

## Striding Bravely Into The Darkness!

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When I was asked to do a presentation for this meeting, I was uncertain as to what most people (including myself) would be interested in. So I suggested a number of topics to the program committee. They narrowed it down to two. “Striding Boldly Into The Darkness” was the one I was most unclear (and therefore most anxious) about, so I thought it would be a good opportunity for shared exploration! More about the slight title change in a few moments.

It occurred to me that the metaphor of “striding boldly into the darkness” might provide learning and insight into those situations we all find ourselves in. You know the ones I mean. The plan for the facilitation seems clear, obvious, sound and agreed upon by everyone. Yet when it comes time to set out . . . darkness. Yet it is a journey we nevertheless choose to take—for a wide variety of reasons.

Coincidentally (or perhaps not), as I was wrestling with what I was going to do in the session, I happened to go for a walk in Lighthouse Park. All of a sudden the metaphor started to take shape. It seemed like every few minutes I was recording some thoughts on how the act of taking my dog for a walk in the early dawn served as a rich metaphor for facilitation.

Here are some elements of the metaphor:

- There is a journey we choose to embark on. We have some influence over whether (not weather!) and when.
- There may be periods of darkness.
- There are a series of choices we can make as we contemplate a journey into the darkness. These choices include (but are not restricted to):
  - When to go
  - What/who to take outside my skin (things/people)
  - What to take inside my skin (values, attitudes and beliefs)
- There may be a need to pause or rest during the journey.
- It is possible to shine a light into the darkness—for which there are a variety of possible consequences.
- Eventually it starts to become light . . . there is twilight (or partial light) in between light and darkness.
- And then it is fully light again.

So let's use these as a framework for exploration.

**Hey, what about the title change?** Oh yes, sorry about that! I was thinking about the topic this morning and I was struggling with the word **"boldly"**. For some reason it had too much of a macho feel to it. And a wee bit of charging ahead mindlessly. I didn't look "boldly" up in the dictionary, so this is just my perception. However, when I substituted the word **"bravely"** for the word "boldly", it felt like a better fit. So I looked up the word "brave". The definition I gravitated towards was *"having the strength of mind to control fear and act firmly in the face of danger or difficulties"*. There was something about recognizing internal resistance to going forth, and then doing so mindfully that really appealed to me. Hence the title change!

1. What could the darkness (unknown, unclear) represent for you as a facilitator?

2. What steps would you take if you knew you could not fail? What would you do with more confidence that you currently resist or avoid?

3. What external preparation can you do to better prepare for a journey in your particular form of darkness? What could you take with you? Who could you take with you?

4. What internal preparation is required to enable you to stride bravely into the darkness?

5. Think about the metaphor of a light/flashlight. What might that light be for you? What (if any) are the consequences of using it? What are some potential consequences of overusing it or using it inappropriately?

6. How do you know when you will make greater progress by resting?

7. What are the joys and challenges that twilight may bring?

8. How do you know when it is truly light again? How does that feel? Where would you be if you had waited for it to be light before you started?

9. What additional elements of the metaphor might be interesting to explore?