

Why Assumption Can Be a Spiritual Growth and Connection Killer

Assumption is the lowest form of knowledge. This is because when we assume, we view situations, make decisions and lead others from a basis of what may not be entirely true.

My assumptions become my bias and are the foundation of my decisions, knowledge, thoughts and feelings. By my own determination, this positions me to be the standard through which everything is arbitrated.

There is also a leadership pitfall that can emerge from an assumption; that is that others should know what we know while disregarding the understanding of our subordinates. These leaders begin to create a hierarchical culture where dominance and intellectual superiority control rather than partnering for the bigger and better picture. This culture is detrimental to both the leader and those they lead.

The challenge: we do not know what we do not know; we only know what we know. The quandary is our propensity to trust only in what we *do know* though incognizant of what we do not know. Our present knowledge is never sufficient to navigate our future leadership opportunities.

We recognize that knowledge is only one part of the equation for effective leadership decision-making. Knowledge without wisdom – the ability to apply knowledge properly—can be counterproductive. Understanding is a vital aspect of the application of knowledge, as it gives substance to wisdom. Understanding incorporates the mastery of knowledge as well as empathy in connection to another's feelings, which assists leaders in exercising good judgment.

All present knowledge is limited. Regardless of the wealth of knowledge we may possess today, it is, and will always be, incomplete. Our present knowledge is based upon the past, not the future. It runs through the grid of our personal and deeply private experiential reality that gave birth to today's assumptions. It was deposited into us by our parents, mentors, educators, authors and our own hunger to learn.

Let's celebrate what we've learned! Let's lead, teach, empower and partner with others! Let's make the most of what we now possess! However, let us recognize that what we know today has been constructed from an infantile clean slate that must continue to be written upon. Never should our present knowledge become a roadblock to what we can learn and develop. It is expedient to learn what we do not know today to prepare us for future possibilities.

Our present is filled with the remarkable knowledge of the past. Be that as it may, we do not yet know today what we can know tomorrow. Today, and every day to follow, can become a deliberate opportunity to gain knowledge, wisdom and understanding.

What are my learning opportunities today? These might be a skill developed, a solution discovered, a person understood, making a complex concept simple, or setting aside time for self-assessment.

What strategic educational opportunities can I pursue? Any type of formal training exercises the mind and expands present knowledge. It challenges us to think and act out of our own cultural norm and view life from a higher perspective.

How can a personal coach or mentor unearth potential in me? When we allow the training and tools of another to be an objective voice to our subjective thinking, we become better leaders. When light shines on dark, fear-based attitudes or actions, we are released to a new and creative expression of

our innate potential.

What can I learn from those I lead? These individuals are working in conjunction with the vision, purpose and objectives of the leader. The success of the organization's endeavors benefits them directly, and vice versa. Their competence is needed, their perspectives are complementary, and their moral compasses all chart the combined course.

What "sacred cows" must I defeat? When a leader exempts himself or herself from constructive criticism or respectful questioning, it alienates those they lead. Likewise, it hinders revelation (i.e., a disclosure of an unknown detail or reality) and disallows objective discovery. We must remain willing to hear another's voice.

Where we are today is a product of our past, but we can strategically position ourselves for a greater tomorrow. This is a healthy leadership journey! {eo}

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