

# Ensnared or Free - The Choice

We, Sharon Eakes and Nancy Smyth, have spent many years working together, facilitating coaches' increased acuity and understanding, polishing each heart-mind mirror to reflect true helpfulness and freedom for clients.

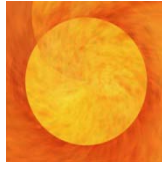
No matter how global the client's needs, we maintain that deep lasting change is found in relationships. We suggest that what lies at the heart of change and a productive and happy life is fundamentally different from accepted thought. In this paper, we consider three prevailing views and offer alternative views derived from our understanding of the choice we make in every moment.

ENSNARED OR FREE –THE CHOICE will, in a playful interactive way, deliver an experience of the views in this paper as well as innovative coaching skills that transform your life and your clients' lives into fuller joy, freedom and success.

<b>PREVAILING VIEW</b>	<b>FREEING CONVICTION</b>
1. I am innocent in the struggles of my life.	I am always an active participant in relationships.
2. My emotions are valid; I am caused to feel the way I do.	I choose to feel the way I do.
3. I improve relationships primarily by modifying behavior.	I improve relationships primarily by shifting my heart to a genuine regard for others.

Table 1 - The Choice<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Table 1 - Adapted from: Arbinger Institute (2000b) The Choice in Intervention; Arbinger Institute (2008) The Choice in Coaching, Arbinger Institute, Salt Lake City, Utah.



## ***1. Prevailing View: I Am Innocent***

How familiar is this scenario?

“Mommy, Billy is hitting me.” Every household has heard this cry from a child who feels hurt or injured by another sibling. What is truly being communicated here? *I am wounded; I am the victim of their behavior; I am helpless; I need you to see the situation my way; I want you to stop the culprit and perhaps even punish them.*

As adults we are more sophisticated in our criticism of another; we usually don't go running and shouting to mommy. However, we might engage others in our story of mistreatment. We may even want some of the same outcomes the injured child wants. Perhaps, we also fume and maybe even blow up, accusing the person of their offensiveness. Sometimes we hold our concern tightly inside like a sore that won't heal.

Whenever the belief is:

**I am innocent in the struggles of my life;**

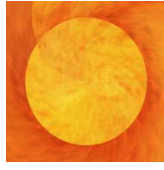
I will continue to build my story collecting evidence about how I am the one wronged.

## ***Freeing Conviction: I am in Relationship***

Let's take a look from the vantage point of the freeing conviction:

**I am always an active participant in relationships.**

What if, for a moment, I could believe that my manner of engagement with another, my side of the equation, has impact? That who I am being, how I am viewing myself and the other person shapes and gives contour to the relationship. From this vantage point, I can start softening, asking myself some probing questions. How might I be a problem for them? How am I perhaps refusing to be helpful in the situation? What might be their struggle? How am I not seeing them or their good intent? Honestly questioning our self, with a sense of curious self-examination, can reveal what has been hidden from our sight.



## ***2. Prevailing View: You Make Me Feel...***

Emotions seem real and they are; we know it is so, because we feel them. So, emotions are real. They might be surging; I might feel right, even righteous, about having them. However, to believe that someone else causes them creates me as a victim, totally powerless and without recourse.

When this is so, I am deeply engrained in these thoughts and believing:

**My emotions are valid; I am caused to feel the way I do.**

When I believe that another has caused me to feel a certain way, I am forgetting who I really am, a person of great ability and capacity. That I have a strong inner core that keeps me steady and at choice in the moments of my life.

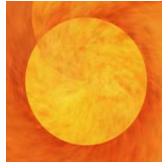
## ***Freeing Conviction: I Choose to Feel***

Actually it is true that in every moment we have choice. We are the one choosing how to respond to each and every situation. We have that much power. As we become more aware, we see how our senses might be numbed by habitual patterns we have adopted in responding to people and life. As children we did not have the cognitive thought processes to understand:

**I choose to feel the way I do.**

As adults, knowing that we are choosing is, in fact, a powerful posture to operate from. It puts us in the driver seat. If we have chosen to feel negative feelings, ones that disable or drain us of our energy, we can also choose to feel positive ones, ones that will build relationship rather than isolate and separate us from another person or situation.

So, how do those feelings arise, if they're not caused by someone else? They are lying in a latent state within us, ready to be of service to us whenever we need their defense or the story they provide. Once a feeling's true source is understood, our mental and emotional tendency can be effectively diminished. With practice we can change our story to a life of great vigor and vitality.



### ***3. Prevailing View: I Want Change***

What is the distinction between a genuine compliment and an empty compliment? You have most probably received the experience of each. There is a palpable difference we feel inside. Unfortunately, we have delivered empty wishes as well. When that is the case, our hearts are not engaged and the tonality and delivery are very different. The recipient often experiences the compliment as missing authenticity or being “off” somehow.

Broadening this logic, when I act out of the belief that:

**I improve relationships primarily by modifying behavior**

I am not including what is most important, my heart, in the relationship. If I am not sincere or my inner countenance has not shifted, simply changing my behavior carries emptiness within it, and is not enough to change how I am being received in this relationship.

### ***Freeing Conviction: I Am Change***

**I improve relationships primarily by shifting my heart to a genuine regard for others.**

If I truly want to improve a relationship, I need to have my heart more engaged in an open, responsive way. I need to see the truth of the other, their pain, their sorrow, hopes and dreams. Not the story I tell myself when I want to be right or prove a point. I need to see the story from truly standing in their shoes, questioning my integrity, seeing more and more the truth of their being, until I come to a place of deep caring for them. In this narrative I will also hear the truth about myself and how I have mistreated them. This kind of honesty creates trust, harmony and enjoyable relationships.

## Ensnared Or Free - The Choice

ENSNARED OR FREE – THE CHOICE will be presented at the ICF Global 2014 North America Midwest Conference. We invite participants into an experiential understanding of the distinctions between the prevailing truths and freeing convictions discussed above. The reward from seeing life from these fresh perspectives is worth its weight in gold.

The presentation will go on to share how, as coaches, we can invite clients to understand this subtle, but life-altering, shift; freeing them to significantly increase effectiveness in their projects, whether personal or professional in nature.

When freed from the need to defend, blame others, and feel victimized, energy becomes available for much more joyful pursuits.

### Presenters

You may reach Nancy Smyth at [nancyis@theriver.com](mailto:nancyis@theriver.com) and Sharon Eakes at [sharon@hopellc.com](mailto:sharon@hopellc.com).

