

Are You In The Box?



As you read the title, many thoughts immediately turn to “thinking outside the box” with regard to creativity. And yes, this is one meaning of the phrase. However, what I’m referring to is a “box” within which we put people. Sometimes this occurs very intentionally, and other

times, unintentionally. Take for example a challenging relationship you have. How many of you have told yourself, “I shouldn’t have to ask!” or “If they were a good leader, they would ...!” or how about this one (my favorite) “There’s nothing I can do, that’s just who they are – they’ll never change!” In these moments, we are choosing to see people as objects. Furthermore, what we don’t realize is that we are placing ourselves in a box as well. We place blame on the other and as a result, we forget that we bear any role in the situation. As many of you know, one of my favorite questions to ask, is “what are you pretending not to notice about your role in the situation?” If we are being authentic and vulnerable with ourselves, we will quickly realize that a significant amount of the time, we play a role in the situation in some form or fashion.

When we are either in the box or placing others in a box, we are automatically hampering engagement, fostering further lack of trust, restricting communication, and as a result, people (including you) don’t reach their full potential. We begin to see silos form in the department and soon thereafter, in the organization. Departments work against each other instead of with each other.

When we begin to see others “out of the box” we see individuals with true feelings, a story of their own, burdens and hardships that they carry every day; rather than someone who lies awake at night plotting our demise. We begin to view the person differently, we actually see them. When we get really good at staying out of the box, we have empathy for the other person. We no longer look

for others' boxes, rather, we look for our own. Don't worry about whether others are helping you, but look for ways in which you can help others. Are you concerned with looking good or getting good? If you answer answered with the latter (which I hope you do!) check out our book featured for the month of March, "Leadership and Self Deception" by The Arbinger Institute. You'll find more information about our boxes through this fantastic read. Until next time, consider whether or not you're in the box or have placed others in the box. Most importantly – how's that working for you?

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