

Can We Talk?

Avoiding the
Prince Charles
Dilemma



Seventy
years is a
long time
to wait for
your role
to begin.

Charles Philip Arthur George, Prince of Wales, has been the heir apparent to the British Throne since November 1952, when his mother, Queen Elizabeth II, ascended to the throne upon the death of her father. He is the oldest and longest serving heir apparent in British History, a role he took on at the age of four.

Prince Charles received numerous titles concomitant with becoming the heir apparent, including: Duke of Cornwall, Duke of Rothesay, Earl of Carrick, Baron of Renfrew, Lord of the Isles and Prince and Great Steward of Scotland. He was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree before serving in the Royal Navy for five years.

No one can doubt that Prince Charles has contributed in many ways to the United Kingdom, as the head of numerous charities, an advocate for environmentalism, a champion of organic farming and even authored several books. What he has not been able to do so far in life is the very thing he was born to do, become King.

If he seems unhappy or even uncomfortable in his own skin sometimes it may be because he has basically been waiting his entire life, just offstage, listening for the cue that would signal that it is time to step into the spotlight and begin his reign as monarch. Seventy years is a long time to wait for your role to begin.

In all those ensuing decades of the reign of Queen Elizabeth II, Prince Charles has faced a dilemma. He must be prepared to step in at a moment's notice upon the death or abdication of his mother, and he must somehow busy himself with other interests to fill the time until he is called to serve. He is a perpetual understudy, awaiting his big break.

His circumstances are not dissimilar to those encountered by the sons and daughters of wealth creators, whose status wasn't earned by them, rather inherited.

*“It is not in
the stars
to hold
our destiny
but in
ourselves.”*

William Shakespeare

Consider an American case in point. A west coast wealth creator built a rather large fortune in a family-run business about fifty years ago. He and his wife also built a beautiful home on a private lake in which they raised their family, consisting of three sons. The oldest son, like Prince Charles, was raised with the expectation that he would be the heir apparent who would take over the business and ultimately inherit the family estate.

The son went away to college, majoring in business, and began working for his father, starting at the bottom of the rung and working his way up the ladder, at least as far as he was allowed to go. He became a Vice-President, after many years, and expected to accede to the Presidency when his father retired.

And, not unlike Queen Elizabeth so far, the father did not take retirement. Instead he chose to hold tightly to the reins of control until he died, never allowing the son to experience full responsibility for the company during his father's lifetime. Moreover, the son developed significant health problems from the stress of his situation which seriously compromised his physical ability to measure up to the CEO position.

Even the lake front home became a liability because of years of neglect, so although the son inherited it, he had to spend a large amount of money to bring it up to optimum living conditions again.

In hindsight, he regrets that he spent so much of his life waiting for his life to begin. And he regrets that when it did begin it was disappointing to him on all fronts.

So what can we learn from all this? One of our dear friends spent thirty years practicing as a psychotherapist and on his retirement I asked him if there were any major themes that he saw in his patients overall. He said there were. Most people were struggling with three main issues: the meaning, identity and structure of their lives.

What is the meaning, identity, and structure in your life?

The experiences of Prince Charles and our west coast client illustrate how people can forego developing their own life course in deference to others. The tight grip on the reins of control exhibited by Queen Elizabeth II and the wealth creator are often seen when working with high net worth families.

It's understandable. For most of their lives wealth creators have worked hard to develop the brand and amass the wealth. They probably endured many threats to their power that could have ended their efforts. Having achieved the pinnacle of success through their toil and trouble, they may not view anyone as measuring up to their standards. Why is this?

At Spencer Legacy Group we are strong advocates for helping clients understand themselves deeply. We are skilled in assessing and interpreting the Myers-Briggs Type Inventory. Some personality temperaments, specifically Sensing Judgers (SJs), who are called Guardians, have a hard time letting go. They want to control the outcomes. Flexibility is not one of their strengths. Since this temperament exists in about 38% of the general population the preference often comes into play in families.

So, what do you do if you are the heir apparent, whether to the throne of England or to the company that your family developed? Focus on finding meaning, identity and structure in your life that is not tied to the company or the country. Perhaps you will find it by pursuing hobbies, remembering from your childhood what you wanted to be when you grew up, getting out of your comfort zone and exploring new geographies and cultures, volunteering, joining interest groups, or meditating on the essential question "Who Am I?"

These longings to find one's own meaning, identity and structure, separate and apart from the roles that others may want to cast us in, were the impetus for us to begin our work with clients in our Transitions Program.

We created an intense, five-day process where clients could examine their life in context and begin to see a broader horizon rich with possibilities they had not previously considered. Working with us in a very personalized way, they were able to step out of their normal roles and decide for themselves what path they wanted to pursue.

In our Transitions Program we combine the beauty of nature with rigorous processes that engage our clients holistically, addressing their needs for body, mind and spiritual alignment in their journey.

Some have made radical life changes, such as a doctor who gave up the practice and became an artist, others simply became more assertive, more of an advocate for themselves, and still others returned to their previous roles with new understanding and a better sense of balance.

In a kind of paradoxical way the more our clients develop themselves fully as an individual, separate and apart from the role of the heir apparent, the more they will be qualified and ready to take over when it's time for them to lead.

Allow the Spencer Legacy Group to show you how we can help your family overcome the issues that might sabotage your success. When it's time to talk about the elephant in the room, give us a call at 1-800-694-0059, or find us online at www.spencerlegacygroup.com.

