



Paul Burke Training Group

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Beyond training: Looking at learning MI in a whole new light!

Thoughts on Improved Practice (TIP) #1823

Beyond Tolerance. Acceptance as an agent of change.



These are the shoes (boots) worn by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. during the "Freedom March" (on display at the King Center in Atlanta, Georgia). They are very big shoes to fill.

A few years ago, I was fortunate to visit the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. museum in Atlanta, Georgia. I've always liked what I knew about Dr. King and his ideas, but after spending a day at the museum, I came to respect his views on "race acceptance" even more. He knew how to activate motivation. He believed in change talk, and most of all in "Taking Steps". He didn't just talk the talk. He walked the walk. Literally. And what was best about him, in my opinion, was his perspective on "tolerance of others". Dr. King did not believe that we should "tolerate" others; he was adamant that we need to "accept" others – even when we don't agree with them, or like their behaviour. He said that acceptance is a virtue and that it takes deliberate effort to develop it. Acceptance certainly requires tolerance – but tolerance, by itself, is not enough.

When I toured the artifacts and displays that abound in tribute to him at the museum, the role he played as "activator of the dream" seemed so clear to me. It got me to wondering about how his approach was so successful in evoking change talk – not just from a few – but from an entire nation! Motivational interviewing also has a role to play in activating dreams. Dreaming begets change talk – even if it starts with "dream talk"!

Dreams as Change Talk of The Spirit!

In Atlanta, Georgia, there's a very special place. It's called Auburn Street. It's a mecca of sorts; a place where people go, thousands and thousands every year, to show their respect, and admiration, and gratitude – all for a man who died at the hands of another. Even now - almost 50 years after he was murdered.

People speak quietly as they walk up and down Auburn Street in Atlanta. Reverence hangs in the air. People stroll around the huge reflecting pools that encircle his tomb in a peaceful way. Pensive. Reverent. They walk softly. Gently. Reflection is what this place is all about.



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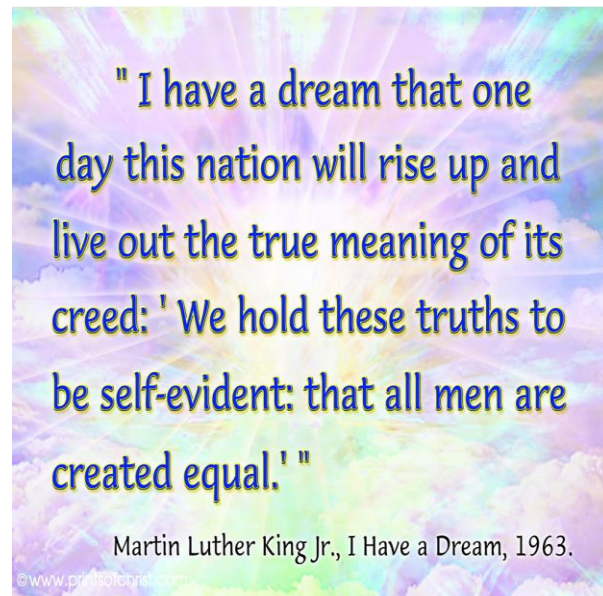
Martin Luther King Jr. was born on this street. He worshipped here. He sat in the front pew at Ebenezer Baptist Church and he listened to the sermons of his father and his grandfather, not knowing then that he would someday preach from behind that same pulpit himself.

Martin Luther King was not a big man – at least not by measure of his height. Still, he was a giant when measured by the effect he's had (and continues to have) on the dreams of a nation. Without question, Martin Luther King Jr. was a liberator of hope. He evoked motivation-for-change in millions of people, in both black and in white; in both women and in men; in both the ignorant and in the wise. Martin Luther King Jr. understood that evoking a dream could activate change and stimulate fresh hope. He invested his life in evoking the American dream of equality and freedom for all. And, as he awakened that dream within the masses who heard him speak, change talk rose up and demanded to be heard. Dr. King helped people to accept that we are different – and equal. He helped us to dream of a world where we would not only tolerate each other and our dreams – but of a world where we could accept the human hopes and dreams that live in each of us.

Below, I share some reflective thoughts from my diary about that wonderful day studying the life and the capacity for acceptance of the great Dr. King:

Dear Diary:

Today, I'm in Atlanta for a meeting of MI trainers from around the world. Atlanta's a very beautiful city. There's more green space here than I've ever seen in an urban space. I toured the neighborhood of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. today - and reflected a lot on the life that he lived. Wow! What an amazing, important, courageous man.



As I watched the video footage today of his historic speech ("I Have a Dream"), I couldn't help but notice how his work was about providing fuel for hope. A lot of people think, it seems, that he was able to "implant" his famous dream into the American psyche and thus persuade his society to re-envision their ways. I disagree.

I don't think Dr. King implanted his dream at all. I think that when he said that "I have been to the mountain top, and I've looked over...", people recognized that dream. It didn't live inside of Dr. King. It lived inside of the folks he spoke to and that he encouraged to see an alternative future - a future different from



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where they were otherwise headed. His approach always reminded folks of the fact that "there is an alternative future; there are choices; there is a different way". He just reminded them to go internal and imagine it. Until then, for the masses, equality was a dream without any hope.

Dr. King evoked their ability to see it. To dream it. To hope for it. He emancipated their courage. Courage to seek out their freedom. To feel it. To taste it. To live for it. (And maybe if necessary, even to die for it - as he himself did).

His words were not simple, poetic speech. More than provocative, they were evocative. When he spoke the last words, "I'm free at last!", people heard themselves hoping their own change talk into existence. "I want justice" said their newly empowered inner voice of the masses. "I need equality". Again and again it spoke. "Because all men were created equal" was reason enough, in the same way that "We can stand up" was ability for all. He helped people to not just "tolerate" that idea. He helped them to embrace it - and accept it.

Dr. King gave life to the hope of a people and to the dream of a nation. Dreams are not passive things. They are the change talk of the spirit. People who want to help (and not to destroy), speak words of hope - in the language of acceptance.

Tonight, I'm thinking that making dreams come true begins with the inviting the dream into awareness. We need that now more than ever. We need to move beyond tolerating the idea of equality for all. We need to learn how to accept it. We need to evoke it. Not implant it. I wonder what Motivational Interviewers could do to help more of our clients to accept their dreams (and not just to tolerate them)? What might we do to invite more of their dreams into awareness?

What can we do, I wonder, in the service of our desire to help; to evoke "dream talk"? What might we be able to do to help others to move beyond tolerance and into acceptance of the dream of equality - despite our differences? What about the dream to stop smoking? Or for a Dad to build a good life for his kids? What about the dream to provide care for the poor, or to go back to school, or to learn to love again - when all hope has gone? What of Susan Boyle's dream to sing at Carnegie Hall? What if Banting had never dreamed of finding a treatment for diabetes. What about...

Until next time ...

YOUR
dream
has a
HEARTBEAT.
listen
to it.