



BE the CHANGE

Sean Casey LeClaire, Publisher

THE CAVE

Harvey, a man from our Monday group emailed me the following note. “Even though I understand intellectually that coaching is a support structure to sort things out, when I am in a self-generated emotional crises (as I believe I have been for the last 2-3 months) my M.O. is to withdraw, hunker down, and to be truthful, wallow. It is not working—most likely it never has—and so I am reaching out to you to see whether we can re-institute our coaching sessions and return to the Monday night men’s group. Thank you, Sean, for giving me the space to reach this conclusion on my own.”

The texture and honesty within his message deeply moves me.

This is why I coach and teach meditation for a living—to have the privilege of being in relationships with people who have the courage to change. Harvey had disappeared from the men’s group and our private coaching work.

Men do this...we go to our caves. We hunker.

Although the caves men escape to appear different, it is always a deep sense of isolation fueled by fear which drives a man’s disappearing act. A daily meditation practice teaches us to self-observe, which supports a man to see exactly how he lies to himself. And sitting with other men in genuine conversation provides a safe place for a man to get honest with himself. On Monday nights, Harvey had begun to learn that he “intellectually understands” that he *figures* things out. He gets things in his head but he can’t yet get what he is aware of, into his heart, into his gut, into his life. Basically, what a man like Harvey does when he gets frightened is to stick his head so far up his own ass, all he sees is darkness. He wallows.

Conscious caring men will give other men space to find their own way, but they don’t let other men wallow for too long. Men dedicated to self-inquiry and respectful sharing call each other on such behavior in a straight-forward and gentle manner. From Harvey’s email there is no doubt he was grateful that I gave him space to find his own way, as each of us must, and I sense he’s ready for a change to happen. I also assert that had Harvey stayed in the group and/or the coaching relationship, or reached out to a trusted friend, he would have opened to his learning much quicker than after three months of wallowing. In addition, by staying with the guys on Mondays, Harvey could have supported other men going through a similar struggle, simply by speaking openly about where he was at, and what he was dealing with internally.

There’s a distinct difference between a call to time alone and personal solitude, and the pull from a man’s cave. The “cave” is where the mind’s claws can do the most damage to a man. One man’s cave is wallowing alone in a room in his house—a room that his children and wife knowingly avoid; another man’s cave is the endless distraction of nonstop sports programming over the weekend; another’s is tiptoeing to his porno web account; another man’s cave is the drunken stupor of three or four highballs in his chair, or working every Sunday at the office, when he doesn’t really have to.

What initiated Harvey’s abrupt departure to hunker-down in his cave was that I had called him on his stuff. Offering a wake-up call perspective, I suggested he was stuck in a pattern of what he eludes to above as a “self-generated emotional crisis.” In his case he often feels the emotion in his belly, as a nervous tummy. The fact that Harvey is a martial artist, a CEO and a truly lovely person makes him even more endearing...Whenever he would share with the group that “my tummy hurts today,” the atmosphere in the room softened immediately.

Men who know how to be present with and speak for and not from the hurt boy within them, immediately know when another man is touching that sensitive and powerful part within themselves. Harvey had begun to do this in our group and his sensitive energy and growing candor with the guys was missed. Harvey had to suffer alone to come to his learning; and suffering is truly optional. For many men, suffering is merely a habit they fall back on, because they don’t yet trust enough to live without hunkering-down in their cave. They don’t yet live by a core awareness coaching principle: support equals release—release from fear.