

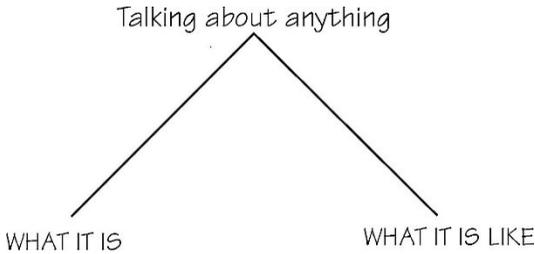
A Way of Talking

Ray Slade

Sometimes we don't realise how, the way we talk affects the way we live. By simply adopting a new way of talking, we can find ourselves enjoying a new way of living.

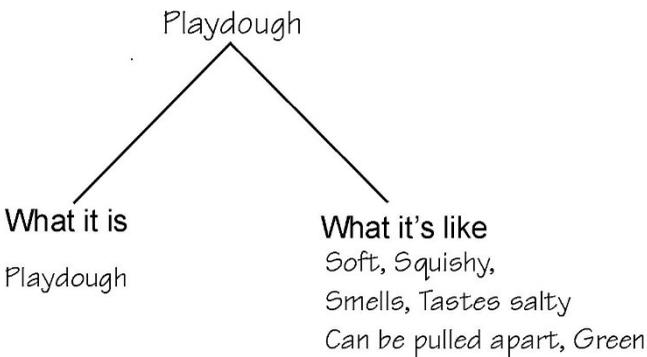
There are two ways of talking about absolutely everything.

We can talk about what something is, or we can talk about what it is like.



Many people might think they are the same thing. But they are very different.

If I talked about something saying, it was green, heavy, malleable, squishy, smells and can be pulled apart, you might not know what I was talking about. But if I said it was Playdough, you would know immediately. One way of talking describes what it is LIKE, the other tells us what it is.



DESCRIBING WHAT SOMETHING IS LIKE, DOES NOT TELL US WHAT IT IS.

KNOWING WHAT SOMETHING IS, DOES NOT TELL US WHAT IT IS LIKE

We could say that talking about what something is, is to talk about its IDENTITY. Whereas, talking about what something is LIKE, is talking about its UNIQUENESS.

If you want to buy something, you'll need to know what it IS, not just what it's LIKE.

The words we use to talk about what something is LIKE, are words that either describe, or define something. Unfortunately, we often get the two ways of talking mixed up.

IDENTITY What something is

UNIQUENESS What something is like

We can easily describe what something is like when we are trying to explain what something is. Most people don't really notice or care. But let's focus for a moment on Uniqueness.

Uniqueness

UNIQUENESS is what makes something different from everything else.

It's square, large, small, fluffy, cold, smells like... is good to create shapes... can be moulded ... tastes sweet ... is hard to cut... and millions more different viewpoints are just ways of describing what something is like.

Is there a problem here?

When we talk about what things are like, we can easily put them into one of two opposite groups. We can think of things as either Good or Bad... positive or negative .. helpful or unhelpful... or whatever labels might be appropriate.

Rain is a simple example. It's fantastic if you are in a drought. Not so good if you're planning a wedding or a barbecue.

How we talk about others and ourselves

The interesting thing is that we talk about people... others and ourselves, using exactly the same way of talking... what we ARE and what we're LIKE. Just like talking about everyday things, we usually get them mixed up. But when we are talking about ourselves or others, the end results can be quite devastating. This is because what we are like and what we do are not related to what we are. Most people find this difficult to accept.

Two Kinds of Uniqueness

Now when we start talking about what we or others are like, there are many things to consider. Just think of the hundreds of attributes that we have...

Humans have the ability to make plans for the future, to make decisions based on values or principles, to recognize the needs of others, to design and build amazing things, to make laws and rules, to praise, to write stories and make movies... and many other characteristics like these.

However, a significant way in which we talk about ourselves, is by using words that describe our individuality. These are ways that define who we are as distinct from every other human being. They are our own personal beliefs about ourselves.

In fact, they are more than just beliefs. They are actually definitions, or ways that we define who we are.

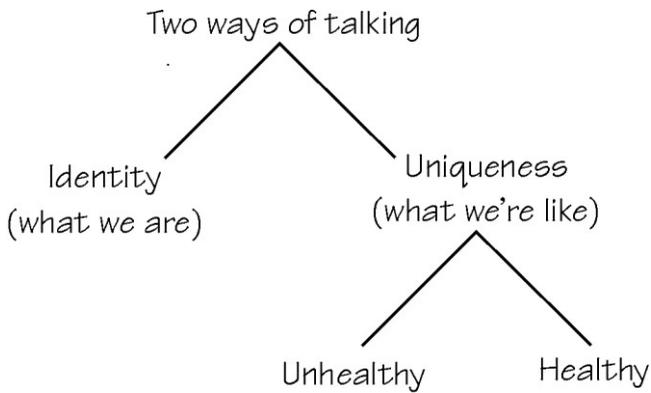
For example... our likes, dislikes, preferences, abilities, character, values,

habits and so on.

The problem arises when we separate these things into two other groups... Healthy or Unhealthy.

Healthy and Unhealthy beliefs

Healthy definitions are those that enable us to remain emotionally stable in life, while enabling us to grow and move forward. They help us to feel good about ourselves and see ourselves in perspective. Unhealthy definitions are those beliefs that hold us back, cause us to be emotionally up one day and down the next, stop us from growing and enjoying life.



Healthy beliefs (definitions) include things like...

- I like the great outdoors...
- I like to play the guitar
- I'm good at fixing things
- I'm good at conversation
- I like to cook and can make a good meal
- I like to write
- I can motivate myself
- I believe I can tell a good story

And many others like these.

Unhealthy beliefs include things like...

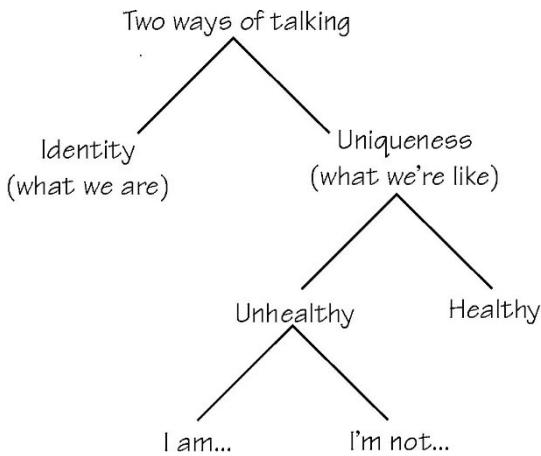
- I'm not good at making conversation
- I'm not good with relationships
- I'm not as popular as others
- I'm overweight
- I'm a bit slow
- I'm hopeless at maths.
- I'm an angry person
- I'm not good looking
- I'm not intelligent

And many others like these.

The Unhealthy Group

You probably noticed that in the unhealthy group of beliefs, most beliefs fall into two groups... the **I am**s and the **I'm not**s.

What's so significant about that?



In the I AM's we find things like...

- I am lazy
- I am hopeless with maths
- I am overweight
- I am inconsistent
- I am unmotivated

The I'm not's group has things like...

- I'm not good with words
- I'm not a patient person
- I'm not a good father.
- I'm not as popular as others
- I'm not well educated

The unusual thing about the I'M NOT group is that we have a large list of beliefs that define who we are by stating **what we're not!** We don't do this in any other area of our life.

We don't define our car by stating what it's not. ...We don't describe our job by stating what we're not. ...We don't say my dog is not a Cocker Spaniel, he's not a sheep dog, he's not a Poodle, he's not a Kelpie, he's not a

People want to know what he IS, not what he's NOT.

Why then do we define
ourselves by what we're not?

The Unfortunate Consequences

For some strange reason, humans take delight in defining themselves by what they're not. And that probably wouldn't matter very much except for one really important truth. Eminent therapist Earnie Larson said,

...we live our lives according
to how we see ourselves

This is a profound truth.

If I have a belief about myself that I'm not a good communicator, then it's unlikely that I'll apply for a job as a public relationship officer.

If I have a belief that I'm not good with words, then it's unlikely I will accept any offer of public speaking or apply for a job as a journalist.

If I believe about myself that I'm a good cook, I won't hesitate to invite friends or strangers around for dinner.

If I see myself as an interesting person, I'll feel confident enough to walk up to strangers and introduce myself.

The beliefs I hold about myself are the single biggest controlling factor of my behaviour.

If you want to change yourself or your unhealthy behaviours ... start by examining your self-beliefs.



Other things to read on this topic

Identity and Uniqueness, Understanding what and who we really are, Ray Slade