

Self-evaluation

By: Glenn Smith

-Self Knowledge Brings Happiness-

“When you meet someone better than yourself turn your thoughts to becoming his equal. When you meet someone not as good as you are, look within and examine your own self.” -Confucius

It was 1983 and I was attending a seminar about Reality Therapy, a process of counseling and self-discovery developed by William Glasser, MD. At the time, I was working as a director at a residential group home for teens. The teens had either initiated trouble with the law or had severe parental problems and could no longer live at home. The day-to-day management of the residents and staff was difficult and I was looking for a way to get others to “do what they were supposed to do”. I went looking for a strategy to better control the people in my life. Instead, I left that training with better ways to control myself.

One of the most valuable lessons I learned was the life skill of self-evaluation. I learned that many people spend their time evaluating others and/or worrying about how others are evaluating them. I further learned that people seem to be more focused on what is happening to them, rather than how they are **happening** in the world.

Not long after this workshop one of my mentors, Dr. Barnes Boffey honed this lesson for me when he asked me, ‘Glenn, how are you treating the world?’ I drew a blank and immediately realized that I had very little awareness on how I was treating the world. I could speak in detail about how the world was treating me. I often felt discouraged by my inability to control my life and the world. At that moment, I realized my attention was focused externally, on stuff outside of me. It was time to shift and to be more aware of my internal world, what was going on inside of me.

Through “shifting” my awareness to who I was being, I started a process of taking more effective control of my



life. I found myself asking questions like: What do I want?, Who do I want to be in this situation? -- What am I doing? thinking?, feeling? -- How is it working for me and others? and the real biggie “Who and what can I control?” ... the answer was always the same “I can control me.” Later through my grasp of Perceptual Control Theory, I began to understand that the only thing I totally controlled was my ability to interpret and to provide meaning to any given state of affairs. That is, I was telling myself a story about all the situations and all of the people in my in my life. At this point I added another self-evaluation question: “How am I looking at me; how am I looking at the world and is this point of view serving me?”

First, I started asking myself and then I found myself asking the same questions of others. I found they began to self-evaluate their own actions, thinking, and feelings and it was no longer up to me to ‘fix’ the problems. I found these same questions spilling over into my personal life, my relationships, as a boyfriend and later as a husband and a father. Over the next 25 years, I kept at it until one day I knew I was getting closer to mastering this skill, when a friend asked me, “Glenn, how is the world treating you?” I realized I had no clue how to answer ... however; I could speak in detail about how I was treating the world.

Glenn