

Diversity and Pre-Validation

"The Two Icebergs"

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Pre-Validation: The attitude or posture of awareness that anyone you meet, no matter what they are doing, makes sense before they open their mouths. The actions of communicating that attitude. A learned posture of contentment with another person's differing point of view.

Pre-Invalidation: The posture of persuasion, based on the internal assumption that others don't make sense, or that they don't make sense unless you approve of it. This is the "home of facticity."

Teaching Pre-Validation.

Look at this chart while reading further. [Click here.](#)

I think of each of us as an iceberg floating in the ocean – and not because of its temperature. Take a look at one iceberg. Part of it is visible, but most is invisible. As you look at the visible part, your mind remembers that there is a whole lot of ice below the surface. You know that every molecule of ice above the surface, is supported by all those molecules that are below the surface. Still all that other people can see is what is on top. I can see your behavior, and hear your words, but I can't see why you do that or why you say that. Your "sense" is largely invisible to me. It is always there but below the surface.

So I can ask you, "Why did you say that?" Now, at first you may tell me things, the meanings of your words, the lessons in your life, your history, your thinking. But after a bit you may stop at the first barrier – what I call the Wall of Privacy, sometimes called the wall of shame. Below this line are things that you know about, but don't want to share. Perhaps you fear being mocked or made fun of, or shamed. The wall of Privacy seems to change position easily, rising higher when a person feels unsafe. Whatever the reason, unless you tell me, I won't be able to really see your sense. It doesn't mean that your sense is not present, just that I cannot grasp it unless you tell me. For a moment let's go deeper and assume you are willing to tell me anything you can. Now, as you share more of the components of your sense, you will run into another wall – what I call the Wall of the Unconscious or Wall of the Unknown. What is down there? All the answers to your own question of "Why do I do that?" This is all the stuff that moves and drives you, upsets or entertains you, and that you don't know. This is the unknown part of you. Some people call this your Shadow. Some people call this your Denied Self. But, bottom line is that you don't know what this stuff is. And yet this stuff is part of your "sense." I can't really understand your sense unless you and I know this stuff. Down there is your history, your life as a little kid, your mom and your dad. Once you see yourself like an iceberg, you will probably realize that you are not capable of doing something that is not a result of all those molecules, all those components, in that iceberg. To say it stronger, you are not capable of doing something that is not a result of all that stuff. If I put add a) the parts of you that you don't know about, to the b) parts of you that you want to keep hidden from others, to the c) parts of you that you are willing to share, to the d) parts of you that others can see anyway, I can make a remarkable statement. You always make sense. Even if some of the components of your sense are out of your own sight (unconscious), you always are congruent. Every act, every word out of your mouth makes sense, and is the sum result of the components within you. You always make sense.

Now lets look at the full picture with two icebergs. Over here is your partner. They have the same structure: visible part, privacy wall, unconscious stuff, etc. They also always make sense – within themselves. They, too, are always congruent. So we can arrive at a wonderful conclusion. **"All people make sense all the time."** Cannot be otherwise. The question is not whether your partner makes sense. The question is whether you can see or hear the sense they are making.

Don't make Sense?

Probably you have heard someone say, "You don't make sense!" You might have said this yourself. What does this sentence mean? Well, I have found three meanings for the phrase, "You don't make sense."

1. I could say "you don't make sense" when I mean, "I don't see the sense you ARE MAKING, yet." It might be nicer to say that I don't see your sense yet, rather than say you don't make any. But that is one meaning of the phrase.

2. I could say "You don't make sense" when I mean "I don't like your sense." I hear married partners say that often, when I hear that one wants to divorce and the other says, "He/She doesn't make any sense."

Now I want you to understand that at this point I don't like Osama Bin Laden's sense. But that doesn't have any effect on whether he makes sense. He's over in Afghanistan somewhere, I'm in Northern Idaho and I doubt I have any effect on him or whether he makes sense.

To go a bit further, I believe that all the criminal detectives in the world (all 80,000 of them) know something that the average person doesn't know. They know that all the criminals make sense doing what they are doing. Average citizens can afford the foolishness of saying that criminals make not sense. Detectives can't afford that silliness. The detectives' jobs are to catch these people. To do that they have to predict where their quarry will be next. If the detective can figure out the logic, the sense of that person, they can predict where they will be next -- and catch em. Note that the detectives don't have to like the criminal's sense to understand it.

3. People often say (and this is just silly) "You don't make sense" because "you don't make my sense." Well, I want to tell you that a person never makes anyone else's sense. They make their own. Look at the icebergs. There isn't a single molecule of ice in one berg that is also in the other. No one ever, exactly, makes someone else's sense. They always make their own. So wonderful second conclusion is that "two people never make exactly the same sense, ever."

A Story

Last summer a woman sitting among friends on my back porch suddenly jumped up, dashed across the area and then stood silently, shaking with large eyes. I was certainly curious.

So I said, "What happened?" and she said, "Didn't you see that bee?" Well, it turned out that I had seen the bee (some data about her iceberg from above the surface) but I didn't know that it had to do with were jumping up. Now I did see a connection, but wasn't clear yet.

So I said, "Sure. How was that bee involved?" and she said, "I am deathly allergic to bee stings." Whoa, that piece of data was from below the surface of the water, out of my site. I could not know about it until she spoke of it. Now that I had that bit of information, I could certainly start to see her sense.

I asked her to tell me more and after telling some little bits of data she added, "By the way when I get stung, I stop breathing. So I carry a little kit with me (epinephrine) to stop my quick reaction and keep me breathing, but this morning I left my kit home." Wow, did her behavior now make sense to me! I could see her sense.

Finally she told me that the first time she was stung she was a little girl about 4. Her parents got her to a hospital and they flew her to another hospital 100 miles away and she had not seen her parents for almost a week. She had been one terrified little girl. Heck. No wonder she jumped up with a bee landed next to her this morning.

Lesson 1: people always make sense in what they do, whether they can, or have yet gotten around to telling you.

Definition: To Understand is to see the sense of the other. For me, understanding is kind of a small surprise event when I get some data and go, "Oh... I see." There were at least three understanding (surprise) events in the story: "allergic to bee stings", "left kit at home", "taken to hospital away from my parents."

Lesson 2: Since people always make sense, you can always understand them, if a) they will speak to you and b) you will listen.

Lesson 3: Listening to a person talk is like looking into their validity - their sense. Since they always make sense, when you listen you travel along into that sense of theirs.

Validation:

But most people want to "feel understood." To make this happen, it is not enough to understand and say so. My parents often said, "We understand you perfectly!" when I didn't think they had the vaguest idea what was going on in me. To make a person feel understood, you must validate them.

Definition: To Validate is to speak out loud, to bare witness, to the sense of another person. When I stand up and say, "Oh, I see why you jumped up and ran across the porch. You are deathly allergic to bee stings, had forgotten your epinephrine kit, and have terrible memories of your first sting. Did I get that?" When I say this out loud, I am validating and when the person says, "Yes, you got me," they are feeling understood.

This is a critically useful skill. People will give up almost any "bad" behavior if instead they will feel understood.

Agreement

Note that I have not ever talked about "agreement". Agreement has nothing to do with understanding or validation. I don't have to fear bees to understand or validate the woman who reacted. All I have to do is see it from her point of view (while knowing mine is different). I think it is useful to just accept that two people never agree on anything, but sometimes they may come close.

Practice - the Odd Dialogue

When you think your partner is doing something "odd", the situation is that you are uninformed about the sense they are making. If you were informed, you wouldn't think their behavior odd. The word "odd" in this usage is one of those misleading words. When I see my partner as "odd", the normal behavior is to focus on them, when the real problem is in me. I repeat, "When I think you are odd, it means I am uninformed."

So try this dialogue, which I call the Odd Dialogue. Pick something your partner did that you think is odd, weird, backward, dumb, etc. Go to your partner and start by this leading sentence.

"I saw you do so-and-so the other day and that appeared odd to me. Now I know you make sense all the time, so could you share with me what was going on that led you to do that."

Then listen (mirror) and see if you are not led to an awareness of those two conclusions: "all people make sense all the time" and "two people never make the exact same sense, ever."

When you do this exercise, you are practicing PreValidation.