



# Pause With Purpose

...to refresh

...to grow

Published monthly by  
Free to Be  
Life Coaching  
and  
John Rottschaefer PhD  
Certified Life Coach  
Volume 31 - July 2008

## Convictions and Consequences

While this title might initially bring to mind Dostoevsky's classic book "Crime and Punishment", let's leave literature and legalities aside and consider yet another meaning of the word "conviction". Webster reminds us that a "conviction" is also "a strong persuasion or belief", similar to a certainty or an opinion.

Most of us have known people with strong beliefs and opinions on most everything. They leave no question as to their view of a topic, and miss no opportunity to promote it. We have also known those who seem vacant of any opinion, whether it be political, social, moral, or where to go for dinner. They see potential and value in any position, often fear taking the "wrong" stand, and live to adapt rather than direct.

So why have convictions? What is the benefit, if any, of holding strong beliefs? Also, what is the cost of having such persuasions, or of not having them?

There is the viewpoint that we all have convictions at some basic level, but some of us just haven't taken the time or effort to identify them. This may well be true, since most of us are convinced that driving on the proper side of the road is the best course of action. While this might

be a "no-brainer", what about the more difficult decisions of life? What helps us choose and directs our behavior? Or do we rely on others to do this for us?

One of the primary roles of convictions is to set guidelines for our life - internal guideposts that direct our attitudes and actions. For them to be functional, we must personally own them, consciously stay aware of them, and earnestly seek to follow them. As we actively live them, they help to develop our identity and clarify our values. While they may change as we grow and develop, it is important that we respect each of them while they exist.

Also, it is important to recognize that there is a hierarchy to our convictions. While we may strongly believe in protecting the health of our body, we might also choose to expose it to harm to rescue our child from danger (a higher conviction regarding our role as protector and the value of our child).

So what do we really believe in? What are we willing to die for, or is the value of life our highest conviction?

Developing convictions takes work; following them takes courage. In a

culture of fear and defensiveness, revealing convictions can result in the experience of prejudice, accusation of offense, and even outright attack. Opportunities can be lost and relationships challenged. However, to pursue "safety" by not having convictions is to live merely as an extension of the forces around us, a reflection of their values and beliefs. And having convictions but ignoring them for the sake of acceptance violates the very core of who we are (unless, of course, acceptance is what we would die for).

Can we hold convictions and reveal them without being a threat or offense? Absolutely! To do so, we must remember that convictions are personal guides for behavior and decisions, both private and public, not standards by which to judge or condemn others. And while they may direct our energy in the setting of social law and public or family policy, they are not meant to be individually imposed on others, but rather shared through word and action.

So let's show our colors, be true to our convictions, and together develop the rich quilt of our shared lives.



# Pause with Purpose

Volume 31 - July 2008

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Your thoughts and comments are warmly welcomed. I would also be happy to share with you more about life coaching and how it can assist you to be your best, personally and relationally, at home and at work..

You can contact me at:

John Rottschafer, PhD

*Free to Be* Life Coaching  
4519 Cascade Rd SE Ste 18  
Grand Rapids MI 49546

phone - (616) 949-9925

e-mail -

john@freetobelife coaching.com  
www.freetobelife coaching.com



If you do not wish to receive this letter, please share this request at the contacts above and your name will be removed from the mailing list.

Copyright 2008 by John Rottschafer Ph.D. and Free to Be Life Coaching. Reprint permitted with copyright information and web address included.

## Handling Different Convictions

In a marriage, team, business, or organization, differing convictions present a special challenge, since decisions effect the group as a whole. To productively determine a course of action, four elements must be in place:

- safe atmosphere
- direct discussion
- clear decision
- unified committment.

Open, even passionate, discussion of convictions is necessary to glean the value from each persuasion. Doing this constructively is only possible in a safe setting where openness, honesty, curiosity, respect, and humility (not uncertainty) are promoted. After discussion, either a vote or the decision of an appointed leader determines the path. If a decision violates a primary conviction of a group member, that member may need to reevaluate their involvement in the group. As long as primary/"die for" convictions are not violated, the group then must embrace and commit to the decided path, putting selfishness and egos aside.

In this way, differing convictions can actually broaden and strengthen the base on which decisions are made.

How great is that?!



**"Follow your honest convictions and be strong."**

-William Makepeace Thackeray