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The Importance of Getting Fired

I'm lucky to have people in my life who gladly share their wisdom gained from experience. In the process, they validate what I'm experiencing, or sometimes, even prevent me from having to learn the same hard lessons.

Sally is one of those people in my life. She's a semi-retired consultant, having built a practice with her former partner that now bills out multi-million dollar projects. There's an ease to her when we talk that comes not from being oblivious, but having seen all too much and now knowing what's important to focus on. She nodded knowingly when I talked about an experience of having said Yes when I should have said No. Her face said it all—"Oh yeah, that's not a good place to be."

So I started asking about other truths that I had seen glimmers of in doing my work. Until we got to the biggie—the importance of getting fired. Really, it's about being okay with getting fired, so you can do the work that's really at hand for any consultant—to tell the client what you see that's holding them back, to call out reality in a way that doesn't mince words, to notice when things are off track. In other words, to be unattached to the outcome in a way that the truth can come out.

I had noticed that getting fired had become an ugly Gremlin for me in my consulting work. A friend of mine once said, "Go in as if you have nothing to prove. And then you really don't have anything to prove." And by the same token, if you are always trying to prove yourself, that becomes the focus of attention instead of the real work. It was dismaying to see how big my Gremlin was now compared to when I worked inside companies as an employee. While I was on the corporate dole, I would regularly go against the grain with the thinking, "What are they going to do, fire me?" The result was that I was much more powerful and influential than my position in the company would have indicated. People could sense that I knew what I was doing and there was no questioning about whether I was the person to do it. It was a glorious feeling of stepping into abundance and possibility to create what was needed in the moment.

Sally talked about how she had a job recently where she needed to tell a high level executive to leave the room while she worked with his subordinates. Not just for a minute. But for hours. It was what needed to be done, in the moment. And later this same executive thanked her in email for having the backbone to do what was needed. Sally also talked about concerns she's gotten from clients when consultants don't push back on the client, when pleasing the client is the modus operandi. There's nothing to bounce off of. We find our way in the world when there's something to experience life from. Hold back on the experience and your clients will continue to be in the fog of their own thinking. Give your clients something to bounce off of. That's why you are there.

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her magic by bringing the power of the creative, intuitive right brain into a left-brained world. While her degrees in engineering from Northwestern University have served her well, it's been her life and work experiences that have moved her to do her best work. She is certified by The Coaches Training Institute and credentialed by the International Coach Federation.