

George and Wally

George was shot, point-blank, by 21 year-old Wally during a robbery. Wally is serving 12-25 years. George has recovered physically, but has suffered emotionally and mentally since the incident.

George has had years of fear and powerlessness. The quality of his life has disintegrated. He is no longer working. George sees Wally as a monster and fantasizes that Wally is horribly powerful. He suffers from nightmares, insomnia, and shakes. George decides that the only possible way to reverse and change his life is to confront Wally. Once he does, the first thing he asks is "Can you tell me, *please*, why you shot me?" George expresses his angst to Wally about whether he will always be like this. Upon hearing Wally's response George says that he had waited 11 years to hear the apology and says that he recognized Wally's loss and pain. He tells Wally that it takes a lot to admit wrong and as he extends his hand to Wally he says the handshake is a gesture of healing for both of them. He says to Wally that he is glad Wally is sorry.

Wally responds to George's questions by saying that he is sorry for his actions and sorry for George's pain. He says he is glad to say or do anything that would help. Then he mentions that he too has had a lot of pain because of the stupid things he did. Wally closes by thanking George for coming to see him that day and for facing him after what he did to him.

One professional's analysis of the above goes like this:

The analysis begins when Wally makes the apology. The mediation professional says that Wally, the wrong-doer is "brought-low". There is no analysis of George until his contact with Wally. George is seen as "raised up and empowered" by Wally's apology. The whole interaction is power-balancing --- an exchange of shame and power. When Wally thanks George for facing him after what he did, the mediator says that Wally has reciprocated and validates George as a man.

My analysis using the Compass of Shame and going through the funnel to Being Right-Sized looks like this:

It begins with assessing where George is in the Compass of Shame. George is one down, not in touch with his personal power and in a strong place of helplessness. His life is ruled by fear and helplessness. In a sense he has given his power away to his fears. This is the Attack Self quadrant. The nightmares, shakes, and insomnia could be a result of the repression of acknowledging and dealing with the fear. If this is so then George's physical symptoms place him in the Hide from Self quadrant. Because of the isolation created by not working, George is also in Hide from Other. He has been silent, quietly carrying around his feelings.

Then the first shift into Being Right-Sized occurs. George's decision to confront Wally is huge because it moves George into Being Present with Other and towards Respect Self. Being Present with Other is about participation and risking exposure and both of these occur in George's effort to see Wally. Somewhere George sees that confronting Wally will have merit for his well-being. George begins to respect himself by becoming aware of his own power. The action of going to see Wally brings some self-value. George begins to regain worth by deciding to act on something he has begun to believe would restore his troubled existence. Wally does not give him this worth; it is George giving it to himself. To conclude the analysis we see George having elements of Attack Other (in his head) by seeing Wally as a horribly powerful monster. So George shifts from Attack Other to Respect Other during the exchange with Wally by acknowledging that Wally too has experienced pain in his life. In the course of the encounter George gains a great deal of Respect Self. George moves into Respect Other as he is open to accepting Wally's apology.

I categorized Wally's apology as lame because it does not have enough Being Present with Self. He does make an *attempt* to be somewhat forthright which is an aspect of Being Present with Self. However, the apology does move Wally into Being Present with Other because by speaking about the common pain with George he has risked exposure and connection. Respect Other is also apparent in the apology as Wally lets go of the illusion of power over George. Wally also moves from Hide from Other and Hide from Self into Respect Other and Respect Self in his reciprocation and acknowledgement of his and George's pain. The mediator says that Wally was "brought low" during his apology. I do not agree with this. I believe that what really transpired was he dropped his defenses and moved into Being Right-Sized. If he were "brought low" he would still be in the Compass of Shame, down in Attack Self, groveling.

To conclude, there is an important quality of power here that I disagree with mentioned by the mediator. I do not agree with the analysis that there has been an exchange of shame and power. The mediator believes that each man had a kind of power over each other. I believe that at anytime we have "power over" someone we are back in quadrant of Attack Other where we want to be bigger than, stronger than, and in control of the other person.

In my estimation an exchange of shame and power would require that George shame Wally to regain his power and George has not done that. George, as stated above, gains his power by moving out of the Compass of Shame and into Being Right-Sized. On the same account Wally shifts out of the Compass of Shame into Being Right-Sized. In regard to power in this interaction I believe that both men have tapped into their personal power through being able to acknowledge their shame, i.e. they were both willing to show "the size they really are" to each other, to openly speak about what was really occurring

in their lives as a result of these incidents. This is the process of acknowledged shame. It is both internal and external and it gets these men out of the Compass of Shame and into the arena of their humanity to come to Being Right-Sized with each other as they become right-sized with them selves. Part of the process of acknowledging shame is to tap into our personal rightful power. This is not used to wield it over someone else, but to empower us in the interaction so that we may hear difficult things that are said and speak difficult things for us to say. For me, this is what is meant by acknowledging shame. When we are right-sized with each other power is shared. These men ended up working together when Wally was released. I do not see the possibility of that happening without mutual respect, which requires that power be shared.

It must be remembered that the analysis of George and Wally in light of the Compass of Shame and Being Right-Sized is just that, an analysis. What it does is give us a chance to apply the Compass of Shame and Being-Right Sized. It is done as an illustration of these models and concepts, in addition to shedding some light on how people are one way in the world while in the Compass of Shame and another way when Being Right-Sized.

In conclusion, in sincere apology we acknowledge our shame and move out of the Compass of Shame to become “right-sized”. This is what I saw when working with the inmates. Those that had begun to move out of the Compass of Shame had more regard for others, participated, listened, and maintained sobriety by continued self-examination. They were more forthright and vital. They were mentally alert, sat purposefully in their chairs, and engaged in the exercises willingly. Even though they were incarcerated they treated themselves with respect and dignity. Some were even able to start building true worth because they were away from neighborhoods and gangs that constantly required they put on a front never getting a chance to be “the size they really are”.

There is one more configuration we could use that pulls together the social aspects of being-rights sized. Below is a diagram of what I call “Collective Humility”. This is along the lines of what David Moore, another professional in restorative practices, terms Collective Vulnerability. But when we are vulnerable we are open to attack. I prefer to use Collective Humility. Here our power is equalized. We see each other as humans with both good and not so good capacities. We are honest with our selves and others, and assess our selves and our part in the scheme of things. Only then we can make a sincere apology that will begin to restore our relationships. As indicated in the quote below by C.S. Lewis acknowledging our shame is not an easy choice but definitely worth the effort.