



Victim...or not??

It's easy, isn't it, to play the role of VICTIM? If I'm honest, I have done and probably will continue to put myself in that spot from time to time. We do it with our significant other, in business, in our neighborhoods, and certainly in the domain of politics. Where do we end up? Divided. Even when there is a rallying cry for victims to "unite," division occurs. Separation results, and where do we end up? Isolated, alone, hurt...Who wants to live in that kind of world? THRIVING is certainly not the word we would choose for a world in which victimhood lives and thrives.

Are there victims in our world? Most definitely there are. Examples abound. Victims of human trafficking, victims of spousal abuse, victims of sexual predators, victims caught in the crossfire of military conflicts, on and on. These are legitimate victims, and we need to do all we can, individually and collectively, to end this sort of violence and victimization.

What I'm talking about here is something different. An example of the kind of "victim" I'm talking about was presented clearly in a recent reality show my wife and I watched together. It portrayed families trying to assist loved ones placed alone in wilderness settings with limited resources. One brother, in particular, played the victim card over and over while simultaneously demonstrating vindictive, self-promoting attacks on other participants. His mannerisms got very old very fast. One thing characterizing this kind of "victim" is a blindness to how he or she is coming across. Their approach, in their own eyes, warrants the label "noble" – a just cause so to speak. In the end, what does this approach produce? Again...it leads to isolation, separation, alienation, and bitterness.

I've witnessed this in the work I do with family businesses. I've heard stories (one person's NARRATIVE of what took place) that go back decades recounting how some family member was hurt by the actions and/or words of another family member. When one moves into the role of victim, problems compound. Those problems can stymie any move toward a positive future for the family and/or the family business. ONLY if these narratives can be revisited, reviewed, and, I would say, "re-written" (after much conversation/communication that is often drawn out and arduous; where people truly listen to understand one another and validate points of view and feelings felt; where the "gap" between INTENT and IMPACT can be closed), can there be healing and positive, hopeful futures imagined.

I just finished reading a book by a Palestinian pastor, entitled, ***Faith in the Face of Empire***. In it, Mitri Raheb, the author, writes: *It is both reassuring and comfortable to feel oneself a victim, because then one is neither responsible for the situation nor accountable. But even the weakest victim is also an actor who has to make choices and decisions – and assume responsibility...Playing the role of victim might assist those who are oppressed gain some sympathy but not necessarily respect...*

...as people who had something to say and something to contribute...Victimhood is a negative identity.

Who wants that identity? Who wants victimhood to define their culture?...

In another book that many of you may be familiar with, ***The Body Keeps the Score***, Bessel Van Der Kolk, an M.D. writes: *No matter how much insight and understanding we develop, the rational brain is basically impotent to talk the emotional brain out of its own reality...It is so much easier for them to talk about what has been done to them – to tell a story of victimization and revenge – than to notice, feel, and put into words the reality of their internal experience...They had not integrated their experience into the ongoing stream of their life. They continued to be "there" and did not know how to be "here" – fully alive in the present.*

Fully alive...isn't that what we REALLY, ultimately want, for ourselves, our loved ones, our communities and our businesses?

Let's choose "fully alive" over "victimhood." Every day. Every way. I bet we'll be glad we did!