

Wake Up Call #17a

Naming, Categorizing, Labeling

Naming, Categorizing, and Labeling. The World Health Organization has *names* for 19 food classifications. We have *categorized* 118 scientific elements on the periodic table. 6,500 languages have been *labeled* as those spoken today across the world. There are 4,000 recognized religions and some 300,000 plus English words, 5,000 new per year, of which 1,000 make it to print.

We're increasing the sub-divisions of articulating everything about our world, but we're looking less. With the increase in naming and labeling, we notice less - we connect less.

I used to do this exercise. It's almost 50 years now I've done this in classrooms with my students. I select one student. I have the person come up to the front of the room and I turn my back on the student. And then I start naming and categorizing and labeling what about them - all complimentary things - very nice things. But, nevertheless, I'm not looking at the student. And of course, the class knows exactly what I'm doing. Nobody feels bad or anything.

Next, I start saying all of the traits we know about this student. And then I stop. And I say, "But what if today, this student has come to school and a tragedy occurred last night in her home. I wouldn't know that. I'm describing what I know of that student as of yesterday - as of this morning - maybe as of 10 minutes ago. But, did I look into the student? Or did I just look at what she is wearing today? "Oh, here's the student who I know is always ... this way." I'm looking at the outsides, and I'm looking at the historical person - not her. If I looked into her, maybe I would say, "What's the matter? You seem to have something on your

heart - on your mind? Are you ok?" But I wouldn't notice it if I don't look.

The ancients used to say, "I see you." They're not looking at the person's body. They're looking at the person's soul. So, today's wake up exercise is to try to undo that. We are in a period of history where the naming is increasing, so we have to increase the connection. We have to undo our separation.

Here's a recommended exercise I'll give to you. Go to the mirror. Face it. Maybe it's the morning. Maybe you're getting ready to go out and get dressed. Now, turn your back on your mirror. And give yourself an encouragement - "You can do it today" - some kind of a statement that you would like to say to yourself that is soulful - something that is right to the heart of YOU. And now, turn around and look into the mirror and do it. And look into your eyes - into you. And see if you feel a difference.

Now, see if you remember not to turn your back on the world - and the people you'll be with - and the trees and the flowers and the air and the birds. Try to not 'phone it in' today. And give yourself this reminder - maybe at the beginning of the day.

That's the wake up call. I know you've heard a million people say this and it's not a unique thing. I'm just a reminder. So, I'll see you in one of those tomorrows.

