

Shifting Paradigms

By Paul Cuthbert

Have you ever driven a manual transmission? When you first begin learning how to shift gears there is a period of time when you are consciously making an effort to remember when to shift. You have to put the clutch in and then think about which gear you want then you have to ever so slightly let the clutch out. As you are learning there are times when you grind the gears or you let the clutch out too quickly and the vehicle stalls.

After a while shifting gears becomes second nature and you can smoothly shift through the gearbox without difficulty. You instinctively become aware of your speed and when the best time is to shift from first to second and second to third and so on. Those who drive a stick shift on a regular basis know that you can only go a certain speed in each gear and unless you shift to a higher gear the car will not go faster than the gear permits. In order to go faster and cover more ground you must be able to operate in the higher gears; third, fourth, fifth and occasionally sixth gear. With each gear the vehicle increases momentum and moves you forward toward your destination.

In life I meet people that are moving forward and those that are crawling along. Some of the people I encounter are operating in the higher gears; they are successful, motivated and busy generating results and attaining their goals and desires. We often refer to these people as “driven.” They know where they are and they know not only what they want but also what to do to get what they want. These people are constantly on the go, their movements reflect their intensity, they walk quickly, they think quickly and they make decisions quickly. Usually, they are tackling a lot of different projects at once and they have trained themselves to be productive through proactive action and attention to what needs to be done.

But not everyone is operating or moving through life in high gear. There are many people that are stuck in first gear, unaware that they can shift gears and pick up speed and momentum in life. Then there are those that are idling in neutral, who no matter what they do in life are not moving at all because they have not engaged the gears. These people talk about the future and how wonderful life will be for them one day. They speak in terms of “if only...,” and “when I am...,” and do little or nothing to change themselves or their circumstances to make things happen for themselves. These people often complain that life is hard and should be better, yet they sit idling in neutral without realizing that they can engage life and create what they want if they would just simply take action.

Just like shifting gears on a manual transmission, shifting paradigms is not easy for people that have rarely been out of second gear. Paradigms are the subconscious patterns of behavior that are the blueprints we follow for how we do things. Have you ever noticed that you follow a daily routine that is the same day in and day out? You get up at the same time each day, you dress yourself following a set pattern of behavior; which leg goes in first, which shoe goes on which foot first, which arm goes into what sleeve first. Most of us aren't even aware of these patterns they are automatic responses that we have followed for years. They are our paradigms. (Paradigms: the ‘G’ is silent).

Our paradigms generate our thoughts. From the earliest years of our life our paradigms (patterns of behavior) are formed. Parents, the environment you grow up in, teachers, and people we looked up to all influenced who you are today and how you do things in life. Clinical studies have shown that between infancy and four years old 50% of what a child believes about them self and how they will do things in their life is “programmed” into their brains. Between the ages of four and eight another 30% of thought patterns and beliefs about the world around them are hardwired into a child's brain. Between the ages of eight and twelve an additional 15% of personality traits are set in place, so that by the time a child reaches twelve years old 95% of whom they are and how they view life, others, and them self has been imprinted onto their subconscious mind. Our patterns of behavior, our values, and beliefs, even our very thought processes are structured and set--created by the people we were closest to growing up in those formative years.

Shifting paradigms is not easy. Becoming consciously aware of the automatic responses and unconscious decisions we make on a daily basis takes effort, practice and the desire to change. Our thoughts are governed by the subconscious programs that run us, just like a computer that is programmed to function in a specific way, the human mind is a programmed compilation of thoughts, feelings and actions that create our world and more importantly our results. Changing thoughts, changing feelings and changing actions creates a shift that generates different results.

Shifting out of low gear is accomplished by creating movement or motion, simply doing something different, doing something that you have not done before; generating an idea and taking an action step will lead to further action. The act of doing something will create a reaction that leads to momentum. Through the continual processes of motion, action, and reaction momentum builds and new results will come. Velocity will increase and life will begin to move you forward as you continue to form new ideas and move in new directions. The more you do to generate activity, the busier you will become. The busier you become the more your momentum will grow and you will soon be shifting from second gear to third, fourth and fifth. The busiest people are the ones that get a lot of things done during the day. They have trained themselves to be successful by keeping everything around them in motion. Do not allow life to happen to you, make life happen for you. Get in gear and live a life that is driven by passion, by purpose, and by your desire for success.