



Superb Coaching

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Perception and Reality

In order that we effectively communicate with another person it is important that we understand a simple principal. This is simply that:

“For each individual – their perception IS their REALITY”

What is the significance of this principal – simply this. No matter what you say or do for anyone, their perception on life is their reality and everything that you say or do that does not agree with this will result in conflict at some level or another.

There is one exception however – for those who accept that their reality may not be entirely true; or that if that person is at a place in their lives where they accept that whatever views they have – such views are based on their own experiences and that their view may not be the only view. Now this is a rare state for most people to be in and is certainly one that I feel most of us should aspire to – a state of complete acceptance in the belief that whatever we are is a result of our past conditioning and subject to the relevance of that conditioning. Our perception on life may hold varying levels of significance to not only ourselves but to those around us or who form part of our lives.

So how do we come to this point? Quite simply it is all a result of those events that have occurred in our life. It is those events and how we as individuals interpret them that give us cause to form our beliefs. Now that is the short answer to the question. In fact the path we take is a little more involved.

Imagine if you will an event that occurred in your life as a child. Take for example the child who is continually told that they will never amount to anything in life because they lack intelligence (the belief of the school teacher say) and will never amount to anything. This event, or series of events, may be linked to other events such as continually failing at class tests. The child will more than likely interpret the results of the tests linked with the comments made by the teacher as a statement of fact that they do not possess any intelligence and will in fact not succeed in life. From here the child will attach a meaning to all of this in that whatever they attempt will result in failure. This will then provide them with an explanation to all previous and future events creating the concept that they will not make a success of their life at school or anything they subsequently attempt. Concepts are a personal interpretation of meaning attached to a previous event.

At this point the sub-conscious mind comes into play. The sub-conscious has a single role and that is to seek evidence to substantiate our concepts. Once we have formed a concept on life our sub-conscious will constantly seek out evidence to support those concepts and of course in finding that evidence, we have proof of the truth. With truth we have our beliefs.

For each individual – remember that their beliefs are substantiated by their own truths, even though these may only be perceptions based on previous personal experiences.



Thus the saying – “Perception is Reality”. For the individual it is; the sooner we come to understand this fact the easier we will find it to effectively communicate with others.

When we talk with other people they will present their “concepts” in the belief that it is the truth because it IS their belief.

Now imagine if you will a lifetime of events that have occurred since the day you were born. Is it no wonder that we are all individuals with our own perceptions on life? Can you see how we as individuals form our beliefs and make the stands we do on matters?

Thankfully most of us share enough common experiences and events which result in us forming common views on so many aspects of our lives. Most of us for instance form the same beliefs on the sanctity of the family and family values. We take a common stand on crimes against the individual. Of course there are those who have different views and indeed choose to violate the beliefs commonly held by most.

Putting aside the broader issues of such matters, can you understand how we can have two or more people considered in all regards as being intelligent and of balanced mind having vastly different views or beliefs in some aspect? It all boils down to their beliefs formed from experiences in life and the interpretation they put on those experiences.

Limiting Beliefs

This belief pattern can not only lead to conflict which I discuss in the next section, but also a common frailty of human beings – “limiting beliefs”. The example I gave earlier of where the child was told that they would amount to nothing in their life. This formed a limiting belief because it “limited” the capacity of that individual to achieve what might otherwise have been possible.

How often do you hear the words – always, never, everyone, can’t, constantly, every, have to, everybody, everything... The list goes on and on. Recognise any of these?

This is what we so often say in order to justify to ourselves what we believe but in reality close investigation will show that it is invariably a belief formed from a personal experience (not a world experience as in the case of “everyone”) and we use such phrases because we have justified our own behaviour.

It is so often that we make use of such phrases to cover our own limitations or limiting beliefs.

I will share with you a short story of a person I knew who grew up as a child in a place where swimming was not at all the normal activity. Now one day this person was invited to go swimming with their friends as children. When everyone else (who were used to swimming) jumped in the pool this particular person (who had never been swimming in her life) just followed suit and jumped straight in at the deep end of the pool. The consequences were as expected and after considerable effort to rescue and revive her, she immediately formed the belief that swimming was dangerous. From that point on she searched for evidence to substantiate this simple fact and of course when reading newspapers and watching television, all she ever read or saw were stories of how and when people drowned. Her sub-conscious sought justification



through evidence that her concept of swimming as being dangerous was indeed the truth. For her, it became her truth and of course her belief. Now many years later as an adult she was reading a magazine to which she subscribed regularly and one day a full page out jumped stating that you could learn to swim in 7 days. At this point she had decided that enough was enough – she was going to learn to swim. In fact she then went off did learn to swim.

What we saw was a change in belief that allowed her to take up the challenge and in fact conquer her fears and most importantly cast aside her earlier beliefs. The amusing part of this long story is that later on she was cleaning out her magazines. Before throwing out the pile she had accumulated over the years she quickly flicked through many of them only to notice that this same 1-page advertisement appeared in almost every one of those magazines! It was her sub-conscious which was only looking for evidence substantiating her earlier belief that prevented her from seeing any of those advertisements. Once her conscious mind allowed her to question that belief was she then able to see the advertisements.

Conflict Resolution

Do you now see how conflict comes about? It is not about who is right and who is wrong! Because for each party – both are right and neither is wrong. An impasse you might say? Welcome to the real world! Conflict exists everywhere. It is not conflict itself that is so bad it is how we manage it or deal with it that makes the difference.

Conflict comes about not only because we have different beliefs but our individual sub-conscious is constantly seeking confirmation and substantiation of our concepts.

Resolving two separate opinions both based on solid evidence (in the minds of the respective individuals) will invariably fail whilst you attempt to show which one is right and which is wrong. Indeed showing either or both parties as being wrong will fail. So what do you do about it?

The solution lies in finding a common ground of agreement or a neutral space within which you can both operate and discuss the issue.

It is a question of whether you wish to remain at the content level or raise yourself above to a level of context at which you can find agreement. From here you work back to identify the point of mutual agreement within the content.

Take for example the situation I was presented with the other day. Jane, for want of a name, is separated from her husband and they could not agree on the form of day care which their child should have. Jane felt that as the mother and custodian of the child she had the absolute right to make the decision for herself. Her ex-husband had a differing view. Now whilst they each tried to convince the other as to who was right and who was wrong they remained in conflict and she could not find a way forward.

I suggested to her that whilst they each remained at this level and coming from their own individual beliefs they would remain in conflict. I then asked her about what the real context of the matter was and she told me that it was about providing quality care for their child whilst she was at work. I asked her whether both she and her ex-husband were in agreement on this and she said that they were. We were now working from a common context where each had agreement – a good start. I then suggested that she



and the child's father should sit down and approach it from this positive angle and identify what that really meant and from their discover the positive attributes on which they both agreed. From here they may find a solution that was not only agreeable to both but in all likelihood it will be different to either of their original ideas. Of course one or the other may also come to understand the other's beliefs and in doing so come to agree with the other. The outcome? I am unaware of what finally occurred but you know the biggest step forward was that I had managed to get Jane out of that negative conflicting space into a neutral corner.

There are a range of conflict resolution techniques available to all of us and I am not saying that I have the answer here. There are many other aspects to take into account but to start with the premise that I accept that you have your beliefs and why they have come about and just because they are different to mine doesn't make either of us right or wrong is a great start.

Imagine if you will how complex we all are when you consider the millions of events that have occurred in our lives since the moment we were born. It is not just the negative meanings we attach to those events that are significant because for most of us life is more full of positive events and meanings to us. Together all these events make us into the individuals we are.

Remember this – no two individuals can be the same because it is physically impossible for us to have occupied at the same time the same space (and associated events) as any other person.

If you find yourself forming any opinion about some other person and placing any form of interpretation to that try and think of your interpretation as being something that SEEMS to be a certain way to you rather than IT IS.

EGO

As adults we unlearn the ability to accept things as we did when we were small children. We develop an EGO. This ego is the result of all those experiences that we have had taking us to adulthood and unfortunately we develop a life pattern which is focussed on:

1. Looking Good
2. Being Right
3. Knowing

A small child doesn't possess this within themselves and isn't that the beauty we all behold in children. We often refer to it as their innocence. But isn't that innocence such a beautiful thing! They are without EGO.

In order that we truly understand others we must understand ourselves. This is quite often referred to as a process of self-awareness and only once we are able to reach this state are we able to truly understand not only ourselves but those around us.

I am not going to attempt to tell you how you should go about this process as there are many others who can do it so better than I. However, I just wanted to raise this aspect and say that it SEEMS to me that by understanding the concept of how we form our beliefs and why we do and the fact that everyone does so, you will be able to much easier grasp the concept of becoming self aware.



Managing Expectations

In examining personal relationships it appears to me that where so often become misaligned is in our inability to manage expectations of one another. This equally applies in the business as well our personal lives. If we fail to recognise and understand the expectations others have of us (and indeed we have of them or even ourselves) then it seems to so often result in personality issues.

Interestingly, much of the information dealing with this talks of beliefs, fears, past experiences, what we are saying ourselves and what others are saying. It is all about experiences that form beliefs within the individual. It looks to me that our ability to manage expectations lies with our ability to understand how people form their beliefs and how we each communicate those expectations to one another.

This requires an open, honest and, dare I say it, egoless environment to allow this to occur.

We have to manage expectations throughout our lives, be it in our business or personal lives. This should not be confused with living our lives unconditionally. I feel it is important to explain my own distinction between the two.

Expectations are those things that we seek by way of setting the framework within which we operate. We live our lives expecting people to be honest in their dealings with us. We can reasonably expect them to be fair in their dealings and to abide by the norms of our society. At a personal level we expect our partners to be caring, loving and faithful. I believe that the expectations we set upon others are those things that we expect within ourselves and are the primary values by which we want to live out our lives.

Conditions come from a self centred point of view and I feel that these are those things which we want of others in order to satisfy our egos. In a business sense it could be that working for a particular company may be conditional upon you making yourself available for overtime. In our personal lives we see many people living out conditional relationships – one partner loves the other conditional upon them living their life in accordance with their own needs to satisfy their personal needs – satisfying the ego.

The line of distinction can be a fine one and in certain situations what is ones expectation can be another's condition depending on the individual perception. I feel that the difference lies in where it is coming; from the heart or the ego (the mind).

If we look at expectations coming from the heart then this is a feeling based need and for two individuals to effectively communicate it is essential to understand each others feelings. If you remember back to earlier discussions, feelings affect behaviour and they also set the framework for beliefs. Do you now understand why I believe that understanding what the other party's expectations are is so important in being able to effectively communicate?

Imagine if you will two people living or working together with completely opposing expectations of the other. How long do you think that they would last if they never communicated those expectations? Not long at all. Generally we all communicate our expectations one way or the other so we have a "feel" for what the other person is



looking for in us as a partner or business associate. The problem is however, we fail to really convey our expectations to others as well as we should. This is even more so in personal relationships because we are so scared of hurting the other party's feelings or sense of pride. We sometimes are scared to say anything because we believe it may cause conflict.

The truth of the matter is – not saying anything and living without understanding will lead to conflict far worse. Conflict, as I said earlier, is I feel not so bad and in fact necessary. It is how we manage that conflict that matters. If we do not manage conflict then it is detrimental to ourselves and our relationships. If we do not recognise the other person's need, beliefs and expectations then yes, we do have an undesirable situation which needs to be transformed.

Maybe I am overly simplistic or naïve in my approach but to me it all boils down to what appears to be a need to understand where the other person is coming from. What has occurred for them that is the basis of their belief patterns and expectations. We all need to see this I feel, and to accept within ourselves that other's beliefs are just as valid as our own and that neither of us may be right or wrong. Recognise the differences, respect those differences and find some middle ground. There will always be a middle ground it just depends on whether you want to find it and have the courage to do so.

In conclusion

Quite simply, I do not want to make myself **look good** here espousing my views as holding the truth for the way forward through life. I am merely sharing with you what **seems** to me to be some simple concepts formed from my own experiences through readings and seminars which I have attended.

I am not right because these are my interpretations and how you receive this information and process it for yourself can be quite different to me. What I say here will have a meaning to you that could be quite different to my own and thus result in you forming your own **concept** of what it is all about leading to your **BELIEFS**.

And finally **I don't know** the answers. These are merely my **beliefs** of what **SEEMS** to be. My beliefs are based on how I interpret the experiences and events that have occurred in my life which no one else has ever shared. The commonality between my own experiences and yours may be enough for us to reach agreement on what I have said here and that would be wonderful. Does it make it right? No it doesn't.

Greg Tomkins is a Behavioural Coach with Superb Coaching where he works with individuals and groups in both a business and personal context. His intent in working with clients is to enrich their lives through transformation of those behaviours which do not allow them to reach their full potential at both a personal and business level.