



INSIGHTS

The Company We Keep

HERE ARE VOICES from the *S&H* staff that you don't usually hear—involving a process called Stillpoint we've been using to build our company.

FROM OUR WEB DESIGNER

I'm not a believer. In much of anything. A cab driver I was speaking with in Chicago one evening told me, "You're Mr. Cool, aren't you? You've got it all figured out." I replied, "Actually, I have nothing figured out, consequently nothing really bothers me."

So, when our team at *Spirituality & Health* enrolled in a 65-day group exercise called Stillpoint that could improve our way of thinking and relating, I was skeptical. But I figured why not jump in completely? I had nothing to lose.

The first step in the process is to take a self-test to evaluate your train of thought around five core processes—*Vision, Persistence, Curiosity, Self-Inquiry, and Receptivity*—to determine how you perceive the world. Then you focus on what's called your balance point—your least utilized of the five—and you're given a practice or strategy to achieve balance and clarity in decision making. After 21 days of using the strategy, you measure your gains and changes by repeating the self-test.

I opened with being highly Receptive with basically zero Vision. Surprisingly accurate! The suggested strategy was to close my eyes and envision new possibilities for work, personal life—anything, so long as it challenged my status quo of perception. I had never done anything like that before but figured it would be a breeze.

I sat down, closed my eyes and. . .

Nothing. I felt like I was staring at a wall.

Gradually, over the next few days, I began to see things and the 10-minute sessions became easier. I felt like a student again—when the world was fresh and full of opportunity. I was actually capable of new ideas. Of course, it had always been that way—only I'd forgotten how to see that. What struck me from the course description was this: "If you don't challenge what you already know, you'll stay where you are."

After 21 days of Vision practice, I improved, and my Balance Point changed to Persistence. My new strategy was to eliminate distraction. This journey arrived at a fortunate point in time, following the year-end holidays, a vacation, and my birthday. I felt ready to commit to some healthy habits and came up with a bold course of action: stop drinking, go to the gym every day, limit television, don't dine out (extremely difficult in a town like Chicago). Before that moment, I hadn't gone a week without a beer in over 20 years, but in my Vision practice I always saw myself as being healthy, and that in turn helped fuel the Persistence. Surprisingly, I kept at it, something I would have thought impossible only weeks before. It was less of a challenge and more automatic. It was as if my brain was saying, *I have a Vision now, so go follow it.*

Is this really balancing my thought?



Business Dog
Tracey Long

My actions and awareness would support that. Today I've made notes like these:

"Successful Vision involves a continuing journey."

"Goals are steps within a journey, but ultimately they are simply guides, not destinations."

Seems obvious, but it's as if I needed the reminder. —PAUL WCISEL

FROM OUR ADVERTISING SALES MANAGER

So far, I've worked on Vision, Self-Inquiry, and Curiosity (on my second round of Curiosity). The internal shift that I've experienced is understanding that I don't have to have all of the answers, and that I don't know what I don't know. I've felt very responsible for the development of revenue (and at times very alone)—it's been an issue both professionally and in my personal life. My go-to point has been Persistence, and while that has served me well, it also has perpetuated some rigidity, resistance, and perfectionism that create more negative stress. I am feeling more relaxed, more open, and better able to deal with life's challenges—most recently it's been my parents' move into a nursing home, cleaning out/closing down their condo, and preparing for my dad's imminent passing. In the past, when I've experienced a difficult challenge, I "pulled myself up by the bootstraps" and worked through it—usually at the cost of everything else in my life. So when it was over, I was exhausted, overwhelmed, and afraid. I don't feel that way today. I can still experience the sadness that comes with loss, but also feel the energy and optimism that this work is bringing into my life. I don't worry so much about how to increase revenue—I stay focused on the Vision, remind myself there are opportunities out there that I don't even know exist, and try to let my Curiosity keep me open to the questions and new answers.

What am I taking away from this experience?

I love learning, and this is such a beautiful reminder of that. As the "elder" on the team I (or my ego) sometimes think/feel that I've heard it all—maybe with different words but the same messages. This process is a great example that learning or self-awareness isn't a linear process that we master—if we want to keep growing there's always more that we can uncover. It's very liberating and exciting. —ANN REED



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