



PUT YOUR SPIRITUALITY TO WORK

Conversation Starters for the Workplace

2.19 YES, BUT... YES, AND...

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THE FIRST TIME Debra observed William conduct a creative exercise called “Yes, but... Yes, and” with a group of executives, she was excited. It was a powerful exercise that clearly demonstrated some of the reasons we are not as creative as we could be, especially in a group at work.

The exercise goes like this... Your group decides to focus on generating creative ideas for a specific challenge. One person starts by suggesting a creative idea. Another person responds by saying, “Yes, but...” and then says why that first creative idea wouldn’t work, and instead suggests another idea. The next person once again responds with “Yes, but...”, and after giving reasons why the other person’s idea won’t work, goes on to suggest a new idea. This continues in the same pattern for some time.

In part two of the exercise, the group again focuses on creating ideas for a specific challenge, but in a different manner. After the first person has suggested his creative idea, the next person says, “Yes, and...” and adds a creative idea of her own. The next person responds with, “Yes, and...” and once again gives another idea. This continues until a rich bouquet of creative ideas has been generated.

To complete the exercise, the group discusses how each of the approaches felt and the difference between the two. Inevitably, people feel that the “Yes, and...” approach was more creative, productive and fun. Yet, most participants readily admit that “Yes, but...” is the approach they are most familiar with in their daily work.

As Debra observed the exercise, she was feeling quite proud of herself, thinking she was an open-minded, creative person, certain that she was practising the “Yes, and...” approach. But then reality sank in. Upon returning to daily work, Debra began to see how often she reacted with “Yes, but...” rather than “Yes, and...” She saw how closed her heart and mind were in the creative process with other people. It was quite an eye-opener for Debra, one that caused her to return to her spiritual foundation for guidance and strength.

The first step Debra took was to tap into her spiritual view of life, which sees this universe as God's play, or God's "leela" as they would say in India. She also believes that God represents the pure essence of creativity, and we (God's creation) too are endowed with the same creative nature. Even her executive coaching work has been focused on "designing and creating your reality," knowing that everyone is a co-creator with God.

This spiritual view of life had always been inspiring for Debra, but now she was finding it quite challenging. She asked herself, "If we are endowed with God's creative nature and this universe is God's play, then why am I dis-empowering the creative process?" It took some real soul searching and embarrassing moments of continuing to catch herself say, "Yes, but..." before she gained any new insights.

Soon Debra realised she was lacking faith in the creative process of life itself. Looking even more deeply, she saw that there were people and events in this world she had judged as wrong, and in doing so had judged God negatively for "creating" such things. The bottom line was – Debra did not trust God's creativity! Debra saw she was continuously attempting to control the creative process in order to direct the outcome. This led to her consistent use of the "Yes, but..." approach, a process which closed her heart and mind to the power of creativity.

These insights have led Debra into a deeper trust of God as the source of creativity. It has also heightened her confidence that as co-creators with God, we can all work together to generate the kind of universe that genuinely reflects our Divine nature. Debra now focuses on being aware of any attempt on her part to dis-empower the creative process by saying "Yes, but...". She rather seeks to surrender her fears to God, which in turn allows her to experience "God's play at work".

So, ask yourself: *Do I say or think "Yes, but..." or "Yes, and..." most often? How can my spiritual view of life assist me in fostering a "Yes, and..." attitude to creativity?*

This article is an excerpt from the book, *Put Your Spirituality to Work: Book 2 – Work as a Spiritual Practice*. To download the full book of articles, as well as additional book chapters, articles, workbooks, and research on the subject of "spirituality and human values for leadership and work", visit our website: www.globaldharma.org