



## **“I Thought I Was Weak.” A Story Of An EVP Who Learned He Wasn't Broken.**

I always felt that people who talked to professional coaches or counselors were weak and vulnerable. Worse yet – when others found out they would know they were weak and vulnerable.

My attitude only added more stress to my feelings of inadequacy. Not only was I not feeling fulfilled, I was conflicted. It was a secret I was keeping to myself. There had to be something wrong with me. I had a loving family and steady work at a respected company, but I felt I was letting them and myself down even though I had more than many people. I must be crazy because I was so conflicted.

One night at a dinner party a friend was talking about seeing Bruce speak at a conference. They talked about how he was real, confident, knowledgeable and approachable. They talked about how during his training presentation he began answering questions, which turned into a group discussion; when the discussion was over he moved back into his presentation. They talked about how easy Bruce made it for everyone to share in that open environment and that if they ever had an executive coach that they would like it to be Bruce.

I suddenly felt like a kid listening to a forbidden conversation. I wanted to know more about Bruce and how to find him. But, I didn't want anyone to know I was interested because they might finally notice I was broken inside. In the end, I found him by looking up the conference information.

Long story short, Bruce and I began to have short phone conversations. I told him I wanted to explore career options – I thought that was a safe topic. Even during these conversations (we were not 'working' together yet), Bruce asked some really insightful questions. I felt his sincere interest in me and what I now describe as my wellbeing. He didn't make me feel crazy.

I took the plunge and hired Bruce as my executive coach.

I asked Bruce if we could work together and he agreed to be my executive coach. We began with a 3-month coaching commitment and I am amazed at how much ground we covered. A few times Bruce guided me off of an emotional ledge I didn't even realize I was close to. I became less stressful and more clear on my goals. I began to see all the things I already had that made me happy.

It wasn't all roses and sunshine. Some of the things I brought up surprised me. I have to stress that Bruce didn't force any topics – they just floated to the surface. I'm glad I had Bruce to talk with.

Even though most of our conversations were over the phone, Bruce created a comfortable, confidential, caring environment for me. Bruce helped me make plans and take steps to reach my goals. I began enjoying work and home life so much more... I became more active.

Bruce and I speak less regularly now. Sometimes I still ask him for help when I need to get clear about a decision. Bruce is a safe, confidential sounding board for me to talk about frustrations, feelings and even some strategy challenges. He has a knack for hearing what I'm really saying and he doesn't judge. He takes pride in my accomplishments and helps me do the same.

I feel so much better and I'm happier. I've learned that conflict can be interpreted as either a terrible thing or an opportunity. It's how we approach it that matters. And, I no longer think people who talk to other people are crazy or weak... but they are vulnerable – I think we all are.

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