

Pathways

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*“Be yourself, everybody else
is taken”*

Oscar Wilde

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Just an Observation

Recently, I have been getting a lot of opportunities to examine what it is that we think we see in life.

As a result, I'd like to chat about two aspects of observational reality.

1. You can't see, what you can't see, because you don't know you can't see it.
2. You can't see, what you can't see because what you think you are looking for is actually something else.

Did you know that bees see flowers at the ultraviolet end of the spectrum? How cool is that? As unappreciative as it sounds, unlike a bee, I see flowers in the ROYGBIV part of spectrum, I have no awareness or knowledge about what things look like beyond that range...I'm simply not attuned that way. So what that means then, is that until someone tells me that there is something out there called ultraviolet light...I have no idea that such a thing exists.

Yeah...and? Well this comes up for me a lot when I'm practicing martial arts, and when I am working with a client as a life coach. Another area in which this has come up a lot for me is in learning Oriental Medicine.

Oriental Medicine is such a paradigm shift in the ways in which I have been used to seeing the world, and processing information, that I am constantly being confronted by new things appearing in my vistas of experience,

purely because I had no previous context for seeing them.

Anyway, by way of illustration, let's take the martial arts side of things first. I was working with a black belt the other day and he was making an attack on my right side and setting me up for a wonderful left-sided combination move. The thing of it was though, he kept trying to force the right side attack line...and successfully discovering that it would not work for him! When I invited him to discover options on the left side, you could almost feel the heat from the light bulb when it went on! The point here, was that he simply couldn't see the opportunity, not because it didn't exist, but because no-one had ever suggested that it might.

As a martial arts instructor and as a national-level Judo referee I have seen this in players in both practice and in tournament. I have also seen it in myself. I can only attack what I can see, so all the other opportunities that emerge along the way might just as well not exist, because, to me, as the 'player in the moment', they are invisible. I simply can't see, what I can't see.

Which leads me to coaching. Great coaches are consummate observers of possibility and detail, they see things at both the large and the small scale as befits the situation...but of course coaches too are limited by their own

Just an Observation...contd.

perceptions of reality...but let's leave that aside for the moment. What a coach does for you, is examine your actions and invite you to discover and explore what were, previously unseen possibilities. The goal of coaching is to help you to play a better game and to play with your full potential unleashed.

In a recent example, I was working with a student about marketing her business, and we were discussing the real value of a marketing dollar. In one case we looked at getting a bunch of leads from a print ad, none of whom became long-term customers, and comparing it to a similar ad that only garnered one lead, but the customer became a loyal customer for years and brought in referrals who also stayed. On the face of it, the first ad looked like it did well in the short term, compared to the second ad, but the second ad earned much more return for the same marketing investment over the long haul. Using examples from my own business experience, I was able to bring the student to a position where she could see her own business in a whole new light. It was like uncorking a bottle under pressure...suddenly she was full of ideas and strategies for business growth and development..it's one of the things I love about being a coach. Sometimes all I am required to do is invite people to

refocus the lens or look at the crystal from a different angle and they are off and running.

It's like seeing in a whole new light...another lesson from the bees!

O.K. so let's tackle the second one: You can't see something because what you think you are looking for is actually something very different. Using myself as an example, I was driving to Wyoming this past weekend, and granted, I had been on the road for many hours and was road weary... but still. So I had stopped at a gas station and decided that an ice cream would be really nice. I walked around the store two or three times and couldn't find what I was looking for. I eventually asked, only to be told that the item for which I was searching was in a stand-up cooler in the corner. I had walked past it at least twice and didn't even see it. I was looking for something that was not a stand-up cooler, so what I didn't see, was exactly the thing for which I was searching!

How curious.

I knew what I wanted, I had an image in my head and then promptly strolled right by it at least twice looking for something else.

One of the places I see this play out so often is in our relationships with other people. This one is tricky, because humans have a propensity for making relationships more pregnant

with learning opportunities than they might otherwise be.

Suffice it to say that sometimes we say we want something in a relationship, and find ourselves battering our heads against a brick wall and creating conflict where we do not intend to do so, because what we think we are looking for, is actually right in front of us, but we can't see it. As a consequence, we are reactive to our partner, parent, child, sibling, boss, employee, teacher, client, rather than taking the time to re-examine the dynamic, look a little deeper and truly see the thing that we are seeking.

One of the obvious places you can see this in action is when two people are talking and voices are getting louder and statements more forceful...it's not an all-out argument at this point, but it is a place where we have ceased to listen and are forcing our point in order to be heard...we are looking for acceptance but have (in the moment) forgotten what that actually looks like. We have forgotten that being heard is a contingency of listening.

To wrap this up then, I would invite you to ask yourself what is that you cannot see in your world currently, and what you might see, if you were to refocus the lens or look at things from a different perspective. ☺

“There is no such thing as bad weather, only inappropriate clothing”

Anonymous

De Nile

Awareness brings with it some great insights into self. I was chatting with my coach last month and we got into a discussion about unrecognized denial. It sort of follows on from my last article, actually...we are looking for one thing, but do not yet realize that what we are looking for is actually something else.

My coach gave me this wonderful acronym for DENIAL...Don't Even Know I Am Lying.

Understand that there is no judgment implied in this statement...we think we are telling the truth, purely because we don't know any different at this stage in our evolution.

Which of course, leads me to one of my great coaching rules: Each of us is doing the best we can with what we've got in the moment. The corollary to which is: If I could make a better decision, I would, but I can't see any other options right now that will get me what I think I want.

It's not exactly that I'm lying, it's that my truth in this moment, isn't really my TRUTH. Each experience therefore represents an opportunity to discover what truth really means.

We can see examples of this in all sorts of places. We can see it in our quest for 'stuff', we can see it in our quest for 'power' and we can see it in our relationships.

The most obvious place that we see it is in our history. What we think is true at one stage in our lives, we discover to be something else at a later stage.

There are two components of this: The first component is that we make discoveries about ourselves that lead us to embrace new truths. An example of this might be as our tastes change and we decide that we actually do like something that we foreswore in a previous time.

The second component is that we can rewrite our history.

Yes, that's what I said.

As children we process the world around us within the framework of our limited knowledge and experiences. Sometimes we cling to these so-called truths as we grow older. In reality, the child within was incapable of processing the events of childhood with all its nuances simply because we didn't have the skill set or the experience to know how. As we get older we can look back and see that things weren't quite the way we thought they were. This is especially true once we become parents in our own right and watch our own children negotiate a path to understanding how life works.

The big issue here is that the inner Gremlin, the Inner Critic (call it what you want), lives in the past and processes his or her world from the context of the past. Each of us has within that little (or not so little) voice that tells us we're not good enough, pretty enough, strong enough, bright enough...whatever. That message stems from our inability as children to effect the changes and control that we thought we wanted.

So we end up carrying all of those distorted views of reality forward into adulthood, into our relationships and into our careers.

What we often miss is that it's all an invention. We create our view of truth in accordance with what we think we are experiencing in the moment. From a different perspective, truth can be something very different from that which we imagine it to be.

So here's something to think about:

What would happen if you challenged one of your most deeply held truths about yourself? Your call...pick one...go on, see what happens.

What if that 'inner critic' voice was simply based on an interpretation of some event, which created a whole host of inaccurate assumptions about how life plays out? What if you embraced the notion that the 'not [fill-in-the-blank] enough' voice, while incredibly well-intentioned was actually chewing into your ability to reach your potential? Or to play the game of life full-out?

Just how scary would that be to you? Just how liberating might it be to you? What if you didn't even realize that you were lying to yourself all this time?

How cool would that be?

What would you do with that knowledge?

And lastly, just for grins and giggles: What if you just said that this article doesn't apply to you? Whose voice was that? ☺

“Don't cry because it's over, smile because it happened”

Dr. Seuss

Six Rules for How I Coach:

- There are no mistakes.
- There are no problems or challenges, merely opportunities, if we choose to see them as such.
- An issue can only be resolved by a higher order of thinking than that which created it.
- How we do anything, is how we do everything.
- We are greater and wiser than we think we are.
- We are all doing the best we can with what we've got, in the moment.



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