Simply Having A Strong *Belief* Does Not Excuse Our Responsibility For Our *Actions*.

We obviously have a variety of beliefs. They can be religious, cultural, personal or other, and they can be important, solid foundations for families and groups. We not only take pride in them, we sometimes use them to justify our actions. We hear ourselves and others say "I believe….", and we take this as something to be respected. But, can beliefs sometimes lead to ethical problems for us and others? Yes, of course they can.

The problems come from the actions that follow from our beliefs. We can have many different beliefs, however strange or odd. They are only in our minds. We can even think that the moon is made of green cheese, and if we don't tell anybody about this, no one will know and there won't be any consequences. But, some beliefs can be potentially harmful to others. An idea in itself does no harm, but, when we say or do something that is harmful to others, then we have an ethical problem. Of course, it is realized that many hurtful actions such as appropriate punishments are necessary. But, we are concerned here with those that can be avoided or fall in a "grey" zone in our interpersonal interactions.

Consider a simple, even if extreme example, the actions of terrorists. Terrorists' *beliefs* as such do not harm anybody, but if the actions that follow from them cause harm, then there is a serious problem. Killing someone who works for the government because some believe they are part of an evil empire is still murder, no matter what the belief. We don't condone such actions simply because they are based on beliefs, however sacred. A personal belief, solely and simply by itself, cannot justify harmful actions to others. Much more is needed to justify such actions.

In the workplace or in the social sphere, it seems that most colleagues and friends understand and respect this. Nevertheless, many interpersonal problems come from people acting on their beliefs, and it is fascinating to analyze this in some detail. If we or others end up doing hurtful things, then maybe we need to examine, be aware of and perhaps modify our beliefs. It is part of living, growing and becoming wise. Personal beliefs can impact our relationships in many ways.