

I will start with some history. I am married to an amazing woman, Paula Englander. We have a grown-up son and daughter who are both married, and each have two teenage boys. Paula and I first met when we were in our mid-twenties when we were graduate students studying Physics. We walked by each other sometimes and we smiled, but we met at a Conference in Boulder, Colorado and we fell in love at that meeting. After a while, we got married and moved to Silicon Valley where we both got jobs doing research. I had finished my PhD and Paula had finished her research and was writing her dissertation. Then, a very surprised Paula was fired for not being willing to have an abortion when she was 7 months pregnant with our first child and her boss realized she was pregnant. The paper she wrote in Physics at that time became the most cited paper in science for the next ten years. Nevertheless, even though she wrote an important paper, she decided not to finish her PhD in physics, and she said she wanted to do something more important. She wanted to work on making men and women equals. She got a part-time job at the same company making more money and only working halftime so she could also be with our son.

Several years later, we moved to Italy, with our 4 yr old son and our 5-month-old daughter, when I was asked by the Italian government to teach and work with students and faculty about Atomic physics in Italy as it was not taught in Italy and it was important in many high-tech applications being used that they wanted to be involved with. Paula took time out from work to spend time with our kids. There were many strikes and other issues going on then, in Europe, and so many holidays and vacations closed-down my work often, so that allowed us to visit many places in Europe, North Africa and Asia with our kids. We came back to the US in about two years, and I became a professor at the University of Nebraska and Paula studied Psychology. Paula began as an undergraduate student and got her PhD in Psychology in about 4.5 years. She wrote three papers from her dissertation and one of them has received over 21 thousand citations since then and is still receiving many citations each year from all over the world. The name Paula Englander Golden is well known and she has written much about men and women and their behavior in different situations, and about alcohol and drug prevention and treatment. When Paula finished her PhD, her professor told me Paula taught him more than he taught her, and I was not surprised. We then both moved to the University of Oklahoma as professors.

We met Virginia Satir in 1978, when she came to the University of Oklahoma as a scholar in residence for a week. Paula had asked the university to invite Virginia, and they agreed so Paula became her guide and professor of record. Paula knew about Virginia Satir's work from when she was graduate student and had read a few of her books. When we met Virginia, we ate dinner and talked a long time, Paula and I were both very impressed with what Virginia said, and our meeting with her developed into a long friendship between the three of us. Virginia was unique, always reading, learning something new, and adding something new. During Virginia's stay in Oklahoma, Paula discussed with Virginia her plan to create a program using positive psychology that included forgiveness. At the time, Virginia did not think forgiveness was possible. So, this became a subject they discussed every year when they met for a week together at Virginia's home in Menlo Park, California. Paula had been a child during WW II and at six, she was the runner for her father who had been an operatic tenor was a lumber jack with the resistance, and the Nazis were trying to find them. Paula at six could go to inform 20 or so people to come to a meeting, remembering all the names and addresses without a piece of paper. Paula and her sisters were baptized Catholic and lived in two Catholic Convent schools during much of the war. When the war ended, her father had saved and hidden 300 Nazi prisoners, and he was declared a hero. Paula, her two sisters and her parents had lived in Poland, Slovakia and Hungary during WW II and the Czech Republic, Switzerland, and Italy after the war before they came to America from Italy as displaced persons when Paula was 17. Virginia could not understand how Paula, could forgive the Nazis. What Paula did was about compassion for other humans. St. Francis of Assisi, who witnessed the atrocities of the crusades, invited all of us to understand that we are all capable of committing any act when he asked, "Can true humility and compassion exist in our words and eyes unless we know we are capable of any act?"

When Paula went, to the 1982 American Association for Psychological Science annual meeting, she was curious about a new thing on the agenda, assertiveness training. She had heard about it, and so she took a short course in assertiveness training at the conference. There, she learned about fogging, changing the subject, the broken record, negative inquiry, and negative assertion, and she was appalled about all that. At that time, women using these techniques were getting hurt, and some were even getting killed. When Paula came home after that, she sat down and wrote the whole program that she had been thinking about since 1976, from the point of view of positive psychology in which she included the importance of human sameness and our ability to forgive. She called the program Say It Straight (our son Jeff, a freshman at UC Berkley at the time, gave Paula the name). Say It Straight is about behavior, about honoring ourselves, honoring others, and thus, it can be applied to all human issues. Paula discussed the details of her program with Virginia Satir, and Virginia loved it and wrote a glowing foreword for the first Say It Straight Trainer Manual, when we had been invited and were visiting Maria Gomori in Canada at a conference with Virginia and Elizabeth Kubler Ross that Maria arranged.

Paula started doing Say It Straight in sixth-grade classrooms in Norman, Oklahoma, with the help of some of her graduate students. She used a social skills questionnaire she developed to be answered by the students before and after training. In addition, with the schools' help, she collected alcohol and drug-related student school suspensions and referrals before and after training. She also received the alcohol and drug-related school suspensions and referrals from schools where the training was not done. The results were that alcohol drug referrals for students in schools where no training was done were drastically greater than where training was done. The same results were found on the social skills questionnaires. After that year, all the middle schools in Norman asked for Say It Straight Training. A mother of one of the students told Paula her daughter had changed how she talked and how she behaved. The woman, who was herself a psychologist, said it was nothing she herself did, so she wanted to ask, "When will you be able to start doing Say It Straight with us parents?" So, after that, Paula started doing the training with parents.

Because of the success of SIS in the treatment school in her first Study, SIS had many requests. All the middle schools and one 5th grade class in the city were trained during that whole academic year. Alcohol/drug related school suspensions were significantly lower among the 6th through 8th graders and the 5th grade class who received SIS compared to the students who did not have SIS. Trained students were 370% times less likely to have an alcohol/drug related school suspension compared to untrained students. Scores on the SIS Social Skills Questionnaire showed highly statistically significant increases after SIS. A subjective feedback questionnaire was also administered to these students. As in the first Study, in every grade, students reported on the Subjective Feedback Questionnaire that they had learned and were motivated to use the skills learned. There were four suspensions among the trained students and 13 among the untrained students. The 4 suspensions were made before those students were trained. About 30% of the trained students were also trained during the previous school year. Thus, we were seeing long term effects of SIS training.

Another study demonstrated the long-range effectiveness of SIS in reducing the number of juvenile police offenders and offences among 9th-12th graders. A six-month pre-training base line period was used to monitor juvenile police offenders and offences among all 740 9th-12th graders in a city with a population of about 5,000. The Police Department monitored juvenile police offenses for all 9th-12th graders for a base-line period of 6 months before SIS and 19 months after SIS training for about half of the students. During the pre-training period, the number of offenders among the 357 students who would later receive SIS did not differ statistically from the number of offenders among the 383 students who would not receive SIS. During 19 months after SIS, the untrained students had about 450% more police offenses compared to the trained students and their offenses were more severe as ranked by the Police Department. If we omitted speeding

and non-hazard violations, the untrained students had 850% more criminal police offenses compared to the trained students. This was a huge result.

The effectiveness of Say It Straight communication training as a treatment component was evaluated with 36 mothers in residential chemical dependency treatment at the Salvation Army. All were indigent, 32 had previous criminal offenses and 14 were on probation or parole at the time of treatment. Self-reported disempowering behaviors (DCB) showed highly significant decreases after SIS training ($p < 0.001$) Empowering behaviors (ECB), quality of family and group life (QLQ-F and QLQ-G) showed significant increases ($p = 0.001$, 0.008 , $p = 0.015$ respectively). Self-esteem (SE), assessed with one group of eight mothers, showed a highly significant increase after training ($p = 0.009$). Statistically significant differences between mothers in treatment an average of 40 days compared to those in treatment 141 days prior to training disappeared after 10-16 hours of training, although the latter group also showed positive changes. Reports regarding training effectiveness were very positive. Results indicate this training is an important addition to treatment and may have implication for shortened treatment time, increased treatment retention and reduction in relapse/recidivism. Empowering behaviors (ECB) show highly significant increases after training, the composite of disempowering behaviors (DCB) and all the individual disempowering components, placating (PL), passive-aggressive (PA), Blaming (BL), irrelevant (IR) and super-reasonable (SR) show highly significant decreases (p values ranging from $p = 0.000$ to $p = 0.001$) after training. One of the things we discovered in our addiction training with both this group and a high-end treatment group was that blaming was the most difficult disempowering behavior for them to stop doing. The state of Pennsylvania is now considering using this program as a training component in treatment in their state.

Say It Straight was also conducted in a special high school in an urban American community with widespread drug use and gang violence in California. After the training, by student request, an after-school SIS club was formed to give the students an ongoing opportunity to explore how to deal with challenging situations in an empowering way using movies. The school principal informed us that when Say It Straight was dealing with present situations, school absences reduced significantly.

The Say It Straight Foundation was officially given status as a nonprofit organization in 1984 and has received funding from private parties, the state of Oklahoma, Texas, a number of federal agencies, and other nonprofit organizations. I was involved in Say It Straight about finance in the beginning, and gradually, I got more involved, and eventually, I worked with Paula on Say It Straight, and my name appeared on publications and contracts, and finally, I did Training of Trainers workshops by myself.

Now Say It Straight is done in the United States in schools from second grade through college with adults, with children and adults in treatment and prisons, in corporations, and other venues, as well as in a number of other countries. The Say It Straight Foundation is a nonprofit corporation, and is a research-based, action-oriented, experiential training program that helps people transform relationships of submission-dominance to relationships of equal value. Workbooks/journals are used for the cognitive component of the training. SIS gives people the opportunity to discover and embrace their inherent resources that enable expression of true personal needs without compromising those of others, thereby preserving the integrity of relationships. SIS leads to personal and social responsibility and empowering ways of being in the world.

Paula spent a lot of time working with Virginia at a number of places each year. Virginia taught with Paula at the University of Oklahoma and, also many different places in the state of Oklahoma, Crested Butte, Colorado, the Haven on Gabriola Island in Canada, and other places as well. There were other Avantans that Paula invited to work with her in Oklahoma that included Maria Gamori and Meryl Tullis and a number of Avantans came to Say It Straight training. We almost bought a house with Virginia to spend time together on

Gabriola Island, but the owners changed their minds about selling at the last minute. When we ate with Virginia, I was always allowed to pay the bill except one time when we were with Virginia and a boyfriend.

Paula wrote all the changes in the New People Making, because Virginia asked her to, and because Virginia had written the original book, Paula did not want her name to be on it. However, because Virginia wanted it, Paula had also signed a contract at that time to write a workbook for the New People Making. However, after Paula also wrote the workbook for the book and everything was finished, one of the publishers decided she did not want to go forward with the workbook, and it was stopped. None of the work Virginia and Paula did together had any involvement with Avanta as Virginia wanted. Virginia was not happy with how Avanta was spending her money, and she stopped as much financing for Avanta as she could. So, she also did not discuss Say It Straight with people in Avanta and the payments to Virginia for her work with Paula was not done through Avanta.

Paula and Virginia wrote a paper together and then they wrote a book together, “Say It Straight: From Compulsion to Choices.” In that book they changed some things Satir had previously used that Paula introduced, and Virginia agreed to. The book was published in 1991 after Virginia had passed, but Virginia was certainly aware and had approved all of what was written. That becomes evident, if you listen to what she said and wrote about Say It Straight while she was alive.

In the book, “Say It Straight: From Compulsions to Choices,” the word leveling was not used, and instead saying it straight was used. Saying it straight meant saying the truth, with a possible exception of not saying the truth when saying the truth might cause great harm to the person saying it. An example of that could be that someone is pointing a gun at you while questioning you, or you could get fired for saying that. In addition, passive-aggressive was added. Passive-aggressive was an important addition because when someone who placates takes the first step to try to stand up for themselves, they certainly might become passive-aggressive, or in another way of saying it, they might placate with a grudge. Virginia was aware, and also very positive about Say It Straight and on our website, you may see and listen to Virginia talking to Paula about Say It Straight and see what she also wrote about it.

The book, “Say It Straight: From Compulsions to Choices.” by Paula Englander Golden and Virginia Satir, was published in 1991, and copies of it are still sold on Amazon. In addition, it also was translated into German and that is also still being sold. Paula and I also wrote a book, “BEING Within-Between-Among-Beyond” in 2018 that can be used by one person or a group. So, it also could be and is used in a few graduate classes. This book goes beyond the 1991 book with Virginia in that it is written after we worked for 30 years on communication and behavior with children and adults in diverse settings and cultures. Our work led us to understand that when we see our sameness as human beings as more fundamental than our diversity, we can make relationships of equal value a reality. Then diversity adds richness to our lives rather than conflict. Our deepest longing transcends our wish to be loved and valued by others. It includes our loving and valuing ourselves and our loving and valuing others. A few weeks ago, I finished another book, “Paula Wants to be free.” This is a love story of my life with an interesting and remarkable woman who wants to be free to do what she wants to do. While this is a love story about how we came together and stayed together, there is still more to see, and that is about how to be and do what you want to do, and a detailed look at Say It Straight training and its effectiveness. This book is now being printed and I expect it to be for sale on amazon and other booksellers very soon.

Paula and I have received the Virginia Satir Global Network Award for Outstanding Service for our unique and significant contributions to the Satir Global Mission through our commitment and leadership to further Virginia Satir’s teachings. When I went to San Diego and I walked up to receive that award, Jeanie McLendon told me that Paula and I were the only people who had ever done research that showed that the Satir’s approach to communication was effective. Say it Straight certainly uses Satir, and it also has

introduced some additional powerful things that Paula developed for a training program about behavior, and Paula and Virginia used in “Say It Straight: From Compulsions to Choices,”

Say It Straight training does not use lectures; the training is experiential, and we learn how to do the training by doing the training as we also practice doing the training. We also use workbooks as a cognitive component. Say It Straight (SIS) is a research-based, action-oriented, experiential training program that uses Virginia Satir’s approach to communication. This is combined with experiential learning based on cooperative action-oriented behavioral skills practice rather than lectures.

SIS gives people the freedom to explore and contrast empowering and disempowering behaviors and their effects on themselves and others. Empowering behavior means honoring and respecting ourselves, others, and the issues in the relationship. Disempowering behavior means not honoring and not respecting any part of one or more components of the relationship. Say It Straight gives people the freedom to discover what was deep within them that would lead them to discover strength within themselves, learn to love and honor themselves and others, and find peaceful solutions.

SIS training has been used successfully in many settings, including schools, juvenile detention, group homes, shelters for homeless people, inpatient and outpatient treatment and after-care, suicide prevention, prisons, and probation facilities. SIS has also been successful in training a variety of populations, including parents, couples, people with eating disorders, student support groups, intergenerational groups, community and church groups and private and public organizational development, and long-range planning.

The recognition of the universality of relationships of submission-dominance and the disempowering behaviors this produces has led to the use of SIS with diverse populations and cultures. The Say It Straight Foundation has trained people from many states in the USA, as well as people in Canada, Puerto Rico, Mexico, Costa Rica, Hong Kong, Europe, Australia, the Middle East, and US Military bases in the United States and abroad.

Unequal power relationships are a universal human experience. We are all born little, and someone else knows better and tells us what to do. However, this leads to a long-term assumption of sub-mission-dominance roles. The fears that arise from this human condition lead to disempowering behaviors that present challenges to us as individuals, to our relationships, and even to our social structures. For example, fear of being rejected can lead to people-pleasing without regard for one’s own self-interests. Fear of being less than can lead to blaming or bullying. When people discover and embrace their inherent resources (such as courage, wisdom, resilience, friendliness, cooperation, positive support, and compassion), they can honor themselves, others, and the issues in their relationships.

Studies have shown that utilizing lectures, providing and discussing facts about risky behaviors, can boomerang and lead to more favorable attitudes toward risky behaviors such as smoking. Indeed, lectures really do create deaf ears. The Satir approach honors one of the most highly held human values: freedom.

The freedom experienced by participants in SIS minimizes the chances of rebellious reactions because when people choose the situations they want to work on, they are taking part ownership of their learning. The result is amazing in which they discover their own desire and ability to make positive choices and the resulting positive behavior their choices have on others.

Some examples brought up by students involve alcohol/drug abuse, cheating, stealing, vandalism, cutting school, sexual behavior, drinking, and driving.

They ask, “How do I say “no” to a friend?” How do I say “I have quit” to a group of friends who are still using? How do I say to a friend “I care about you, and I am scared when I see what you are doing” How do I tell my parents “I love you, and I’m scared when I see what you are doing?”

Adults report similar difficulties important to them at home, at work, and with friends.

The length of SIS training depends on the size and composition of the group. For example, basic SIS training has been conducted in seven to ten fifty-minute sessions with elementary through high school students, in fourteen to twenty-five sessions over a period of several months with adults in addiction treatment, in a weekend with couples, and as an ongoing program for adolescents and adults in prisons. In all cases, the training content is experiential, and cognitive reinforcement is achieved through the use of workbooks-journals for different age groups, which are used to review, contemplate, and record one’s experiences. SIS also uses posters with pictorial representations of empowering and disempowering behaviors. An example of the depth the training can achieve was in a prison for lifers, where a counselor conducted Say It Straight every week for ten years. When he retired, the prisoners requested to continue Say It Straight by themselves.

Safety and Trust

To create a setting of safety and trust, the training begins with creating a team. Depending on the size of the group, the team can begin with a number of triads that merge into one large team. Guided imagery is used to give people the opportunity to explore rooting diversity in sameness even with people with whom we disagree or have a fight and to explore rooting uniqueness in sameness and diversity. The guided imagery can go beyond the training group and be extended to the whole world. It can involve nations, religions, and cultures with which our country or some of the participants may be at odds. The guided imagery includes exploring diversity and rooting uniqueness in both diversity and sameness.

This process has been successful across all populations where SIS has been used from second graders through eighty-year-olds. In one elementary school, two second-grade girls could not see any sameness between them. It took a week for the two girls to see their sameness. One day, one of the girls went up to the teacher’s desk and said, “All my life, I have been angry,” and the other girl overheard that, jumped out of her seat, and said, “All my life, I have been mad,” and then they hugged. They became friends, and their mothers also became friends.

We have had reports from other students who have been enemies and became friends, and we also have had reports that SIS demystifies bullying. A counselor doing SIS with a group of gay students told us that a student said, “All my life, I have been irrelevant. Now I can be real.”

The Components of an Interaction

Satir used and we also use this simple yet profound view of the components of an interaction: I, you, and it (the issue). We view empowering communication/behavior (saying it straight) as honoring all three components of an interaction. When we say it straight, we stand up straight, we do not use disempowering behaviors, we tell the truth, except possibly when in a situation where telling the truth might cause us great harm.

Satir had used five communication styles.

1. Leveling (Emotional balance and mutual problem-solving)
2. Placating (Wanting to please)

3. Blaming (Finding fault)
4. Be like a Computer (Being super-reasonable)
5. Distracting (Being Irrelevant)

In the book *Say It Straight: From Compulsions to Choices* by Paula Englander Golden and Virginia Satir, the word leveling was not used, and saying it straight was used instead. *Saying it straight* means saying the truth, with a possible exception of not saying the truth when saying the truth might cause great harm to the person saying it. By telling people they can say their truth, we empower people to speak their truth that they may have never done before. They discover what happens to their self-esteem and the effect it has on others as they speak their truth. In addition, *passive-aggressive* was added. *Passive-aggressive* was an important addition because when someone who placates takes the first step to try to stand up for themselves, they might become passive-aggressive, or in another way of saying it, they might placate with a grudge.

We use the components of an interaction: I, you, and it and have pictures to represent all the disempowering and empowering communication/behavior.

Hidden Treasures

It is a powerful realization for participants to discover in every disempowering behavior that there is already an implicit resource, a hidden treasure, like a seed, that can blossom into its fullness when we honor others, the issues, and ourselves. For example, the disempowering aspect of placating is we honor the needs of someone else at our own expense. The implicit resource in this behavior is the ability to compromise, to negotiate, and to be helpful. In blaming or bullying, there is already a seed of leadership. In being passive-aggressive, or placating with a grudge instead of placating, there is the seed for standing up for oneself. In being super-reasonable, the hidden treasure is our ability to think things through clearly. In being irrelevant, there is already the seed of humor, imagination, and taking time out to relax. In all the disempowering ways of being, when we honor all three components of an interaction (I, you, it), we can be kind without being weak and be powerful without being destructive, and we can say it straight and be leaders for positive change.

Sculpting

Disempowering and empowering communications/behaviors are first explored by using body sculpting, introduced by Virginia Satir. Satir helped people experience their own empowering and disempowering behaviors by having them put their bodies into physical postures that intensify and make overt and concrete one's internal experience. In this way, people become aware of their breathing, their body sensations, their feelings, and their thoughts in empowering and disempowering ways of being. The body's responses become a comprehensible system of signals, like the dashboard of a car, where lights come on to warn about what needs attention. In SIS, we use sculpting with individuals, couples, and large groups to help people experience themselves, their feelings, their body sensations, their breathing, and their thoughts. For example, when we introduce the concept of the placating behavioral pattern (people-pleasing), we ask participants to get down on one knee with one hand on their heart and the other hand in a begging posture or as if warding off a blow. We have had participants in wheelchairs or who simply could not get down on one knee. They could still follow the guided imagery. We then ask participants to imagine someone in front of them whom they are placating and to be in touch with their breathing, their body sensations, their feelings, and their thoughts as they say "yes" when their deepest yearning is to say "no." At the end of this sculpture, we ask them to stand up and imagine someone in front of them who is placating them. In this way, they explore not only what happens to them when they placate, but they also explore what happens to them when someone placates them. This process is used in exploring every communication style.

Using the same process, participants also explore blaming, being passive-aggressive, being super-reasonable, being irrelevant, and saying it straight. Of all the behavioral sculptures, only the sculpture of saying it straight has elicited comments from some students and adults, “I have never experienced this before.” All the others they have experienced before.

The multigenerational sculpture is a more complex exercise that gives people the opportunity to discover the rules from past generations that bind them today. An example could be a rule passed down the generations, such as “You must always win” or “You must never put your needs first.” The rules can be transformed into gentler guides.

In SIS, we also use a multigenerational sculpture to help people discover the strength in their roots that made it possible for them to be here today. Despite past hardships and even abuse, they become aware there had to be enough nurture for them to survive and even thrive into the present time. We draw the analogy of the seed of a tree growing in the cleft of a rock. It had to have enough sunshine and rain, even in the most difficult climate, to allow it to grow, burst through the crack in the rock, and be alive today.

This is often one of the most powerful experiences in the training. This sculpture of the strength in their roots moves people from shame and blame to appreciation, pride in their ancestry or their past, and recognition of their own strength, often for the first time.

For instance, in a workshop for teachers, counselors, and coaches, one of the counselors volunteered to be the “star” (the primary focus) of this sculpture. The participants all knew each other, as they had grown up together and lived in the same small town in Massachusetts. At the end of this sculpture and guided imagery, the “star” was sobbing. While she certainly looked white, she disclosed that there was a secret in her family that had always been a source of shame for her. There were slaves in her heritage. In this sculpture, she was experiencing pride in her ancestry for the first time as she realized the strength, courage, and hope that must have existed in her forbearers to allow her to be alive and present to make her contributions today.

Another example of the power in experiencing the strength in our roots is that of an elementary school student in San Diego who had been ashamed of his family. None of them had ever come to any school event. Two weeks after he played the “star” of the multigenerational sculpture, his parents and grandparents astonished the school principal by appearing with the student at the next family-school activity. His teacher had earlier noticed a change in the student’s behavior and told us she believed the student told his family he was proud of them.

Making Movies

Making movies is important and a way for people to explore situations important in their lives in which they have used disempowering behaviors. The participants who will act in a specific movie suggest the content. In this way, the movies give participants ownership of their training. Playing a part in a movie gives participants the opportunity to discover and compare how they feel as a function of their disempowering and empowering behavior. They get feedback from the person with whom they are interacting about the impact of their behavior as well as feedback from the audience. They discover that empowering behavior enhances their self-esteem and elicits respect from the other person and the audience.

Here is a brief introduction, an example of making a movie. The trainer becomes the movie director, asks for volunteers, and asks them to choose acting names for themselves. The director also chooses a name for himself/herself. The actors/actresses play their parts using method acting. That means they feel their own feelings while playing their part, not the feelings they think they should feel in that situation. The simplest

movie requires two actors/actresses. Usually, the first movie is about placating that will be transformed into saying it straight. For example, the movie could be about a friend pressuring a friend to engage in a behavior, such as using drugs or cheating, sneaking out of the house at night, engaging in sex, or, in the case of adults, being pressured by the community to take the responsibility to raise money for a good cause.

Both actors explore being the one who pressures and the one who responds to the pressure in a disempowering and then in an empowering way. In this way, they both experience the effects of empowering and disempowering behavior by being both senders and receivers of such communication/behavior. In some cases, this may be the first time someone has experienced saying it straight.

During the movie, the trainer's responsibility as a movie director is to help process the feelings of the one being pressured, as well as the one doing the pressuring. For example, the trainer may ask the actors questions, such as "How do you feel as you are aware your deepest wish was to say 'no,' and instead, you gave excuses and ended up saying 'yes'? You didn't honor your deepest wish." A question to the pressurer could be, "Did you know your friend did not want to do this?" The processing continues to clarify and lead actors to reflect on the nature of friendship.

Another function of the director is to assign who will be the pressurer first. The reason is sometimes in a school, a student could be a real drug dealer, and that student immediately wants to be the pressurer since he/she knows how to do that job well and wants to show off. It becomes a powerful experience for that student to be pressured first. In this way, he/she experiences what it is like to say "yes" when one's deepest wish is to say "no," compared to saying "no" when "no" is one's deepest wish. To witness the struggle and the transformation the dealer goes through is also a powerful experience for the observers.

It is worthy to note when someone is being pressured by a friend to do something with negative consequences, like cutting school or using drugs, often, the person being pressured responds with positive support. For instance, the response can be, "You are my friend, and I am scared when I see what you are doing. I'll stick by you. Let's go talk it over with..." This happens often. But if this doesn't happen spontaneously; the director needs to set up a positive support movie.

It also is the function of the director to assign the deepest wish to the one who will be pressured. The deepest wish is always for empowering behavior, namely, to say it straight. For example, the director can say, "Your deepest wish is to say 'no' to the pressurer, but the only way you know how to take care of yourself is by placating."

You may wonder about the assumption of the deepest wish being for empowering behavior, speaking one's truth. Paula Englander-Golden's personal experience in WWII created a conflict between the desire to speak the truth and wanting to survive. We believe relationships of submission-dominance create the same fear and conflict even though death may not be the result of speaking one's truth. We believe the universal deepest wish is to speak one's truth that honors oneself, others, and the issues. By giving this assignment to an actor in a movie, we empower people to speak their truth that they may have never done before. This allows them to discover what happens to their self-esteem and the effect it has on others as they speak their truth.

At the end of a movie, the actors get feedback from the observers about what they saw, what they heard, whether they recognized such a situation, how they felt as they watched the movie. Lastly, the director invites the actors and himself or herself to take off their name tags and invites actors and observers to take from the movie what was useful and leave behind what was not. Giving everyone permission to only take what is useful is another way to give everyone the freedom to make her or his own choices.

Participants have played out many challenging situations, such as moments when they very much wanted to say “no” but said “yes” instead, times when they wanted to say “no” said “yes” instead and made plans for revenge, times when they gave lectures and felt frustration and anger with the outcome, and times when they wanted to talk to a loved one whose behavior worried them but then did not address what was in their hearts when they came face-to-face. In every case, they change the disempowering behavior into empowering behavior. Movies can become quite complex with several actors participating in one movie.

When we do Say It Straight Training of Trainers workshops, we show participants some movies on three DVDs that have Paula doing Say It Straight training on a contract funded by the US Department of Education for the Say It Straight Foundation. The movies show Paula directing and processing movies with students and adults that can be used to learn how to make and direct the training from an expert. Most participants in Say It Straight Training of Trainers workshops have ordered one to three of these DVDs to help them specifically with being the directors of movies when doing Say It Straight Training.

Transforming Rules

Disempowering communication and behavior are often the result of one or more of our rules that we carry from our childhood, sometimes unconsciously. The language of rules uses words such as “must,” “should,” “ought,” “always,” and “never.” Any behavior can result from holding several rules that govern the same situation, and some may even be contradictory. For example, we may have the rule “I must always be honest” along with the rule “I must never lose face.”

Sometimes the same rule can lead to different behaviors, depending, for instance, on other rules that influence it. The rule “I must always avoid conflict” can lead one person to placate, another to be passive-aggressive while someone else might be irrelevant or even be super-reasonable. For example, if I have a rule “I must always avoid conflict” as well as a rule that “I must always appease you,” I may placate. However, if instead of appeasement, my second rule requires that “I must always use reason to avoid feelings,” I may instead become super-reasonable. If my second rule is “I must always lighten up a difficult situation,” I may become irrelevant in my response or crack a joke. If my rule is “I must always appear that I collaborate, but I will get revenge,” I will be passive-aggressive and agree to collaborate but sabotage you behind your back. When taken to the extreme, these rules can lead to destructive consequences. For example, the rule “I must always be right” can lead to willful ignorance—that is not being open to new information or acceptance of a new idea. The rule “I must always be more deserving than others” can lead to greed. The rule “I must always win” can lead to cruelty or dishonesty. The rule “I must never have rules” is, in fact, a very big rule that we often encountered working with young people. It leads to rebelliousness and is important to transform.

The process of a rule transformation begins with identification of the rule. We examine difficult situations and consider them as opportunities to connect to our inner resources and develop our skills to honor ourselves, others, and life. Then from “I must always...” or “I must never...,” participants are asked first to change the word “must” into “can.” The next step is to change the word “always” or “never” into “sometimes.” Finally, the participants are asked to change “sometimes” into at least three possibilities to reach the final statement “I can...when...” So, for example, the rule “I must always win” progresses to the next step, “I can always win,” which the owner of the rule, quickly recognizes as impossible. Next, it becomes “I can sometimes win.” Now the transformation reaches the final step “I can win when...” with three possibilities identified, such as (a) “I play better,” (b) “I have a great day,” and (c) “I am better prepared.” A transformed rule can lead to a useful guide for living.

When we do rule transformations with younger students, we may ask the whole class to choose a rule. When we are transforming the rule, we record on the board all the students' responses. In this way, all students discover they have rules that bind them, and no student is singled out.

The Necklace of Resources

There is always more within us than what may come out in a moment of stress. At times, participants, regardless of age, can find it difficult to transform disempowering communications/behaviors into empowering ones. In such situations, we can help a participant by creating a "necklace of resources." We use guided imagery to help participants become aware they have many resources within themselves. They become aware of those inner resources with which they need to be connected at that moment to help them in the transformation. Some of the resources people have come up with are courage, kindness, wisdom, the ability to be a good friend, the ability to honor themselves, others, life, nature, and the ability to learn something new. These are truly infinite treasures.

We ask the person we are working with to choose people in the group to be physical representations of their resources. Those who agree to create the "necklace of resources" are asked to come forward and gently put their hand on one shoulder of the person going through the transformation. The "resources" rotate, one by one, as they are face-to-face with their owner (the person going through the transformation). One by one, as they rotate, every "resource" says to the owner who they represent and ask if they are accepted. For example, "I am your courage. Do you accept me?" etc.

We have worked with people who created jewelry they can wear to represent their necklace of resources. In one group of eighteen women in outpatient addictions treatment, every one of them requested to do their "necklace of resources" in the group. When working in addictions, we have found spirituality to most often be called upon. The rule "I must always win" can lead to cruelty or dishonesty. The rule "I must never have rules" is, in fact, a very big rule that we often encountered working with young people. It leads to rebelliousness and is important to transform. .

When we do rule transformations, sometimes with younger students, we ask the whole class to choose a rule. When we are transforming the rule, we record on the board all the students' responses. In this way, all students discover they have rules that bind them, and no student is singled out.

Paula and I have done many Say It Straight workshops and conference presentations together in the United States, Costa Rica, Mexico, Hong Kong, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Egypt and Israel. Paula also worked at Army and Airforce bases in the US and abroad in South Korea, Guam, and Germany. The University of Oklahoma had contracts to offer master's degrees in human relations to the army and the air-force, and Paula was part of that. At that time, she was using Say It Straight to help African American men and white men get along with each other in the army and woman pilots get along with men in the air force.

Paula had a class with white students, African American students, and native American students and some refused to sit in a circle with the others. So, she started the training standing up, but at the end of the training the students were sitting together. In another school, when she thought she had done all the classes in the school, the principal of the school told her she had to do one more class. This was a class that was separated from the other classrooms and had all the students who were problems, some of them had been left back in some grades. She agreed to do their training, and at the same time, Nancy Reagan who thought many kids were acting crazy and she was pushing "just say no", and she wanted to show how crazy the kids were. She sent someone to see if Say It Straight could be used on the program, she was going to put on national TV.

Paula was worried about that, but she pushed ahead with that class while the man Nancy Reagan sent was there. When she got to the room, she could see the kids really were making a lot of noise and running all over the room, because there was no teacher present. Paula took a deep breath, opened the door, walked into the room, and said keep doing what you are doing, but do it in groups of three. She then put them in groups of three and went around the room saying you are an A, you are a B, you are a C as she gave each one either an A or a B or a C. She then said in the first round the As are out and the Bs and Cs will play together. That went on as then the As and Cs played together and finally the As and Bs played together. In all cases, the ones who were out were trying to get in and it was very boisterous. The man Nancy Reagan sent was happy and as he left, he said I will be back with my crew next week, Nancy will love this. He came back the next week but now the group was different. One of the tall kids was talking to another tall kid and he said, "Man we've been buds since we were in Kindergarten, and I am scared when I see you using crack cocaine," At that point, the man from Nancy Reagan told his crew to stop videoing and he jumped up and said, "I don't believe you. You weren't like that last week. I don't believe you." The boy turned and said, "You callin me a liar"? With that Paula jumped up, in case she had to protect the man. Then the boy said, I been practicin." After that day the man from Nancy Reagan told Paula that what she did was amazing in the time between the first day and the next week. I will certainly want to put this on TV, and he did.

When Virginia came back from Russia in 1988, Paula and I saw her, and she said she didn't feel well and thought she had picked up something in Russia. But she got much sicker in the summer at the last workshop she ever did while in Colorado. She was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and decided to return home. She called Laura Dotson, who lived in Denver, and asked Laura to meet her at the Denver Airport and bring some chicken soup. She went home and did not live very long after that. Laura was with her in her house when she passed and Virginia told Laura that she was sorry how she had treated her sister. Virginia also called Paula a number of times during the beginning of that September to talk about problems she still had with Avanta. The last time she called was on the day before she passed, September 9th, she called Paula and said please forgive me, Then, she said, call me in the morning and she hung up. Paula thought Virginia had asked to be forgiven with a new understanding that forgiving is possible. When Paula called the next morning there was no answer, she had passed. I was still on the Avanta Board when Virginia passed, and I organized a celebration of her life with M. A. Bjorkman in California. We invited some famous people who knew Virginia, to speak and also some Avantans to speak to a little over 1,000 attendees.

Many years later I was going to do a Say It Straight Training of trainers Workshop at California State University, Long Beach, and I thought this is where the newest President of Satir Global is, Sharon Loeshen. I do not know her, maybe things have changed, and I should look her up while I am there. Well, I did, and she graciously invited me to have dinner with her while I was there. When we had dinner and I talked with her, I got that she was just what Satir Global needed, and I am still happy about that.