

It Is All In The Conversation!
By Claire Knowles

Have you ever heard a word or a phrase surface in a new or different way, and subsequently hear it again and again but in different-yet-familiar ways? I can recall a number of years ago, when the word “transparent” became a business buzzword. This new idea was transparent, or that task was transparent, or the hidden agenda was transparent, etc. Transparency was important!

What about the word, *conversation*? In the last few months, I’ve heard or read about **conversation** particularly in the realm of personal authenticity, quality relationships, and deep, meaningful interactions. It has entered my perception many times and in these interesting ways:

- People who practice Appreciative Inquiry (lifting up the positive) are familiar with “initiating *conversations of consequence*”. This is more than a strategy – it is a conscious choice and pursuit. It means no more empty conversations! It means being present!
- In a recent Learning Event of The Center for Self-Organizing Leadership, Inc., there were discussions on the importance of *the continuous conversation and the importance of conversations of meaning and relevance*. (www.centerforselforganizingleadership.com).
- You could say that *the conversation is the relationship* and is extended or stopped, deepened or lessened by the degree of authenticity we bring to our conversations. Yes, it’s all in the *conversation!* (www.fierceinc.com – Susan Scott)
- The book, “Turning to One Another: Simple Conversations to Restore Hope to the Future” (Meg Wheatley, Barrett-Kohler Pub., Jan. 2002) offers some profound thoughts to ponder. This book (as described in an Amazon.com review) underscores the *centrality of conversation* in healing everything from personal relationships to organizational dysfunction to world discord.
- In her book, “Fierce Conversations: Achieving Success at Work & In Life, One Conversation at a Time” (Berkley Pub. Group, Jan. 2004) Susan Scott challenges an organization’s leadership *to hold the long-overdue conversation*. Can you imagine what great achievements could come forth if every supervisor, every team leader, asked the people in her/his organization and team, “*What is the most important thing we should be talking about today?*” Can you imagine what progress could happen if everyone was involved in advancing the intentions and work of the organization as a whole? Can you imagine the increased productivity and coherence that could happen if the “elephants in the room” and the “un-discussables” were really lifted up and resolved? What if you raised this same question with your family at the dinner table and were open to really listening and authentically engaging?

Susan Scott, (same author as noted above) also challenges the individual—you, me. She writes, “On the personal note: What’s *the conversation out there with your name on it? The one you’ve been avoiding for days, weeks, months, years? Who is it with and what’s the topic?*” (See Susan Scott, Article in Seattle Post-Intelligencer, “Companies, careers built or lost one conversation at time”, October 6, 2003).

Some of the most important *conversations* you hold in life are the ones that you hold with yourself. Have you noticed your self-talk lately? How is it influencing your choices? Do you hear limiting statements like, “I can’t” or “Yes....but”? What if the next *conversation* you had with yourself started as a conversation of consequence? “*Self...What is the most important thing we should be talking about today?*” And, tell the truth – speak directly to the heart of the issue.

Ahh...conversations that transform!

Claire Knowles retired as a corporate Human Resources Manager after a career spanning 33 years, and presently is an independent leadership consultant, personal, life & executive coach and a writer. She is on the Board of Directors of The Center for Self-Organizing Leadership, Inc.™, a not-for-profit Educational Center which teaches leaders how to be more effective using Living Systems principles. www.centerforselforganizingleadership.com. Claire is also the creator and presenter of “Lights On! Workshop©” a workshop which assists women to face and embrace life situations. www.lightsonworkshop.com Claire, together with her husband and partner, Richard N. Knowles, and two other consultants skilled in the the work of Self-Organizing Leadership©, do business as The SOLiance Group USA and The SOLiance Group Canada. www.SOLianceGroup.com