

HUMANISING THE WORKPLACE

Transforming work into the major opportunity for personal development with Psychophonetics.

Yehuda Tagar¹

Work is where most of us spend most of our lives. We give our work our most precious time on Earth: the best years of our lives, the best part of most of our days, most of our energy, creativity, vitality, mental and emotional space. Most people know their work colleagues and spend more quality time with them than with their own family at home.

Most jobs in the modern economy require more than people can humanly give, creating chronic stress with very little skill to process it, minimizing further the time and quality of workers' free time. What free time? By the time you did your 8 hours of work (for normal company employees, 12 hours per day for people in high positions, 14 hours per day for the self-employed), your travel and parking – not much time and energy is left in your day. No free time for the seriously employed. Add to this your basic home chores, child care, shopping, emails and social media, a bit of social life, and sleep (1/3 of your life) – and the normal stressful routine dominates for decades with very short breaks to recover for most of us.

If on top of this normal work-life load, during the best years of your life in which family life and children dominate whatever is left of you after work, you also have aspirations for personal and spiritual development – where on earth will you fit it?

Conclusion: if you do have aspirations for real personal and spiritual development in this life – find a way to do it at work, through work, in spite of work - or else you will not do it, for work takes most of your time and energy.

Motto: what you want from your life as a developing human being – want it from your work, because that is where you spend most of your life.

Warning: personal development and spiritual development are no abstractions, decorative luxury goods. Without conscious and practical striving for personal development, which include constant upgrading of your skills and ability to process, digest and overcome the inevitable stress that work and personal interactions create – human life becomes toxic, un-sustainable and self-destructive, just like a body that eats but does not digest the food. Without conscious striving for spiritual development, which is the striving to manifest one's higher human potential through one's existential human reality – human life becomes

¹ Yehuda Tagar is an Israeli, Australian, South African and British psychotherapist, coach, counselor, consultant, trainer and international lecturer, founder of Psychophonetics, the first practical application of Rudolf Steiner's Psychosophy, Methodical Empathy and Humanising the Workplace. He is the director of Psychophonetics Institute International, President of PACE – Psychosophy Academy of Central Europe (Slovakia, Czech Republic and Hungary). He is based in Slovakia and teaches regularly in the Czech Republic, Hungary, South Africa, Australia, Germany and Romania. In Slovakia Psychophonetics courses are being offered in Bratislava and Kosice. <https://linktr.ee/yehudatagar>

boring, routine-like, stagnating both work potential and personal relationship, chocking one's creativity, weakening the sense of purpose, of meaning and the inner living spark that makes life with all its challenges worth living, and make death a transition rather than a total dead-end of everything human.

In light of the above – a workplace is only fully human if those who create, shape, direct and work in it consciously strive to constantly upgrade its ability to serve as an opportunity for workers' personal, social and spiritual development. Individual workers can strive individually to make use of the workplace as an opportunity for personal and spiritual development, even in spite of the indifference or opposition from the workplace and its governing system and management. But most people do not have the skills and the inner strength to do it for the long term without the workplace leadership conscious and practical support. Humanizing the workplace (often with other names) is a growing movement world-wide of cutting edge companies, directors, managers and consultant who realize that in order to mobilize, engage and apply the full potential of workers on all levels – the presence of their full humanity must be invited, involved and activated at work, and that includes their inborn drive for human, personal and spiritual development.

Humanizing the Workplace is a professional development program designed for that purpose. It consists of training managers and workers on all levels in the 7 standards required for sustainable human development in the workplace. These 7 ground conditions for personal and spiritual development are ancient. They formed the ground level of deep leadership training from time immemorial in the initiation teaching that prepared true leaders of humanity everywhere. But up to the early 20th century these training were known and controlled secretly and made available to the chosen few who were destined by birth, tradition or hierarchical controls to be the leaders. At the dawn of the 20th Century someone² decided that the time was ripe for this possibility for personal and spiritual development was made available to everyone, and that people should be left free to choose individually if they wish to take on personal training in deep leadership. It has become my life task and mission to create practical processes potential available to everyone with which the 'deep leadership' goals of the 7 Conditions of personal/spiritual development can become practical even in the midst of the outer conditions of all workplaces as they are. The result of these efforts is the program called: 'Humanizing the Workplace'. The intended outcome of the new course at MB University is to train highly skilled coaches and counselors who will be capable of upgrading workplaces and workers to use work as an opportunity for personal/spiritual development, in the best interest of both work and workers.

The seven components of humanizing the Workplace are the following:

² Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), an Austrian philosopher, scientist, Goethe scholar and educator, a pupil of the great Slovak scholar Karl Julius Schröer (1825-1900) of Preßburg /Bratislava.

THE FIRST CONDITION: SELF CARE

The commitment to take personal responsibility for one's well being on the physical, energy, psychological, mental, relationship and spiritual levels, based on one's own intuition.

There is within each organism an inherent instinct regarding its optimal health, an intrinsic 'nature's user manual' of instruction for survival, maintenance, healing and repair. Pain, discomfort, hurt and need are the reminders of this internal instruction. But when it comes to the soul level – instinct has to be replaced with conscious intuition if well-being is to be maintained. And intuition is a new power of perception, potential and asleep in everyone. The waking up of intuitive perception is the essence of personal development.

Deep down people know instinctively and/or intuitively what is good for them and what is not. There are many diversions from listening and adhering to this intuition: outer pressures, outer authorities, experts, advice, reactivity, pleasure, addiction, self-destructive drive, overdeveloped sense of duty, lack of boundaries, the desire to please people, to impress and to belong. The commitment to the First Condition entails confronting all these outer and inner pressures – and acting not on them but on the intuitive voice that is trying to tell me what is good for me and what is not. Essentially it is an on-going act of trusting one's intuition, of choice and of independent free will.

THE SECOND CONDITION: EMPATHY

The commitment to continually move from judging people from the outside to seeing them and their situations from their own point of view, in the context of their own life.

Our personal and emotional life and our intellect tend to separate us from the wholeness of life. While giving us independent individuality, critical thinking, boundaries and personal identity, the cost is isolation and distance from others. Reaching out beyond that isolation requires the conscious effort of shifting from my awareness of what *others mean to me* to *what they mean to themselves*. In the past such understanding came from the bonds of traditional group consciousness. For individuals it must be replaced by a new capacity of connection: Empathy. Born only in the middle of the 20th century it signifies a shift in human evolution. It is in rowing demand and in short supply everywhere. It requires conscious effort.

THE THIRD CONDITION: SELF-MANAGEMENT

The commitment to regard thoughts, feelings, emotions, desires and all the inner human life as reality, in oneself and in others, and to act accordingly.

We are born with 5 senses (some count 7, some 12) for orientation and survival in the physical world, but with no sense organ for the perception and observation of the human soul (psyche), not our own nor that of others. Yet to observe our own soul we must, both in order to develop it and to function in the growing complexity of human life.

To start with we are all blind to inner life. Materialistic science, education and culture destroyed direct perception of the soul and spirit. But if we wait until we 'see' the soul in order to regard it as real – we will never see it and we will remain ignorant of it.

The third condition turns this predicament around: do not wait until you 'see' the soul in order to regard it as a reality. Commit yourself to regard it as a reality – and you will start to see, hear and know the soul, starting from your own. You will become a practical person who deals with a complete human reality, not just with the outer surface of it. To achieve this the Third Condition standard has to be developed.

We all have hints and signs and outer symptoms and expression of the reality of the human soul, as its effects human life and relationship continuously. If we take those experiences as if they were real and listen to them – they will speak to us of their underlying reality, making us wise and practical regarding the whole human reality.

THE FOURTH CONDITION: RESPECT FOR DIVERSE REALITIES

The commitment to respect the validity of one's own reality, of the reality of others and of the healthy boundaries between them - as the basis for ethical, healthy, sustainable and fruitful relationship.

What we call 'reality' is something individuals create for themselves, consciously or not, yet it can grow into a greater reality which is in common with others. In the past that common reality was given by the group-soul, tradition and outer controls. Today each one of us gets to choose it, consciously or not.

If I know that I create my own reality and respect it – I can remember that others do the same, but they may construct a reality different to mine, and have the right to respect it as I have the right to respect mine. The recognition of the equal right of different realities and their parallel existence *is* the fourth Condition. It is the foundation of tolerance, of unity in diversity, the basis for civil society, of equal rights of people, of freedom of speech, expression and association, of evolving democracy.

Two divergences from this standard are possible: 1) being too submissive and distorting one's integrity by giving in to the pressures of other people's reality over one's own; 2) to be too pushy with one's reality over other people, controlling them or engaging in a power struggle for domination. Both divergences equally compromise the integrity of individual truth. Both divergence prevents the emergence of a greater reality which could embrace the differences in a greater whole. In light of this standard - both the need to control others and the need to be controlled by others, transform into a self-grounded individuality with its own boundaries and its own restraints, in relationship and cooperation with other people.

The Fourth Condition can be termed: 'the balance between people's realities and boundaries'. Recognising the validity of all individual realities involved in any given situation creates healthy, flexible, sustainable boundaries between people and organizations.

FIFTH CONDITION: DECISION MAKING & ACTING ON DECISIONS

The commitment to a responsible decision making process, and to acting on decisions.

All decisions require an element of futuristic intelligence: on the basis of the limited knowledge and awareness of *today* – we make a decision that will affect ourselves and others *tomorrow*, a future of which our present knowledge is limited. Yet we must decide.

A responsible decision takes into account all available present information, all the people that will be involved and affected by the consequences. It requires a wisdom higher than the one we use for daily life and a motivation deeper than the desire for success. It requires love for the deed itself and care for those that will be affected by the decision. In

Psychophonetics-based Decision Making Process we name seven steps essential for a making a decision: 1) decide to decide; 2) decide when to decide; 3) create at least two viable options; 4) imagine each of these options using all the available information; 5) imagine optimal 'future me' beyond the dilemma; 6) decide; 7) act on the decision.

Step 4, the deep contemplation process which engages higher intelligence requires three nights of sleep, echoed in the old proverb: "sleep on it". In Sleep we are in touch with our higher intelligence, but usually we cannot recall it in the day.

Once the decision was made – acting on it will strengthen the will, while not acting on it will weaken it. That is true of every decision. Acting on one's decisions forms destiny, character, who one is and is becoming. "What I do is me, for this I came" (Hopkins). But "between the resolution and the action – falls a shadow" (Eliot) and most people suffer from that shadow to some extent. We tend to judge ourselves and others on that, but judgment does not help personal Development.

The human will in light of Psychophonetics is a spine made of 7 vertebrae, each of which could be impaired in some way: instinct, drive, desire, motivation, wish, intention and resolution. The commitment to the Fifth Condition can become an opportunity for the healing of whatever is the weak component in the spine of one's will.

SIXTH CONDITION: GRATITUDE & APPRECIATION

The commitment to develop personal gratitude and a culture of appreciation.

In the same way that the physical body needs to be fed and nurtured – so it is with the human soul. Some emotions nurture the soul: joy, love, hope, belonging, acceptance; some emotions deplete the soul: fear, anger, jealousy, revenge, bitterness, rejection. Most emotions are not chosen, they just happen. Gratitude is a unique emotion: it is one of the most nurturing ones, it can potentially be chosen and cultivated consciously.

Potential freedom about gratitude exists: there is never a shortage of things to be grateful about: sunrise, air, the human body, friendship, kindness and love that we experienced, beautiful memories, life itself. We can choose to focus on these – and gratitude will naturally rise in the soul naturally, nurturing the life forces. Sometimes there is a need to create changes in one's life so that there will be enough reason in it to be grateful for. Sometimes there is a need to make creative use of challenges in order to be grateful for the learning that comes from them. The commitment to generate gratitude consciously nurtures the life forces of body and soul.

THE SEVENTH CONDITION: CONSISTENCY

The commitment to consistency of character, standards, policies, fairness, ethics and contracts.

Human inner life is an invisible ocean in continuously changing weather: storms and calms and tides of ups and downs. In order to fulfill one's full potential – a center of stability must grow in the middle of the soul that is not subject to its instability: the 'I', the core of individual identity and being, grows through consistency. Truth is valid regarding of the changing feelings about it, commitment has validity beyond the emotional ups and downs, and character is growing in the middle of pressures and in spite of them.

The Seventh Condition is consistency itself. The consistency of the commitment to the above six standards forms the core of consistency training.

* * * *

THE ROLE OF PSYCHOPHONETICS IN HUMANISING THE WORKPLACE

All the above would remain just good ideas and intentions without a comprehension, methodical and practical training that translates these intentions into actual individual and collective skills. Organizations only change as much as individuals change within them. The skills required for the understanding and the practice of this program must include skills for individual change. Superficial group presentations and episodic experiences will not result in real change. At the core of a real attempt at personal change there must be a new capacity for real self-observation and self-awareness.

Psychophonetics process of self-observation and change provides these higher standards and the above program as a whole with legs and hands. To each of the above conditions practical skills of personal observation and change have been created for both personal and group training.

The professional training in Holistic Counseling for the Workplace – Humanizing the Workplace upgrades the innate intuition the hidden power within each individual to manifest through one's life and work not only the desire to survive, but also the wish to evolve as a human being through earthly life, through work and through personal relationship.

It is an idea whose time has come.