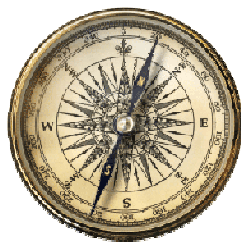


Have We Lost Our Moral Compass?

Would I be overstating it if I went out on a limb and made the bold assertion that we have lost our moral compass? And as a part of that observation say that we have been holding up the wrong people as our heroes and role models for far too long! And it only seems to be getting worse.



As a population in North America we are losing our ability to discern the difference between right and wrong, fair or unfair, just or unjust and be willing to take a stand and declare ourselves.

Traditional morality is our sense of what is right or wrong, fair or unfair, just or unjust.

To go along with this it is also my contention that a hero or role model must be a disciplined person, meaning that he/she should be prepared to take responsibility for their lives, always tell themselves and therefore others the truth and as much as possible lead a balanced life which among other things includes having integrity, courage, charity, compassion, an ability to forgive and a willingness to delay gratification.

Beyond what I believe are some of the characteristics of a hero are a number of others:

- A man/woman admired for his/her achievements and noble qualities; one who shows great courage,
- Wisdom and fortitude to do what is right,
- Possessing and displaying the highest level of charity, selfless dedication and a willingness to put others first while seeking no attention for him/herself.

A role model is considered to be a person who serves as a model in a particular behavioral or social role for another person to emulate. A person who is unusually effective or inspiring in some social role, job, etc. and so serves as a model for others, in fact very similar or synonymous with a hero.



There is no better example to reinforce my assertion than Tiger Woods who many have held up as a hero and role model. Up until very recently many among us stood in awe of the golfer and only wished that we could be like him. He transcended the game. The qualities that he brought to the game of golf translated into success beyond anyone's wildest imaginings. But we

made the mistake or the quantum leap of concluding that he must also be a remarkable man, husband and father.

Well that bubble burst didn't it! Clearly what we have come to know is that Tiger Woods is a **man-child** who completely lacks traditional morality as defined here. As he was growing up somewhere along the fairway he got his wires crossed and it will take a lot more than an electrician to untangle them! As a matter of fact, I am not even sure 'Bagger Vance' could help him? He has no sense of right or wrong, fair or unfair, rather in fact has more of a sense of entitlement, a feeling of being above it all, omnipotent even. He has not taken responsibility for his behavior and in particular has not been telling himself the truth. He has shown repeatedly a complete lack of integrity and little if any compassion for his family, the game of golf, golf fans everywhere and the sponsors who have paid him millions of dollars. This man-child has no discipline in the way he conducts his personal life. The worlds greatest golfer, no question, but a hero or role model as a man, husband, father, **NOT EVEN CLOSE!**

There are countless examples of men and women similar to Tiger Woods throughout the sport and entertainment world, men and women who many unfortunately have and/or continue to hold up as role models, even heroes just because they are



accomplished professional athletes or entertainers.

When will we come to understand that heroes and role models are not by definition professional athletes or entertainers? Oh unquestionably some of these individuals are heroes and legitimate role models but not because they are professional athletes or entertainers.



To make matters worse television networks have gone to cheap television and created a monster in the form of reality TV. The tall foreheads that are responsible for programming at the networks determined that there would be a market for this type of 'trash' television and what is so incredibly frightening is that they were right. There are so many so called reality television shows on now that it is difficult to keep track of them. People are sitting down in front of their television sets everywhere, apparently watching and after a while accepted that this is 'reality,' the way people live or should be living. It has gotten so bad that we even have individuals and families staging outlandish stunts in the hopes of being discovered and offered their own 15 minutes of fame in a reality TV show.



So What Has Happened Here?

We have allowed three things in particular to happen that have contributed to the lose of our moral compass.

The gradual decline of mainstream religion in North America is one. There are many reasons for this and someone could write a big book on the subject. The point that I want to make is that whatever your beliefs may or may not be, and whatever your reasons are for attending or not attending church or synagogue, one thing that I am sure most of us can agree on is that along the way if nothing else these organized religions have given us a moral code or moral compass to guide our lives, our behaviours, that has stood us well and has stood the test of time.

Some may argue but others would agree that many of the characteristics we attach to heroes and role models are central to the values and beliefs put forth by the various religious denominations.

Secondly, the family as we once knew it has changed considerably and I certainly do not believe for the better. Quite simply the family is suffering from **profound neglect**. And the

primary reason for this can be pretty much summed up and found in this quote by author and psychologist James Hillman:

"I think we are miserable partly because we have only one god and that's economics. Economics is a slave driver. No one has free time; no one has any leisure. The whole culture is under terrible pressure and fraught with worry. It's hard to get out of that box. That's the dominant situation all over the world." *James Hillman*

Unfortunately with the gradual decline of religion and family it has become increasingly difficult to find a standard or a code of conduct to live by, something or someone to measure ourselves against, a moral compass if you would, a person whose behaviour and example can guide us in living our lives in compassionate, fruitful, and productive ways.

And finally, technology continues to fuel our disconnect from the very essence of who we are emotionally and spiritually. Television, computers, Blackberries, Facebook, Twitter, the list grows.

It is no wonder that our young people and a surprising number of our older people are enamored by those found in the sport and entertainment pages of our papers and magazines, not to mention those that we see, hear and read about on television and on our computers.





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COACHING POINT

It is becoming abundantly clear that a growing and sizable portion of the population looks to sport and entertainment for their heroes and role models, their moral compass...and that is frightening.

What to Do?

In the popular song Hero, there are the words; *"a hero lies in each and every one of us."* The real heroes and role models today are yes, you guessed it, everyday men and women; grandfathers and grandmothers, moms and dads, husbands and wives, sons and daughters, those who get up every day; shower, brush their teeth, comb their hair and head out the door knowing that life can be difficult even at the best of times but instead of shrinking back in defeat muster the emotional and spiritual strength to go on and make a life for themselves and for those they love and cherish.

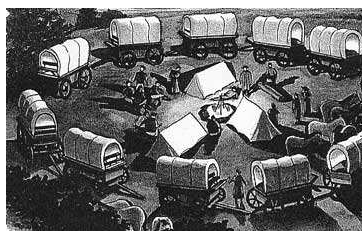
It's funny but you never see any of these people featured in People magazine, bit of a contradiction, don't you think!

Of the groups mentioned above parents must be particularly singled out for their role. For the most part I believe that we are a product of our first family experiences. It is primarily our parents who we look to for the support and guidance we need to grow up morally. It is here that we are supposed to develop our moral compass, our moral code of conduct. And consciously or unconsciously we

hold our parents up as our role models or heroes to show us the way. They should be the ones to emulate the kind of behaviour most associated with traditional morality. If they are not there, or worse, are poor role models, then who?

Are You a Parent?

Most of us have come from at the very least mildly dysfunctional families and that generally means we are somewhat neurotic in our behaviour, which loosely translated means that some days we feel pretty good about ourselves and others days not so much. A good thing that often comes out of that level of self-acceptance and behaviour is a continuous striving to do better. The important thing here however is to be aware of the limited amount of time we all have and accordingly strategically prioritize it.



If you agree that traditional religion and family have declined, and with what James Hillman has to say about economics being a slave driver than maybe it's time to circle the wagons and take back your responsibilities as heroes and role models, if not collectively than individually and strategically carve out the necessary time to do the job that you signed on

for when you made the decision to have children.

In doing this you must either get back in touch with your life's purpose or for the first time find it! And you better hope that somewhere in its definition the word children pops up?

Let me sum up by telling a little story. On a recent Sunday I found myself walking in the Polo Park Shopping Center. There were many young families there on that day but I happened to notice one family in particular as they approached me; a mom, dad and their little girl no more than two feet tall, who was walking in between them holding her mothers hand. As I watched, the little girl looked up at her dad, reached up and took his hand, and as she did this a beautiful smile of contentment appeared on her face. All was right in her world, her heroes were by her side.

The nuclear family was once the essential moral and ethical unit of society, we need to bring it back.

"We worry about what a child will become tomorrow, yet we forget that she is someone today." *Author unknown*



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