



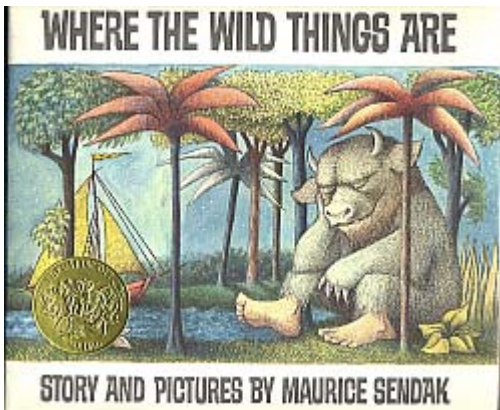
## Sherpa Strength: The Newsletter of Executive Coaching

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### Got Wild Things?

by Karl Corbett

You have Wild Things at work. Some of your Wild Things can't keep it under control. Others don't know how to act. Bottom line, Wild Things limit how much good your organization can do.



Who works with the Wild Things? Well, your leaders do. They're supposed to motivate and inspire people to work together. They have to tame your Wild Things, or at least try. Leaders can also hire professional Wild Thing tamers, sometimes called "executive coaches".

Changing someone else's behavior is tough. It's a challenge. The way you do this challenging work depends on the way you see the human condition. What you believe about people drives the way you deal with them and their behavior.

One way of looking at life is traditional storyteller's view. It has been around forever. Our culture and our experience tell us we all have something called character. Character is a set of traits that work together to guide our behavior. Honest people are almost always honest. You can count on hard-working people to work hard. We agree that a good life comes from doing good things. We all know what that means. It's the traditional storyteller's view of who we are.

Nearly fifty years ago, the children's book *Where the Wild Things Are* took the psychologists' view: Character is a myth. We are not driven by permanent traits we use all the time. In fact, we are each 'a community of people', continually popping in and out of existence. We don't clearly understand right and wrong because we are driven by circumstance, not character.

There's a lot of room for creativity when you turn a 10-sentence story into two hours of film. The writers and actors in the 2009 movie take the psychologists' view of who we are. Twelve-year old star Max Records says: "It's not like the classic moralistic story, where you do something, you realize it was wrong, you learn your lesson. It's different. The boy gets angry, the mom gets angry. "

Catherine Keener, who plays the mother, continues: "They don't sit down and talk about it and resolve

their conflict. They just 'go for it' emotionally. That's what happens sometimes, and it made perfect sense to me. At that moment, if they say, 'I hate your guts,' they mean it."

In the story, Max wants to control the wild things. The wild things want him to be in control. He fails. The wild things realize that he isn't a king, and maybe there is no such thing. That's the psychologists' view of the human condition.

If truth is absolute, then only one of these two views makes any sense at all. If truth is an open dialog, then we can learn from both viewpoints. If you are responsible for leading, for managing the behavior of other people, it's not academic. It's real world. Do you praise certain things? Punish others? Ignore behaviors or confront them? You can't guess. You need to take a stand.

Decide which point of view you take: the storyteller's or the psychologists'. Think about that foundational view when you deal with business behavior. Then, acting consistently, you can create permanent, positive changes in business behavior. Permanent, positive change. It's a challenge. It's where the Wild Things are.

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