

Unfear Newsletter: Becoming Heroes

Dear Reader,

Do you want 1,000 heroes in your organization or 1,000 children? Similarly, do you want to be the hero on a journey, or a child, dragged along on mom and dad's journey?

In both cases, most people would choose the former. Yet, most fear-driven organizations (and individuals) are trapped in a mindset and dynamic that prevents everyone from reaching their potential as a hero. We call that the "Parent-Child" mindset, and we must break from it and become an unfear organization.

Unfear Organization Mindset Two: From Parent-Child to Adult-Adult

Leaders in most fear-based organizations view their subordinates as children. The implicit assumption is that only the people in the upper echelons of the hierarchy possess the intelligence and/or capability to make significant decisions or solve major issues. As a result, they coddle their employees and control their every move.

On the other hand, leaders in an unfear organization view and treat employees as fellow adults. Instead of coddling, they share feedback in a straightforward but respectful manner. In the face of adversity, these leaders invite broad dialogue and empower everyone to contribute to a solution, regardless of their job title. They give everyone real responsibility while establishing clear guardrails and boundaries for each employee. Then, within those guardrails, the leaders give the employees autonomy. In short, these people lead without micromanaging.

Of course, employees also bear responsibility in creating an Adult-Adult dynamic. In many cases, a Parent-Child dynamic arises from a negative feedback loop. The employees behave like children (shirking responsibility, lacking initiative, etc.) because that's how the organization treats them. Then, because the employees act like children, the organization doubles down on coddling and micromanaging. Or vice versa. Both parties need to embrace an Adult-Adult dynamic for it to work.

Atonement with the Father

At the midpoint of the Hero's Journey, the hero encounters a fearsome father-god who holds the power of life and death. To move on, the hero must either overcome or reconcile with this father-god. In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell calls this stage "Atonement with the Father." This moment represents the first time the hero engages their father-god as an equal. They may fight. They may talk. The father god might not even be personified, but instead, a long-harbored psychic scare that the hero finally overcomes. But by meeting the former tyrant/protector as an equal, the hero discovers the true extent of their power. While our modern working world feels far from myth, it is our arena of action. And in this arena of action, we unconsciously play out these deeply ingrained archetypes. The Adult-Adult mindset encourages us not to seek comfort and parental protection at work. Rather, it tells us to view work as a chance for us to discover, through initiative and occasional struggle, our unique strengths and how we can leverage them to help ourselves and everyone else thrive.

Worth thinking about

Do you feel you're treated like an adult or micromanaged like a child in your company? Take stock of your behavior. Do you often step in to fix other people's problems for them? Do you hold yourself accountable? Do you take the initiative to resolve issues when they arise, or do you wait for someone to prod you into action or give you a blueprint to solve the problem?

Take it to go

The next time you notice someone struggle, pause. What was your first impulse on how to solve the problem? What are some ways you can support your colleagues, while treating them as an adult?

Likewise, the next time you notice an issue in the organization that needs resolving, what is your first impulse? Is it to be irritated that nothing is being done, or to initiate action? What, if anything, stops you from acting?

Questions?

Please contact us and schedule a call if you are interested in applying Unfear to improve your team and organizational culture and effectiveness. We'd love to hear from you.

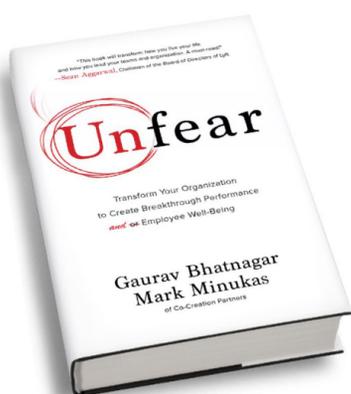
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