

HOW HAS ACTION LEARNING CHANGED YOUR LIFE

One of the most powerful questions I've been asked within the Action Learning community is this: HOW HAS ACTION LEARNING CHANGED YOUR LIFE??

Michael Marquardt, founder of Action Learning, asked me this question 3 years ago during the WIAL Global Conference in Shanghai. It was during a break, in between sessions. I was stunned, yet surprised myself with an instant and heartfelt answer. Then Michael built on my answer, with a response that struck me to the core and dramatically shifted my perspective about the real power of Action Learning. I have since used this story to mentor new coaches. And 3 years later, it still rocks my world.

How has Action Learning changed MY life?

Action Learning has made me a better mother. The most profound difference happened in my most important role. I started seeing my 3 young children with a completely new set of lens, less tainted by the biases, hopes and fears built through my lifetime and unfairly applied to them. I started to be more curious about what they



REALLY thought and how they REALLY felt, asking better questions each time. And I did my best to listen with an open heart, with less judgment – not always easy, not always successfully, but there was much more intentionality. I started to seek the goodness in each of them, rather than pointing out weaknesses and what they're doing wrong. I applied more consideration, and less

authority. In the beginning it felt like I was giving up so much. Until I realized that we were, together, creating so much more for each other. And years down the road, I see them growing beautifully into their own skin. Unique and amazing individuals. Connected yet apart.

Later on I would learn that this is called "unconditional positive regard", a term credited to humanistic psychologist Carl Rogers, and often used in client centered therapy. Unconditional positive regard is a feeling or a mindset that allows us to accept and respect others as they are without judgment or evaluation. Rogers stated that for a person to grow, they need an environment that provides them with genuineness (openness and self-disclosure), acceptance (being seen with unconditional positive regard), and empathy (being listened to and understood).

Action Learning Coaches are trained and skilled to offer unconditional positive regard to our members, regardless of who they are or what they say and do. When we trust the team and ourselves, we demonstrate acceptance and respect. When we trust the process and allow it to unfold, we nurture an environment for others to do the same. And as they experience learning and growth, we grow along with them, and the benefits seep into the different roles in our lives.

How has Action Learning changed COACHES' Lives?

I have since asked this same question to other Action Learning Coaches. Action Learning has changed us in varied, yet equally powerful ways.

Elbert Or, visual communicator, facilitator and family man. He talks about finding a community, and now bridging communities: "There's always been a part of me that has felt alone in my incessant desire to ask questions, even the ones that I worry others may see as too 'elementary'. So in some ways that's made me feel like an outsider. AL has not only opened me up to a safe and welcoming community where no question is too basic, and has introduced me to a tool that has also empowered me to share the power of questions and diversity of thought & perspective. I've since been able to practice it in my advocacy work, helping bridge non-profits with the communities they seek to help, and creating stronger collaborations and more innovative & sustainable solutions as a result."



TJ Nadres, business builder and coach. He highlights the power of perspectives as a jump off point in improving oneself: "AL is a safe and inclusive process, that allows for diverse perspectives which opens up so many possibilities. At the same time, it is an opportunity for individuals to learn more about themselves, and grow and evolve. Because of AL, I am more aware about listening to others and including others' perspective, and improving myself in the process."

Ina Teves, coach, mother and inquirer. She shares how the the power of questions, has made her humbler, respectful, and curious: "HUMBLE in that I am compelled to set aside prior knowledge about situations and people, to check my assumptions, to reframe a point of view. I have learned to review and recognize my own habits of thinking, to ask with some compassion: "What was I thinking?". AL compels me to remove the expert hat, to come from unknowing, and then to ask the question that matters and that engenders positivity and creativity. AL has made me RESPECT teams more. No longer

are they less than the sum of their cognitive parts. They have the power to learn and to do, with the tools of AL. AL is helping teams recognize and use their own agency and power. AL has made me more CURIOUS. What is it that I have not thought to ask? What is the emerging question that shows us who we are and where we want to go? AL is meta.”

How has Action Learning changed MICHAEL’S Life?

So let’s get back to my story! I mentioned that Michael’s response to this question struck me to the core and dramatically shifted my perspective about the real power of Action Learning.



He said: “When I discovered Action Learning in 1994, I quickly realized that the goodness/philosophy behind Action Learning was very similar to the gospel of Jesus - love your neighbor as yourself which means respecting each person and believing that there is goodness in every person and the possibility of becoming a wonderful person. I feel that I have never lost my missionary zeal and now preach the good news of Action Learning.

I believe that the Action Learning Coach needs to demonstrate great leadership and thus great love for each person in the group, and maintain a firm belief that each person is/can become a wonderful, successful human being - if placed in a positive environment that is created by the coach in Action Learning.”

How has Action Learning changed YOUR Life?

Genuineness, acceptance and empathy evoke change and growth. As Action Learning Coaches, we have the power to create this environment anywhere we go. And when we do, we change ourselves too.

So yes, how has Action Learning changed YOUR life?

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