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PE.550 Designing Your Life
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Designing Your Life (IAP-Spring 2009)
Lauren Zander and Gabriella Jordan
Lecture/Discussion 7: Cleaning Up Hauntings

Principle: Cleaning Up Hauntings

Once you have found a haunting, your job becomes to clean up the haunting. When you do that, the whole thing falls apart: the theories, traits, and beliefs you have that center around the haunting. You can move on. It's all a new game. It changes everything.

To clean up the hauntings, have a conversation with the people involved. Say your piece, have them say their piece. Forgive and understand. It's all about feeling at peace. Confess that you have a limited vantage point and don't know what he/she will say and that you want to know their side. Apologize for what you have done; apologize for your traits at work. Apologize for judging him/her all of these years, or for carrying a grudge against him/her.

For example, Lauren cleaned up her haunting about her friend Sheryl, who she cut off because Sheryl hooked up with Lauren's ex-boyfriend. Lauren apologized that she didn't have a conversation with Sheryl about what happened, and that by cutting her off, Sheryl lost all of her friends. The funny thing is that Sheryl didn't know why she was cut off. She thought it was because she had lied about her age, and that Lauren wasn't ok with the lie. Lauren feels so great and free and can now love her. Feels so good.

A note about cheating: Cheating is no good, of course, but often cheating is the natural outcome of a relationship getting bad. And that going-bad process is the fault of both people. There are typically two criminals, not just the one who cheated.

Here are some reasons you may use to talk yourself out of having a clean-up conversation with someone, and an argument as to why the reasons are invalid:

- You may think that you don't want to hurt the other person, or get hurt yourself. But the truth is that people often assume the worst. Knowing is better. It feels liberating, and it can bring a sense of intimacy and trust into a relationship. If someone "wronged" you, then own 1) why you brought it into your life, 2) that you have been hexing them ("I hope she suffers forever").
- You may also think you know how people will react, and so use that as an excuse for not actually having the conversation. But the truth is that we don't know how people will react, and we should give them the chance to express themselves. It is actually not fair to them to prevent them from expressing themselves.
- Sometimes, you will confess to people and expect something from the other person in response. Ok, I told my truth. Now you should tell me yours! Or be my friend again! But the truth is that we can't manage other people's reactions— after all, we've been managing them all this time by NOT confessing. Being proud of who you are and willing to take the consequences of what you've done means that you accept ANY response from the other person.
- You may also reason with yourself that things are going so well with someone, that you don't want to destroy it by confessing right now. Why rock the boat? In reality, things could be so much better if you told them. The confession that is haunting you is affecting your relationship. You can't be 100% yourself with them because you feel

like you need to hide part of yourself. Odds are, if it bothers you that much, it probably left a mark on them too.

- Finally, you may reason that cleaning up the haunting is not your job, not your business. But in reality, if it is haunting you, then it IS your business. It is impacting you. If not you, at least get the person whose job it "is" to confess.

Class Participation

Participant 1: I confessed to my godmother that I had been judging her about how she raised her kids, and how she was "unnecessarily stressed." My godmother had no idea, and was so grateful. She explained everything that had been going on in her life at the time, and it turns out I had no idea about all of it. I feels closer and great!

Participant 2: I know the people I want to work on, but I don't know what to say to them.

Lauren: For each person, make a list of everything that:

1. You are keeping from them.
2. Is unforgivable.
3. Is a mystery. What happened there?
4. Is none of my business, but I would like to know.
5. Is a hidden judgment.
6. You wish would change?

Participant 3: My dad passed away when I was a few months old. I always hear the good things, but I never hear the bad. I asked my mom and grandma about his traits, and still they gave me no bad ones. Then I asked my sister and she told me that my dad would disappear for days. And all of my life, my mom has gotten upset when I don't call every few days, because she's worried that something has happened. I want to keep going back and make it safe for her to say things to me. **Key point:** sometimes it takes time and effort to build a relationship to a point where the other person feels comfortable and safe to talk.

Participant 4: I read my mom's memoirs, and I realized that she didn't ask many things about her crazy family history, or her husband cheating on her. She just accepted the mystery and kept it at arm's length. And now I see that my family is the same way. We just don't talk about certain things, and there are so many secrets.

Lauren: And you are exactly the same way. You wonder "how could she have lived with this mystery?" but you already know the answer to that, because you do it too. You are a profound chicken. You think that talking about real life is bad. But it's really good. So confess to your mom that you want to tell her a few things for you.

Participant 4: But I don't want to put her through that. It's selfish. I don't want to hurt her.

Lauren: But you have no idea. The woman has been through the war already. She is already hurt. In fact, it will be good for her. She has been lying to you her whole life. Here is her chance. You have no idea what she will say or feel. Two tips: 1) build an intimate relationship with her first, and 2) make it all about you. "I feel bad that I never said..."

Also, what is so bad about hurt? It is a real human emotion. It happens. Feel it. We try so hard to avoid it, it's crazy.

Assignment: make a list of 10 things you want to ask your mom.

Participant 5: I am working through things with my ex-boyfriend. I miss him, and as I wrote my haunting I realized that I was sad because I missed what we had. Now I don't believe that I can really find what I am looking for. It's just a fairytale.

Lauren: You want the Cinderella story. We all do. What's wrong with that? The problem is that once we get our Prince Charming, we don't know how to care for the relationship. What was your role in the demise of the relationship.

Participant 5: We were long-distance, and I let the relationship deteriorate. I should have put more effort into it.

Participant 6: I brought up some things from the past with my brother, and he said "geez, why won't you let go of the past?"

Lauren: You can't expect him to know how to react, or to drive this. You want too much from him. You need to do the work on your side to have everything figured out, and then bring it to him. "This is what I need from you." Make it really easy for him.

Homework

1. Continue making and keeping promises, reporting in every Sunday. Report on whether you kept or did not keep your promises. Suggested format:
 - a. Describe the promise
 - b. Write for each promise "KEPT" or "NOT KEPT"
 - c. Describe the consequence
 - d. Write if you paid the consequence or not. IF no, by when will you pay it?
 - e. What are your stats on keeping the promise (e.g. I kept 5/7 days).
 - f. What did you notice about yourself? Where did you stop yourself? Where were you a chicken or brat, and where were you great? You can include this for any promise, but ALWAYS do this for every promise that was NOT KEPT.

2. Pick one haunting and analyze it
 - a. Make a list of all the information you don't have about the haunting, such as "I don't know what he really thought about it," "I am missing whole parts to what happened," (when, who, what everyone really said—you probably only remember segments).
 - b. What experience does this haunting represent? Being betrayed, being lied to?
 - c. How could this have happened to you? Why weren't you able to prevent it?
 - d. What was your role in it? Remember that you probably weren't as naïve as you claim you were.
 - e. Are you scared of resolving and cleaning it up? Why? Make a list of why.
 - f. If you were to clean up this haunting what would you say and ask, and to whom?
 - g. What is the lesson, trait, theme, or pattern to be learned from this haunting?