

Rubber Band Demo to Real Life

Unedited posts from archives of CSG-L (see INTROCSG.NET):

Date: Sat Mar 04, 1995 5:18 am PST
Subject: Rubber Band Demo to Real Life

Ed Ford 950304

Last Wednesday, I was conducting a group session for adults on probation. In order to explain what happens when we try to control others, I showed them a special rubber band demonstration, the one where I knot together two rubber bands, ask a person (she) to hold them stretched out in front of her so that the knot is an equal distance from each hand and directly in front of her. Then I ask another participant (he) to move his finger in front of the rubber band. I ask her to keep the knot directly at his fingertip as he moves his finger up and down and sideways. What I then do is gently take one of her arms and sincerely try to help her keep the knot in front of his finger. What happens is that she invariably admits to not wanting my help, and in fact resists it. This demonstrates the difficulty of trying to control another person.

A 33-year-old woman on probation told me how much the demonstration helped her understand the effects of what it is like to be controlling. She said she has gone through "many" boyfriends and they all complained about how she is always trying to control them, telling them what they are doing wrong. She said she never realized how serious this was until I did the demonstration with her. "I never realized how controlling I was and the effects of my attempts to control them until you did that demonstration." She said that being a part of the demonstration brought home to her how controlling she was and the effects of this on others.

When we do our little rubber band demos, most of us think "that's great" and go on. We see it as a nice way to demonstrate a theory. I never realized the powerful impact it could have on a person's life.

Best, Ed.

Date: Sat Mar 04, 1995 6:04 pm PST
Subject: Re: Rubber Band Demo to Real Life

<[Bill Leach 950304.16:47)] >Ed Ford 950304

I missed that one! I am going to HAVE to go give it a try. It is so 'obvious' as to what will happen -- great!

Of all people, I 'hate' to be the one to 'water on your parade' but...

> I never realized the powerful impact it could have on a person's life.

I don't see that you have shown that it has been a 'powerful impact'. It seems to me that 'all' that happened is that you 'opened a door' to allow for additional understanding and eventually change. I quoted 'all' there because I did want to add that the statement was NOT meant to imply failure to accomplish anything significant.

My doubt concerning 'powerful impact' is that next time our lady friend 'wants something' she is most likely to 'activate' the same control systems that she has always used. IF she learns that the feelings of 'anger', 'frustration', 'depression', etc. 'mean' that there is a control system conflict (ie: a control system is failing to control) AND that she must then 'go up a level' because of her recognition that one control system can not control another without violence THEN there has been a powerful impact.

I believe that most people really do need help with how to make use of the understanding (I'm sure I did and for that matter still do).

-bill

Date: Sun Mar 05, 1995 12:15 pm PST
Subject: Powerful Impact!

Ed Ford 950305

Bill Leach says that he doubts whether the rubber band demo had a "powerful impact" on Debbie's life. Remember, it's from her perception, not yours. I'll let you know when I see her this Wednesday night at group. But to be able to build a relationship and maintain it when you haven't in the past - that, in my opinion, is a powerful impact.

I've also been working as a volunteer at a women's unit of the Arizona State Prison once a month. I've seen the same thing in a few of the women as they begin to understand PCT and apply it's ideas to their lives. For many of these women, who've been reorganizing, some for many years, this bit of understanding helps to reduce the error to where they can more easily tolerate the pain of conflict due to large uncontrollable errors. They realize they can only deal with those things over which they have some control. Since anger is caused by setting and often maintaining reference levels over which they have little or no control, by dealing directly with and evaluating whether they have control over the things they want, they are able to reduce their anger by reprioritizing or giving up on the things over which they have no control.

The delight for me in knowing PCT is watching others begin to grasp the ideas, if even so slightly, and doing something with their lives that creates a more efficient way for them to deal with their worlds.

Best, Ed.