

People Will Always Remember How You Made Them Feel

Mark Sadovnick

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Ever since I was a little kid, I felt that I had a relationship within me. No, I didn't go around talking to myself. We did not have a lot of money, never owned a home, my Dad worked, and my Mom did too, but inside our home.

We were definitely Jewish, a small, close family, though not a religious family; even though my grandparents were from Kiev (my great-grandfather was a Rabbi there), always led Passover seders (despite our rushing him to watch the Stanley Cup playoffs ever year!) and other holidays, and even though I went to Hebrew afternoon school. We sometimes went to high holidays, but seats were expensive.

I've always enjoyed the feeling in a temple, really any synagogue, church, mosque in Montreal; and, even more as an adult from my home to Vienna to Jerusalem. My knees were shaking as I went up to the alter to pray-sing my Bar Mitzvah, and 'someone' up there (at the alter I think), touched my shoulder and said something to make me stop shaking, and I loved the experience (and rocked it too.)

Funny, my cousin and I practiced every ritual to help our Canadiens hockey team win, including little prayers. And yet we knew that we were not really full praying for that, because that's not important enough (we didn't want to take any chances though and leave prayer out.)

And as for Hebrew school, both fun and annoying, it was my turn one Friday to bring the Challah (one of best breads ever!) to school for Shabbat. I instead decided to bring it to share with my friends for an *important* baseball game. Weird, but that relationship I have, gave me feelings that I didn't do the right thing, and yet, also said 'way to go' by sharing the Shabbat spirit and bread with my friends.

Back to my grandparents, who we called Bubbi and Zaida. Bubbi was a very physically small women, Zaida the man of the house, who reported to Bubbi. We have terms now of work/life balance, integration and work at home, or office, etc. They had simpler terms. Life. Work hard. Be kind. Respect *everyone*. Learn from *everyone*. And though we were proud of being Jewish (and still am), we were taught about how to be, to bring our whole self to this life. Work was part of life. Life was often work (defined that way often for many people even now.)

With that, Bubbi and Zaida had their relationship, between them, and I'm pretty sure each had like my relationship. As a kid, I would walk with Zaida to the park or store, and he would smile at everyone. I asked him finally how he knew all these people. "I really don't know most of them", he said. So why does he smile at everyone then. He answered "I smile at them because it makes them smile, also say hello, sometimes stop and talk, you've seen that happen, right Mark? And then it is no effort at all because I smile more, and it makes me feel good too." He brought his whole self being present to life at those moments, and definitely made a difference for me and many.

It's often said that successful marriages don't just happen, you need to *work* at them. One day I asked "Bubbi, you've heard Zaida's jokes maybe a million times (exaggerated a little, though as I got older, maybe not), and you still laugh. Why ?!" Her answer, "I laugh at half of them because they're still funny to me; and, I laugh at the others, because it make him happy." Now remember Bubbi was the boss, albeit a tough love one, so this was not a subservient wife playing her role. She brought her whole self and faith to her life's work, in a truly authentic and caring way. And Zaida knew it, and loved and respected her even more for it, fueling him to continue to bring his whole self and faith every day.

Semi fast forward to a teacher and coach in Grade 7. Best one ever. Unorthodox, or to use a more modern term, disruptive in his ways. We thought he had made his money, but we had no sense how much, except that he taught because he wanted to. He had a beautiful Ford Thunderbird too. He had a wise sense of true rewards for effort and results, and weird consequences for misbehaving (from taking your baseball glove away before recess, to standing at the blackboard with your hands on two circles, knees on two others.) We all literally knew that he really cared. He taught us about doing our best, no matter what, and care. He also introduced me, the first time he gave me a lift home in his T-bird (probably be written up if he did that now), how to visualize before a game, a test, or whatever I am about to do. It was basic then, but brilliant to both be me (he did not push any specific religion) and believe by seeing myself already there. Without me knowing then, teaching me how to bring my whole self, and faith, to whatever work I do in life.

Allow me two other stories setting the experiences for the foundation for this topic. Montreal is an amazing city. European in North America. A revered pro hockey team with more championships than any other, just ahead of the Yankees. Ken Dryden shared this in his book, "The Game." The province was shaken by separatism, experiencing terrorism of bombs, kidnappings and tanks in the street, and of activism in speeches. Even Charles de Gaulle visited as President of France, and from a balcony, declared "Vive le Quebec Libre." Not appreciated by the Canadian Prime Minister. So, the first referendum for yes/no to stay in Canada was in play, as was a Canadiens hockey game. Updates were shown on the scoreboard. Cheers as it leaned yes, cheers as it went to no. We saw all that , and felt the angst and fear and hope, but what Ken described, as he was an all-star goalie in the game and the dressing room for intermissions. This was a very close team of great players, French and English mostly. Working together to entertain, represent the city and province, as champions, one team. They felt torn as how to be. To their credit, they played as Leaders Who Care in a situation of higher intensity than any game. That would be the closest to separation ever, voting just above 50% to keep Quebec and thus Montreal in Canada. They didn't make the decision happen, though they did bring their whole selves to be all that, and in a province of diverse faiths, impacted people's lives and future.

My cousin and I coached a Pee Wee hockey team, in Montreal, which happened to have French, English, Greek and Jewish, Asian, Black and some White kids too. The city despite the separatist era, is one of diversity and inclusion. Not formally mandated, just embraced as a positive, by most (always a few, right?) The team literally became recognized as the UN team, teaching many adults through some interesting situations which went public, about faith, respect for their own, and in each other. Their wisdom as 13-year-olds, in the value of their diversity, made them stronger to achieve their goals as individuals and a team. They showed the community what it meant to bring their whole selves, and how much it matters.

The moral? My foundation of faith and with my relationship was strong. At Deloitte, I was really good at accounting, tax, etc. but not my favorite thing to do. I sought out leaders at our clients who would speak with this young kid, to find out partners didn't want me doing that. I knew anyway that I needed to put

my whole self out there, and one partner influenced my journey by creating the path to engage with clients, be MC at events, and represent for recruiting and biz dev.

That led to an opportunity in Winnipeg with Canada's largest private real estate developer. After I saw the marketing guys were making the money, while I was answering the key tax/financial questions, I put my whole self out there with the CEO to ask to take the lead. First project he had the faith to give this Jewish kid from Montreal? Presenting to the large Mennonite community. It turned out to be a wonderful experience of culture, faiths and trust, and successful resulting business.

At same time, I put my whole self into the Winnipeg community, as President of the Jaycees chapter, including creating a kids club engaged with the pro hockey team. I just had faith that this alignment with social impact would be beneficial to all. My company got positive PR, the project won the national youth award, and although we lost to host the World Congress, Jaycees offered me to be Executive Director at global HQ in Miami! My whole self was so engaged, I also got an offer for my dream job with the Jets pro hockey team!

Long story short, only one person encouraged me to take the Jaycees offer, a leadership development nonprofit, for less pay. The pro team executive who made me the offer! He told me that the opportunity to meet leaders from around the world is unique, and as much as it meant declining the dream, I had a bigger opportunity and dream which has come to me for a reason. So I did, amazingly.

I did meet many great leaders of diverse perspectives, cultures and traditions, at all levels of business, government and academics. There were some 'sucky' ones too, which made for good differentiation. It led me to an executive search career full of experiences all founded and evolving around the source.

On my first search assignment, the candidate turned down the offer. I couldn't believe he did that to me. To me? It's not about me! From that point on, the same journey continued about bringing my whole self, faith and all. In every client discussion about securing and keeping the best talent, the word *caring* inevitably came up. I just knew from my walks with Zaida, that if you cared about people, they would smile back. So, Ryder execs built a day care center at their HQ. Alamo changed an HR person to Director of Wellness, unheard of then. JM Family had ATM's and dry cleaning.

Over decades, business execs have realized that caring is good for business, employees and their families, and their community. Talent, investors and consumers ask about it. I committed to partner with *Leaders Who Care*®, and although some found the word *care* too personal, or fluffy, etc., I had to ask what they will do when I start using the word *love*. I learned that by bringing my whole self, faith and all to the workplace, in a respectful way, it is the most authentic and effective way to gain trust and bring success for all.

From Maya Angelou's thoughts – "most people will forget what you've said, what you've done, but they will always remember how you made them feel," - to recognizing and representing *Leaders Who Care*® about their talent, community and planet, and see it is also good for business, it really is as that Deloitte partner told me, "brilliance is simple." Keep the faith, whatever you call it, and bring your best game of making a difference. The history will follow. And yes, keep smiling at people.