

Power vs. Force
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How many have been bullied at some time in your life?

This one is tougher - How many have bullied others at some time? Be honest now!

When confronted with human problems, force will not bring a lasting solution. That is why I attach great importance to the feeling of mutual love among all human beings, as well as to the sense of responsibility of community life. These concepts are the source of peace everywhere in the world. They are the origin of all individual and collective fulfillment in a human community and therefore of concern to us all.

Dalai Lama

I want to introduce The best book I never read... "Power vs. Force"

I have read about this book - I have heard about this book - I have skimmed parts of this book - and someday, doggone it, I'm going to read it! It's about the Power to..... versus Power over.....

You see, everybody wants the power to do things in this life - with their life. Not everybody realizes they have the power within them. That's because our world teaches children that they are to be quiet and obey - and later in life adults too learn to be quiet and obey. For many, they feel that's the secret to getting promoted, to getting along, and to making it to retirement.

In some cultures, I am told, there is not even a word for a relationship between complete equals. One must be dominant, and the other must be dominated. I don't know if that's true, but I've heard it, and I suspect some truth to it.

Bullies come from a sense of weakness and lack... they have been treated as 'less than' in some way, possibly by parents. Then they bully others to try to find some sense of power. Perhaps it is others in the schoolyard, perhaps later it is their own children. Beatings of children were very common in the British class

system - and none so hard as the British education system in places like Jamaica. My own doctor in Regina, British educated, told of being whipped for errors in spelling or arithmetic, or for having a button undone on the school uniform.

I hope we wonder how people could treat each other that way. Believing that we are each appearances of the Divine Spirit in form, surely we ought to have a more benevolent and gentle view.

I was bullied in the schoolyard, and down the street from the school during grades 1 to 4 or 5, but grades one to three especially.

I was five when I started school - my birthday is in late October. Some in Grade one were nearly seven. I was one of the smaller ones.

In those days, learning disabilities were unknown - you were either smart or you were stupid. Those who couldn't read were not labelled smart. The practice was to keep them in the same grade two years instead of one, then pass them to the next whether they could read or not. when I started school in 1949, grade four was filled with 12 and 13 year-olds, some of whom couldn't grasp the order of the letters in the alphabet.

I should point out that these kids were not stupid - my friend and colleague Bob Beesley, who was president of the parents Association of Dyslexics in Regina, revealed to me that Dyslexic children, who have reading problems, typically have higher IQ than normal children. Imagine their frustration at being labelled as dumb!

Getting back to my experience, when I was 2 1/2, I saw my mother for the first time since I was born, when she was released from the Sanitarium after tuberculosis treatment. Her case was used in the medical college as an extreme example of recovery.

Mom was weak and convalescing for a couple of years after that and she used her time teaching me to read and to print. When I started school, I would guess I was reading at about a grade five level.

That was the year they started the Dick and Jane readers - remember those? See Dick. See Dick run. Run, Dick, run. See Spot. For someone who had been struggling through Tom Sawyer, even though I didn't get ALL the words, and even though I didn't get the point of the fence-painting episode, Dick and Jane was a crashing bore. I sneaked over to Grade Three at recess because they still had the old readers, with real stories in them.

Then the teacher decided that I was the one to light a fire under those stupid kids in grade four. I was handed the grade four text to read aloud - an embarrassment to the big kid that couldn't get the first word.

The target was painted on my back. Gangs of four or six pushed snow down my parka, pushed me down into snowbanks, pushed me into hedges, and general twisted arms, legs and whatever they could grab. I became a pretty good sprinter by the time I got to grade three!

My daughter was bullied in grade five or six.... in that case, there was a girl who found she should increase her popularity by taunting and teasing. When bullies act out, often others support them without meaning to....sometimes to avoid being the target, sometimes to feed off the secondhand feeling of power. That magnifies the effect.

My daughter dealt with it by using her natural advantage - size - the bully was a short and thin little princess type; my daughter was large, which was the focus of the bullying. So - quite simply - she called the kid out after school, and threatened violence. Then she waited at the appointed spot - a hill in back of the schoolyard - and most of the school waited too. When the girl wisely didn't show, her bluff was called, and the bullying was completely over. As is typical, the hangers-on changed sides, and my daughter had a huge bunch of fickle friends she neither needed nor wanted, but you can't have everything your way!

Human behaviour works like a pendulum. Bullied people easily turn into bullies. As the pendulum swung, I moved out of the danger of physical violence, but I learned that I had one advantage - I could not be beat at verbal bullying.. the put-down that leaves the room laughing, all except the poor victim. Having been powerless, I learned to wield the power of my sharp tongue. I could have written

a book "How to lose friends and influence people- negatively"

Just to show how we rationalize things, I told myself I was doing good - my main focus was others in the workplace who picked on those were verbally defenceless - slow to think of a response. Pick on them, and my shaft of wit, like a sabre, would cut across the would-be bully's feeble efforts - Ha Ha! Mess with best, die with the rest! What power!

What foolishness!

I also learned about the force of loudness. I had business dealings with a manager named Adolph. The last initial was H, like Hitler. Adolph would phone and yell at high volume into the phone - startling the person at the other end into doing whatever he wanted - another form of verbal bullying. I soon found that if you matched his volume at the start, he would quickly become quiet and reasonable, and a great discussion would follow. In fact, he ultimately thought I was the only person he wanted to deal with - I was his buddy for life. Anthony Robbins describes this behaviour to a T in one of his audio courses - it's called mirroring. Mirror the behaviour of the bully, and he thinks you are a kindred spirit.

It took years for my pendulum to swing back to centre, so that I did not feel I had to force my way to make things happen. I had to study the Science of Mind.

So - suppose we get back to this book - Power vs. Force?

Where do we find the power TO - instead of the Power OVER?

Look inside.... within you is the certainty of the spiritual being that is you.

Your inner being is un-harm-able, immortal, and has all power to do what is desired. Your puny force will not match what the God within can do for you - and God will respect all other spiritual beings in the process.

Above all, don't react to forces that appear to block you. They are appearances only, and what you resist will persist. Look away, and look to your goals and your dreams.... Pray affirmatively for your good to enfold around you - keep steadfast

- pray unceasingly.

Take a look at where your pendulum is right now. Where was it, at the different stages of your life? Remember, there are many forms that bullying takes - physical force, unyielding argument, repetitive demanding, verbal abuse, ridicule, shouting, guilt, shaming. Some are subtle, and some are obvious. Please, meditate on it, think about it. We act out these behaviours in so many ways. Sometimes it's just silent judgment - quiet refusal to honour the paths of others.

In the Celestine Prophecy, especially in the movie, there are a couple of scenes where our hero is called to account for trying to use the force of his personality or the force of argument to over-ride the wishes of someone else. The behaviour is compared, indirectly and subtly, to the dictatorship that rules the South American country in which the story takes place.

As we look to North Africa, we see the beginnings of the shift, where people are reacting to dictatorial behaviour. Whether they achieve our notion of democracy or not remains to be seen, but they are certainly throwing off the bullies that have been their rulers.

Can we see examples in our own families, our communities or our countries, where bully tactics are trying to emerge? Can we, both personally and culturally, evolve out of that style of thinking?

Is this the change we look for in 2012? That would not be such a bad idea.

Respect all Divinity, starting with yourself, and we will have a better world.

And so it is!

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