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Columnist

Professional Development

Leggo your ego

When we hear the word “ego,” we think of someone with a “big head,” someone who thinks and talks more of themselves than others. Webster’s defines ego as “the self; the individual as self-aware.”

We all have an ego. It’s the part of us that lets us exercise our free will. It’s a vital and necessary part of our humanness. When we let it rule us, however, ego can get us into trouble and bring about failure and unhappiness in our business and personal lives.

When we follow our spiritual nature – the highest and best in us – we begin to become, as Neal Donald Walsh says in *Conversations with God*, “Who We Really Are.” A spiritual teacher once told me that as we become more spiritual, our ego knows it has to die, so it fights even harder to control us. So I believe when we say, “Lead us not into temptation,” we’re asking God to let His wisdom guide us and not be tempted to listen to our egos.

On the human level, it’s impossible and impractical to completely “leggo our egos.” But there are many things we can do to give it less control over us. Here are five suggestions.

Don’t judge others. When we let other people’s behaviors and attitudes upset us, we’re being egotistical. We want them to conform to our standards and desires instead of letting them be who they are. When we can respect other people enough to let them be who they want to be and do what they think is best for them, we’re letting go of our egos and recognizing the spiritual unity we have with them and all other human beings.

Don’t criticize others. Criticizing is the verbal result of judging. If you do, say, or believe something of which someone expresses disapproval in the form of gossip or criticism, they’re being egotistical and judging you. It’s petty and no one wants to hear it.

Just think of the common response to negative political campaigns and commercials. I am personally grateful that the politicians have toned it down during the current campaign and have focused more on issues than personalities. They could

improve even further, methinks. Yes, even people in positions of “power” can leggo their egos. And be better for it.

Think win-win. (Doesn’t mean, “I win twice!”) This is one of Stephen Covey’s seven success habits and I can’t imagine anyone being truly successful without having this attitude. Our highly competitive culture encourages us to win at the expense of others. In activities where we keep score, there have to be “winners” and “losers.” But in the Game of Life, it’s preferable to let everyone win.

Many people don’t want to go into sales because they don’t like talking people into buying something and “losing” if the person says no. But if you’re selling a product or service I want or need and I like it, then we both win. Salespeople who cultivate a win-win attitude are more successful and happy in their jobs.

Be non-attached to outcomes. This may be the most difficult way to control our egos, especially for results-oriented people high in the Utilitarian or Individualistic values. When we set goals and work to achieve them, we can get frustrated when they don’t turn out the way we want. We may feel like failures and want to quit. The secret to success in any endeavor is to take action, let go of the outcome, and accept the results.

Which brings us to the final suggestion.

Let go and let God. How fortunate are those who not only believe in God, but also have the faith to put their lives in His hands. God knows better than we do what’s best for us. A genuine desire that “Thy will, not mine, be done,” is the most perfect way to “leggo our egos” and live successful, fulfilling lives.

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