

Story #17b

Naming, Categorizing, Labeling

17. Aim more at the transformation of your students through the experiences they have in your class, than the information they may receive.

(The Teacher's Bill of Rights)

We're always about the names and the categories and the labels. Deepak Chopra talks about this. He said that children know everything that is of the pure knowing quality, before they learn to label things as such. He said that at 74 years of age, to this day, even though he has practiced many spiritual exercises and techniques and really invests in them since he was a teenager, he still has problems when the language that we must use causes him to take things apart or separate from reality - or what he would call *existence*. He would say that a baby does not separate. The baby looks all around oneself and says, "That's me. Everything is me and it's all one."

I have a friend who is a social worker who is the glue to many different communities and families. He has an expression that, somehow, I have picked up. He says, "Are we paying attention enough, here? Are we *living live!*?" He says this because he considers that we are starting to separate from reality, the second we get into our heads with names and categories.

Dr. Lisa Miller, in her book, *The Awakened Brain*, speaks about this. In an interview with Deepak Chopra, she said that on day one we are inherently spiritual. She believes that there is a pure spiritual knowing that a child has. She gives an example where a child can say that they know something with total surety, without having been

told - before learning. She also cites that children can love a homeless person as much as their mother. This shows their unabashed connection to all things. She would say that this shows a top-down causality - that the child knew certain things from within. This is in opposition to learning things in the world, which would be a bottom-up causality.

You know, back in 1937 there was a meeting of Rabindranath Tagore (the Indian poet and sage - first non-European to get the Nobel Prize) and Einstein. They had an excellent discussion - actually a few. If you look at the transcripts of the exact words they exchanged with each other, it's fascinating. Einstein was professing the scientific view of the time (although he was ahead of his time) as bottom-up causality. He said that everything can be understood by examining the particles and the smallest pieces on up of the physical world that we live in. Tagore was saying that he did not think so. He said that he thought that the top-down was causal. He said that there is more to the world that is non-material and non-physical that fulfills the whole. He inferred that the world is caused by consciousness, feelings, and meditative places that you go ... a top-down causation.

So, be careful. When we name and categorize, we're teaching information. Tobin Hart, in his book, *From Information to Transformation* (Hart, 2001) would say not to solely teach information - teach transformation. He would encourage you to let the student have an experience, not just a lot of names and categories.

We have to have them in order to have our language, but do we have to *only* have them? That's our message for today. I'll see you in one of those tomorrows.



References

Hart, T. (2001). *From information to transformation: Education for the evolution of consciousness*. New York: P. Lang.