

I always knew that it wasn't just fight or flight. Knew it in my bones. And found it impossible to identify with that binary choice.

Because my default response was freeze.

I was familiar with the concept of the lamped rabbit/deer in the headlights phenomenon but never related it to my own experience.

Then I saw a diagram that crystallised all this for me and the proverbial scales fell from my eyes.



Fight, Flight & Freeze

There are now major therapies centred on stimulation of the vagus nerve to address and relieve PTSD and other chronic trauma conditions.

I believe my response originated in early childhood – I learned early that fighting didn't work and fleeing wasn't possible. So I became an expert at freezing – mentally, physically and emotionally. I would sit in a room, someone could come in, look around and not see me. They could even look right 'at' me, and still not see me. I could lie so still in bed, you'd never know there was anyone in it. I was brilliant at the hiding part of hide and seek. I was pretty good at the finding part too, because I knew how and where to hide.

Mentally, I learned to remove myself from my environment to a better one. I was a voracious reader and developed a powerful imagination. I also became good at choosing which thoughts I would entertain and which to ignore. When I was in my own little world, nothing could touch me – I wasn't even aware of what was going on around me.

Feelings were dangerous – joy was high risk. I knew and dreaded the moment it ended in tears, as it usually did. Anger was no use against a more powerful force, so I practiced that

mostly against myself. Sadness and grief were overwhelming. The viable alternative was numbness, zoning out.

I loved animals and felt a deep sympathy for them, treated them well, protected them. But to people, I was cruel and hurtful and, as I grew up, assembled an arsenal of tactics and weapons to keep the world at bay and keep a lid on my inner volcanoes. I became sharp witted and sharp tongued – could cut you to the bone with just the ‘right’ insult or sneer, a sarcastic comment. Sometimes just a look would do it.

Although as an adult I learned alternative and better strategies, now in my late fifties I see I’m still rooted in that fetid soil.

We love to think that we’re happily perched atop Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, busily expressing our self actualization. The grubby truth is that more often than not, it’s a matter of survival. The prime directive is endure. On that foundation is everything else built.

Some people ask me why I’m writing about things like this and what’s it got to do with business anyway? Well....

It’s like this. Business is just another way of spelling/saying busyness. It what people do when they’re being busy.

Commerce is when you’re busy exchanging goods and/or services for money (or other value). Or engaged in activity that supports commercial objectives.

Learning is when you’re busy teaching yourself or being taught something.

Loving is when you’re busy being real and seeing the real in others.

In Luke 2:49 Jesus chastises his disciples “And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought

me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

In other words – why did you disturb me? Did you not know I was busy? And none of us think God is a captain of industry.

Now I know what they really mean is Commerce, and that's ok (I just wanted to make a point).

Commerce is the exchange of valuable goods and services for valuable consideration.

Good commerce is when the parties surrender items of lower value for items of higher value (from their perspective). When I'm hungry, food has higher value than money (within the limits I define). When my belly is full, money probably is back to having high value.

So Value is a personal thing. It cannot be defined independently of the person holding the idea.

Commerce is essentially Personal and conducted between People. Not between machines, or assets, or corporations. Or between resources or capital (human or otherwise). No, between People. Commercial success depends on being able to empathise with and understand others. On appreciating their values. Maybe even sharing them (but not necessarily).

If you're struggling today with something life or the universe has thrown at you – be it coronavirus, losing your job or business, the illness or death of a loved one – or if you're grappling with the demons you've been carrying for what feels like an eternity and you're so, so, so tired – no matter what's going on with you, the fact that you're here at all is a triumph.

Where there's life, there's hope. Sometimes the right thing to do is to do nothing. Sometimes it's to fight, sometimes it's to flee. Sometimes it's to accept, even. Wayne Dyer advised that given a choice between doing what is right and being kind, the right thing to do is to be kind.

So, can you be kind to the suffering? especially if that's yourself....

From a commercial standpoint, what value are you offering? What personal needs and wants does your product or service satisfy? Do you understand what it feels like to have, or even be in the grip of, these needs and wants? How does your offering transfer as value to your customer? How clearly do you articulate the benefits and convey the certainty that the value you offer is higher than the value of the money they have to surrender to get it?

Zig Ziglar famously said 'you can have anything you want in life if you help enough people get what they want". A good place to start is with what they want, why they want it, what they actually need and then how to give them both what they want and what they need.

If you've enjoyed or been touched by this piece, I'd love to hear your comments..