



Why I Regularly Post Articles On LinkedIn

By Jose Franco

It's not what you say, it's what you do and how you live your life that matters. Model the behavior you want for your kids and the rest will take care of itself. I've coached (120 game schedule) travel baseball to mostly New York City inner city teenage boys (non family members) from 1997 to 2011. I gave love, time, professional advice and encouraged a sense of self regulation to the members of Youth Service League and New York Grays Baseball organization; while simultaneously demanding members to be accountable and to have high expectations for themselves on and off the field. Not all kids get to be professional baseball players, but all kids can grow up to be punctual, professional, respectful and hardworking employees or entrepreneurs. In 2012, my family opened up an organic juice bar in my Park Slope Brooklyn neighborhood where I presently work 7 days a week. Despite growing up in a single parent home, I've learned to express myself through writing and in key ways, playing, coaching baseball and the thought process involved in writing have filled the void created by my absent father. I often write with the hopes of being a role model to other fatherless kids, young adults we find listening to music all throughout New York City, hanging out in malls, bars, posting on blogs, podcast and videos online. These individuals use services like Google and Youtube for easy access to endless advice from the likes of Instagram influencers with thousands of followers or more. The pitfalls of this approach is qualifying the soundness and credentials of the advisors. Philosopher Baruch Spinoza (1632 - 1677) is famous for saying, "Be not astonished at new ideas; for it is well known to you that a thing does not therefore cease to be true because it is not accepted by many." I worry well intentioned advice are often counterproductive when they project the advisor's shortcomings.

Despite the best of intentions, any advice has limitations regarding perception and enlightenment. How much you reveal to the person from whom advice is sought and the advisor's capacity to conceptualize, describe and communicate the best course of actions determine the usefulness of the advice.

Growing up in the Bronx, (70's & 80's), folks would say, "once people start making money, they seldom give back to the community, move away and are never heard from again. That's why it's better to be feared than loved", a saying coined in "The Prince" by Niccolo Machiavelli. Despite the book's popularity, I think "The Prince" was probably the worst job application in history and at times, Donald Trump's go to playbook, despite it being totally unsuccessful in its original purpose. Unfortunately for Machiavelli, like the current US President, he wasn't a very tactful person, but he did write about the world the way he saw it and didn't sugarcoat much attempting to gain favor from Lorenzo (Prince). However, Lorenzo didn't want to listen to all sorts of unsolicited advice on how to maintain power.

The difference between "The Prince" and "The Stories I Tell Myself" is the intended audience. In my book, I write for myself in search of consciousness, growth and enlightenment. I am the most frequent reader of my writings, because I believe it's better to be loved than to be feared. I'm not afraid of people benefiting from my ideas without getting paid or validated. I'm ok with the fact most people exhibit free-rider behavior waiting for externalities or others to do the work they need, or (if they do the work themselves) not proactively sharing, hoping the people in their community become conscious through self discovery. Part of the answer lies in the fact that all of us are not merely in need of a lucid moment of self awareness, we need self awareness continuously. It's seldom possible to predict when other people will have an epiphany. Once we realize the payoff from doing the work yourself is sufficient, I'm hoping more of us dive in and awaken (at which point the fact that everyone else is a free rider becomes irrelevant). Being reactive by only waiting for others to do the work, avoiding thinking about issues rationally and deeply gains nothing. Indeed, it incurs a future cost—you deceive yourself by utilizing a "straw man" argument instead of an "iron man" argument. Instead of presenting someone's argument in its weakest form through introspection, we should aim to present someone's argument in its strongest form.

So the payoff from this choice is actually negative. Machiavelli in his personal life (turbulent times) failed to realize we all can win if we see money for what it really is, a social construct that promotes exchange through trust. To put it more positively, we gain from the input of different groups and individuals. The input and insights of others will improve our work in the future which helps us improve on things we may not be aware we're bad at. In the end, Niccolo Machiavelli considered his life to be a failure. Whereas, despite barely knowing my father, I consider myself a joyful autodidact who's happiest when reading the biographies of philosophers, coaching baseball and selling organic juices to my community. Baruch Spinoza was a lens grinder who found it intellectually liberating to write for himself at a time his contemporaries were being censored, persecuted and murdered for expressing their ideas. Spinoza wrote freely without ego or fear of censorship because he knew he couldn't circulate his writings without reprisal. Today, censorship works by flooding us with immense amounts of misinformation, of irrelevant information, videos of people falling, until we're just unable to focus. We know about Spinoza because he left instructions for his writings to be made public upon his death. Of the hundreds of kids I've coached in the last 20 years, those who reached the Major Leagues (Adam Ottavino, Harrison Bader, Pedro Beato, James Norwood) chose to have a proactive belief in themselves; While coaching these young men, I learned self belief is a choice individuals can only make for themselves. In essence, what you believe in your heart is what you are and what you become.

Today, America has a President that promotes fear by exploiting most people's inability to approach things rationally when history and emotions are involved. Unequal results of human achievement conjure up simplistic notions of injustice which can result in people misunderstanding better actions that require difficult choices. Any civic minded citizen worth their salt has to follow politics and current affairs closely as the decisions made at the seat of power aren't simple and/or transparent. These acts naturally impact the future success of the country and require continuous attention. I recognize my life is in process and what works for me may not work for someone else. Regardless of person, we must be accountable, transparent and surrender to our individual realities. We all have to contend with our capacity to do good and evil. Far too many of us set ourselves up for defeat because we're unwilling to acknowledge the destructive side of our being. Opting instead to create counterproductive narratives in our heads instead of chasing the difficult task of surrendering and objectively seeing ourselves. Regardless if you grew up with a father or not, you are the author of the stories you tell yourself. I choose to see myself as the epitome of the American dream despite the realities of my family life. Or should I create a narrative in order to rationalize and justify choices and behavior that are counterproductive?

I'm often in situations of wanting to help spread a message of universal love, realistic hope and consciousness. I choose to write despite not knowing what every kid without a dad might be in need of. I'd like to help them all, and yet I lack a real grasp of what I could plausibly offer; I'm hoping most haven't become jaded and their minds aren't impenetrable or opaque. I think we all possess a superpower, a capacity to give people something we can be sure they fundamentally require, founded on a primordial and basic insight into human nature: that all of us are in deep need of reassurance. With that said, I find comments against most absent fathers beset by a sense of insecurity and, beneath some excellent camouflage, to a greater or lesser extent, of sadness. If this sounds like you, you are not alone. Despite not growing up with my father and most times telling myself our relationship was beyond repair, I followed my own advice and called my dad on Father's Day 2014. I could hear the joy in his frail voice. We had both lost over 75 pounds since our last meeting (me through a vegan lifestyle and him as a side effect of prostate cancer). Over the next few weeks I spoke to my dad regularly. He died six weeks after the only Father's Day we shared. I'm glad I was able to say goodbye.