

THE TED^{*} LETTER

By David Emerald



August 2008

Welcome

"The TED* Letter" is designed for those who are committed to adopting a Creator Orientation and cultivating TED (The Empowerment Dynamic) in their personal and professional lives.

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Beyond the Kinship of Victimhood

Have you ever stepped back and reflected on the tone and quality of the conversations you find yourself engaging in with coworkers, friends or family members? As I watch and listen to people interacting (I have long been an avid "people watcher") it is amazing how much time and effort goes into talking about what's wrong with this or what we don't like about that. It is all-too-easy for us to reinforce and collude with each other in such "isn't it awful" discussions. I have come to call this phenomenon the "Kinship of Victimhood."

Here's one recent example. I was on a commuter jet flight into Chicago's O'Hare airport. The flight was so short that the single flight attendant did not leave his seat during the flight. I was sitting in the second row. In the first row was a pilot from another airline and a flight attendant from yet another, both of whom were "catching a ride." The two flight attendants and pilot entered into a 20-minute conversation that moved from one story of complaint to another, as they "compared notes" on their opinions and stories of gate agents and air traffic controllers and the state of the industry.

As they talked I was listening with an ear of compassion, as I can only imagine the stress and strain of being an employee in the airline industry these days.

Their conversation certainly served as a great example of the Kinship of Victimhood. One definition of kinship is "relationship through common characteristics or a common origin." While they all worked for different airlines, they shared a common industry under tremendous pressure and could relate to one another's examples of victimization.

They engaged in one of the more common "rituals" of this kinship, which is the practice "one upping." It often

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takes the form of something like, "you think that's bad, listen to this one" and the person tells a story that is even more striking than the one before.

Let's face it, we have all participated in such conversations. They abound. Pick a subject: the weather; politics; the economy; global climate change; world affairs. The list is endless.

This kinship does serve a purpose. It is a way of connecting; a way of relating; and many times a way of coping. We see the positive side of the Kinship of Victimhood when we read or hear about neighbors coming together in times of disaster or threat.

The "shadow" of this kinship is that it often reinforces Victimhood - as a role and way of being - by heightening the focus on the victimization we experience. (For more on the distinction between Victimization and Victimhood, see [May 2008 issue](#) of "The TED* Letter" entitled "*Victimization and the Human Experience*".)

As a Creator, we are called to move our conversations beyond the Kinship of Victimhood. We do so by focusing our attention on what we want to create and/or how we choose to respond to the situations in which we find ourselves. We support others "as Challengers and Coaches" in their own creating.

We can do this even when faced with the realities of victimization. Several months ago, I was contacted by a woman in the Dallas, Texas area whose neighborhood had been raked by a tornado, causing severe damage to a number of homes - including her own. She shared how the TED* framework was helpful in dealing with her own situation and in supporting others in responding to the damage. While many tears were shed in the days that followed, she was able to remember that she could still choose her response to the situation.

I'm not certain what to call TED*'s alternative to the Kinship of Victimization. (I am open to any suggestions.) Perhaps it is a "Creator Kinship." Another might be a "Clan of Co-Creators." A "clan" is defined as "a group of people who act together because they have the same interests or aims." Aim to be a Creator and engage in conversations that support and reinforce others in deepening their own Creator capacities.

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Putting TED* into Practice

The next time you find yourself in - or being drawn into - a "Kinship of Victimhood" interaction, use the following simple framework to help "shift happen" from focusing on victimization to choosing outcomes to create or possible steps to take in response to the situation at hand.

1. **Empathize** and respond with compassion to the situation they are describing. It is usually not helpful to say directly "you are just being a Victim!" The victimization they are focusing on may, indeed, be quite valid and reasonable. For instance, had I been actively involved in the conversation on the airplane, I might have said something like "I can imagine that there are a lot of challenges you are facing in your industry these days."
2. **Acknowledge their feelings** about the situation. Again, the feelings they are expressing are a part of their current reality and denying or minimizing the feelings may lead to resistance. Just name it and not dwell on it. I might have said, "Given the challenges, I can certainly understand feeling frustrated or exasperated at times."
3. **Redirect the conversation** - as a Challenger and/or a Coach - into one that is either more outcome-oriented or focuses on the baby steps one could take in response to the situation. Again, had I been in the conversation, I might have challenged by saying "the situation is making travel less-than-pleasant for customers and employees alike and we (assuming I was a peer) need to stay focused on the customer's experience and making it the most hassle free that we can." Or (again assuming I was "one of them") I may have posed a question from the Coach role: "What can we do to support one another in dealing with frustrations when they come up so that it doesn't get passed on to the customer?"

You might notice that this three step process follows an acronym - EAR - as you Empathize, Acknowledge, and Redirect. By lending an "ear" as a Creator, we can help make shift happen from the Kinship of Victimhood to developing a Clan of Co-Creators.

The Spread of TED*

TED* continues to spread in and through a variety of sectors of our societies. More and more organizations and professionals are incorporating the frameworks and tools that TED* (*The Empowerment Dynamic) provides.

If you are actively using or participating in TED* related processes, please let us know by emailing me: David@powerofTED.com.



Fall is just around the corner and the calendar is beginning to fill! The following are some of the private and public offerings of TED*:

September 24: (Public) [“Introducing The Power of TED*”](#); Fresno, CA; Fresno Pacific University; 9:00 – 4:00

October 8-9: (Private) **Empowerment & Personal Accountability in Nonprofits: Shifting the Culture from a Problem Focus to an Outcome Focus**; Richmond, VA.

October 10: (Members and Guests) Richmond Area Coaches Association

October 11: (Public) ["Introducing The Power of TED*"](#); Richmond, VA; Virginia Commonwealth University; 9:00 - 4:00

October 14 & 16: (Private) **"The Empowerment Dynamic (TED*): How to Create Results and Lead from an Empowered Mindset"**; Fortune 50 Company; Dallas, TX and Atlanta, GA

October 30: (Private) Governor's Executive Development Program; University of Texas LBJ School of Public Affairs; Dallas TX

To register or learn about upcoming events, visit www.powerofTED.com for the latest developments. If you would like to schedule a TED* Event for your organization or community, please contact me!

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