

EVERYONE NEEDS SIGNIFICANCE...

Janet Little

“Everyone needs significance,” a client said to me last week. He continued, “Even the guy who puts a gun in your face is asking for significance—the unspoken, *Notice me! Take me seriously. Show me some respect. I matter.*”

Not showing respect, not having appreciation for another’s journey in life manifests as waiting for the chance to speak instead of really listening to the other’s words. It shows up as bursting in late and noisily to a meeting. It’s the action of a person who reads the first part of an email and misses important details in the sentences that follow.

“If you don’t care about other people,” my client said, “how are you going to appreciate the idea, the significance of the other?” Most of us have the capacity to develop empathy and appreciation and understanding of others. We have the ability to learn to hear and then to reflect that we appreciate the significance of the other.

In a loving culture, like the kind that we all want our kids and grandkids to live in, like the kind we want to live in, we show respect to each other. Showing respect requires practice in mindfulness, being in the moment, taking the time to appreciate the other, to communicate to them that you acknowledge what they have said, what they have done.



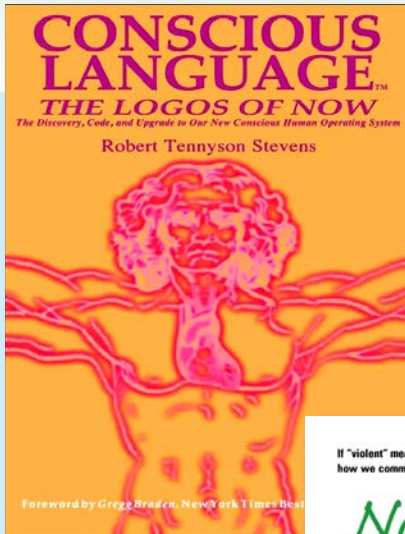
Showing respect for others is a type of empathy—the expression of one of the virtues of a loving heart.

Yet, it takes effort to recognize other people—and we’re busy and stressed. Where do we start? We start with learning to appreciate ourselves.

You might know about the many forms of intelligence, a theory proposed by Harvard psychologist Howard Gardner. He proposes: *Visual-spatial, Linguistic-verbal, Logical-mathematical, Body-kines-thetic, Musical, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Naturalistic*. He has suggested a ninth: *Existential*. Yet, with all these fine groupings, where does mechanical intelligence or animal whispering fit in? What about the talent of being a food wizard? The point is, recognize your intelligences—and the limits of them!—and learn to listen to what others see from their vantage point.

Consider various vantage points. Read Edward de Bono’s *Six Thinking Hats*, and learn to understand your own and others’ perspectives. The leading authority in the field of creative thinking, De Bono says our perspective can be compared to the wearing of a certain color hat: a Blue hat for organization, planning; White: facts and information; Green: ideas, creativity; Yellow: benefits, values; Red: feelings, instincts; Black: risks, caution.

First, determine which color hat you typically wear. How do you show up in a meeting, whether the meeting takes place in a conference room or at a dinner table? Then learn to use your understanding of these “hats” to appreciate where another person is coming from. The person in your life who meets your suggestions by telling you what can go wrong could be a Black-hat thinker. Take the information in, and examine it from that perspective



RECOMMENDED READING: *Conscious Language, The Logos of Now*, by Robert Tennyson Stevens, and *Nonviolent Communication, A Language of Life*, by Marshall B. Rosenberg, Ph.D.

instead of reacting to what you see as negativity.

To learn more about yourself from a vocational point of view, you might take John Holland's "Self-Directed Search," a career assessment test, to learn where your strengths lie, where you fit in the interests categories comprised of Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising and Conventional—RIASEC for short. Simple quizzes to find your top three interests/strengths are available online. If you're career exploring or reexploring, Holland has also categorized thousands of jobs by personality types, a compendium that may be available online or in your local library.

As you begin to appreciate the unique snowflake you are, also recognize your own conceits—so as not to take them too seriously. Those conceits are like pride before a fall or wearing stiletto heels to a Montana rodeo! Wear your boots instead! Have patience in overcoming.

After all, did you deliberately show up with dog hair on your jacket? You're working on getting better, on becoming your true, best self—and, for the most part, so is that other person,

that other you are standing in front of, that other one-of-a-kind snowflake.

Choose to believe that your slowness to recognize another's idea or perspective is a block in your own awareness. Pause. Show regard. Reflect back to that person what you perceive he said or did. Stay curious as to how she views life such that she came to that conclusion, chose to react in the way she did. As best you can, model clear and concise communication and help others to learn the benefits of that.

Give significance to others by interrupting your crazy, galloping mind. Look the other person in the eye and say something that helps give that person significance, like: *I appreciate your work; You really add to our team; I'm so glad you are part of our family; and thank you!*

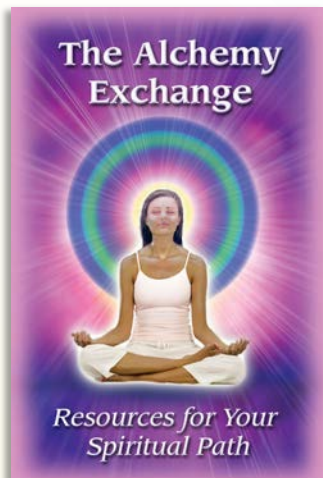
One of my favorite ministers once said to me, "Yes, dear, things would be more efficient if I did them myself, but God has entrusted me to train leaders." Really, we're all training leaders, whether we have that role as a parent, teacher or mentor, or whether we are just meeting another, face to face for a moment or longer.

Did you know that the golden rule—a version of it—appears in all major religions? Remember to treat others as you would most like to be treated. ■

Read more about other perspectives, worldviews, and biographies of individuals who have experienced life-changing events. Wonderful examples are available at The Alchemy Exchange Store at 130 N. Second Street, Livingston, Montana when you are in the neighborhood or visit their [Online Store](#). (See ad on next page.)

Janet Little is a psychotherapist and editor currently living in Boise, Idaho. She calls herself a Christian Buddhist and is active in [The Hearts Center Community](#).





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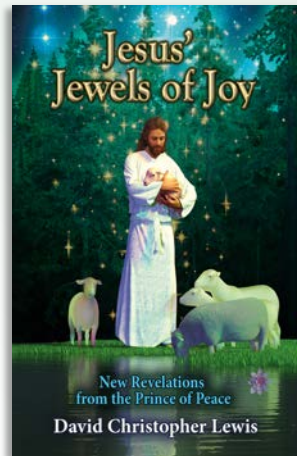
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