

**Work in Progress**

Published monthly by Michele Crawford

Work in Progress is an electronic newsletter intended to assist individuals seeking optimum well-being.

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Feature Article: Change the way you think; Change your life Part Three

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1) Note from Michele

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Dear Reader

I call it wackoville. It's a place anyone can go and the reason you go there is you tell yourself an irrational belief.

By definition, wackoville is the place you are when you are no longer acting in your own best interests, you are neither calm nor focused on outcomes and goals, you hurt yourself, others and property, and most of all, your fight or flight or freeze response is activated.

After you return to your authentic self, (it is hoped) you have regret about your wackoville emotions and behaviour. But, when you are in

wackoville, you either feel overwhelmed by your emotions or you feel entitled to them.

Depression or panic attacks are examples of being overwhelmed. Entitlement is the man who feels justified to swear and honk his horn at the other driver who stops his car in the middle of the street.

The problem turns out to be the other driver is having a heart attack.

All cities struggle with traffic problems. Vancouver and the Lower Mainland are located on a peninsula, hemmed in by mountains, an ocean, rivers and inlets. There are a finite number of roads and bridges. There are too many cars and more condos are being built every day.

Irrational beliefs include: this reality SHOULD not be true and driving SHOULD be easy.

Recently, a male client (let's call him Joe), told me a great story about wackoville and these should beliefs. Joe is driving to work through rush hour traffic with 2 co-workers in his car. Beside him is a long-time friend and a young female passenger is in the back seat.

Suddenly, he is forced to slam on his brakes because without warning, a van changes lanes in front of him. Joe, a former traffic rager who is now in recovery, is focused on his excellent driving skills. He could proceed to work, not deal with insurance claims and vehicle damage and celebrate his new reality-based calmer approach.

Not so his buddy; who is beside himself with outrage. Screaming and swearing at the van's driver, he is also enraged at Joe because he told him to calm down. He grabs the Club bar, gets out of the car and continues to yell at the other driver. He smashes the van with this metal rod. That driver is now out of his van and the situation is escalating.

Joe physically tries to stop his pal, saying he is acting stupid, embarrassing both of them and tells both him and the other driver to get back in their vehicles so they can go to work. I still haven't heard if the van's damage was reported which would mean a hefty repair bill for Joe's passenger.

My question for Joe's friend is if that's how you act when there was no damage and it wasn't even your car, how would you act if someone damaged your car with a metal bar?

All the way to work, his friend continued to rage and call Joe offensive names because he "did not have his back." Oblivious to the other passenger, his own health and dignity, property, friendship, pocket book, and risk of further danger from events if they continued to spiral out of control, this man probably still feels justified because his belief is people should never cut you off in traffic... even though they do.

Furthermore, every time he remembers this event, he returns to wackoville and further damages his health, peace of mind, character and so on.

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2) Feature Article: Change the way you think; Change your life Part Three  
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D = Demandingness beliefs, are rigid unconditional demands placed on self, others, life and the world. Demandingness language is should, must and have to... what the Rational Emotive Behavioural model defines as shoulding on people, living in shouldhood, having a shoudy mind, shoulding all over the place, and of course, musturbation.

It is living a life based on expectations, ideals and false assumptions rather than what is. The reality is traffic exists, drivers are not all calm and rational; they make mistakes, have poor driving skills as well as dreadful manners. One noteworthy generator of anger is an expectation that is not met.

The tyranny of demandingness applies to four principles.

- 1) The concept of the angel and the devil sitting on your shoulders: the angel being the rational side and the devil whispering irrational thoughts. Your rational authentic side is looking at the van that just cut you off and your irrational side is telling you it shouldn't have happened.

That belief is not in harmony with the reality of what DID happen and that is why using the should word almost always puts you in wackoville.

- 2) When you should on anything, you are no longer in control because your focus is on what you cannot control (the van's driver) and not on what you can control (yourself). A better belief is "Given the reality that... (the van cut me off)... how do I want to feel? do? That's what Joe was thinking.

Merely by training yourself to always say would be better than should, you will be focused on reality instead of being in wackoville. It's that simple. You have automatically acknowledged reality or you could not be saying would be better.... Then, you can concentrate on yourself and what to feel/do next.

- 3) The word should keeps you stuck, ironically on the very thing that has upset you. Ruminating and stewing over the event long after it is over, even years later, is the result of denying the reality of what's happened instead of placing your energy on better outcomes.

By saying would be better instead of should influences you to look at problem solving, options, solutions and moving forward.

- 4) Significant research indicates brain chemistry changes when you tell yourself irrational thoughts. In particular, words like unconditional shoulds, musts and have to as well as swear words, even when you are not elevated, create an implosion of nasty neuro-peptides and stress hormones in the emotional brain which are toxic and travel through your body. These are the chemicals of stress and illness.

Demandingness beliefs put false pressure on yourself, others and life/the world. They are dictatorial, arrogant and idealistic. Rational thinking embraces wants, desires, preferences and requests.

When you do not receive a desire, you are disappointed. When you do not get a demand, you are angry. Excessive anger turned inward leads to guilt, anxiety and depression. Disproportionate anger turned outward hurts others, property and relationships. Both forms of anger hurt your health.

When individuals think and act the way Joe's friend does, even though it may be less or more extreme, you usually believe the event caused your emotions and reactions and your anger is evidence you're right. Logic tells us that if that was true, we would all act and feel the same when a vehicle dares to cut us off in traffic.

Thankfully, we do not.

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3) About Michele  
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Michele Crawford is a therapist who assists individuals who are struggling with trauma, anxiety or depression. Her passion for her work remains embedded in being able to connect with you in your suffering, helping you find real solutions no matter how complex the issue may be.

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4) Counselling Services  
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Are you prepared to live with more happiness, optimism, confidence, self-worth and hope? If your answer is "yes," then your next step is to contact me for a free 20-minute phone consultation. We can then discuss how I might best help you resolve your problems of Trauma, Depression and Anxiety.

The benefits of counselling with Michele include: significantly reduced stress levels, an optimistic outlook in life, increased confidence and hope.

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