

Shifting Paradigms & Perspectives

Learning to see problems, challenges and circumstances from new paradigm or perspective can make the difference between coping and thriving towards a more hopeful and positive mindset.

First, review these perspectives below

<p>Optimistic Perspective: When you use this perspective you see the brighter side of a situation:</p> <p>Example: You get a flat tire...</p> <p>Use of Perspective: “At least I have a car!”</p>	<p>Meaning/Purpose Perspective: When you use this perspective you look deeply at the situation in order to find a larger value, reason, or meaning.</p> <p>Example: You lose a friend to cancer...</p> <p>Use of Perspective: “Life is precious. I should live every day as if it were my last.”</p>
<p>Historical/Time Perspective: When you use this perspective you compare this time with other times in history:</p> <p>Example: You feel dis-satisfied with where you work and live...</p> <p>Use of Perspective: “I have it much better than those who lived during the Great Depression and didn’t have jobs or homes.”</p>	<p>Humor Perspective: When using this perspective you immediately shift your thinking by maintaining a sense of humor or being able to laugh at the situation or yourself.</p> <p>Example: You step out of your car on a wintery day and into a slushy puddle.</p> <p>Use of Perspective: “These were my favorite shoes, but at least my feet are frozen!”</p>
<p>Spiritual Perspective: When you use this perspective you look for a grander view of “destiny” or “purpose” often relying on a belief in a higher power.</p> <p>Example: A friend becomes paralyzed...</p> <p>Use of Perspective: “Everyone has a unique pathway and challenges in life, which may be part of our eternal training.”</p>	<p>Evidence-Based Perspective: When using this perspective you look for objective data and information that shed’s a more accurate light.</p> <p>Example: You don’t understand why you are in debt each month with your spending.</p> <p>Use of Perspective: “Let’s look at exactly what I am spending and not estimate it.”</p>

<p>Gratitude Perspective: When you use this perspective you take stock for what is good in your life, despite the situation.</p> <p>Example: You get fired or laid off..</p> <p>Use of Perspective: “I have much going on to be thankful for, including my health, my family, my faith, my friends....”</p>	<p>Philosophical Perspective: When you use this perspective explore through the lens of unique values, ideals, and beliefs such as political or philosophical tenets.</p> <p>Example: You feel that nothing is going right for you...</p> <p>Use of Perspective: “Well, Marcus Aurelias believed ‘all is change’ so I shouldn’t get so worked up. Like this weather—this too will pass.”</p>
<p>Growth Perspective: When you use this perspective you see the circumstance as the opportunity to learn and grow.</p> <p>Example: You didn’t get the promotion you wanted...</p> <p>Use of Perspective: “This is an opportunity to take stock of my skills and experiences and get the feedback I need to make it next time.”</p>	<p>Others’ Perspective: When you use this perspective you look at the situation through someone else’s eyes.</p> <p>Example: Your colleague is rude to you for no apparent reason...</p> <p>Use of Perspective: “I wonder what that person is going through. Perhaps they were just in a bad mood.”</p>

In addition to the perspectives above, what other perspectives come to mind that you might use when you experience difficulty or challenges. First, create a label for your identified perspective, then use the samples above to provide an example and use of this new perspective:

<p>Type of Perspective:</p>	<p>Type of Perspective:</p>
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Paradigms & Perspectives Practice

Read the following stories and explore new ways to see and process the circumstances

The Bus to Jeri, Nepal

by

R. Christopher Barden, Ph.D., J.D.

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Nine years of training in clinical psychology, four years of training in the martial arts, and several years as a tennis professional had, I thought, convinced me (RCB) that people create their own emotional reactions to events. However, it was not until the winter of 1987 that I truly understood this principle in a deeply personal way.

That winter was a magical time for me. It presented the possibility of fulfilling one of my most heartfelt lifelong dreams --to trek to Mt. Everest. After meeting in New Delhi, my friend Dr. Stan Kuczaj and I headed for Kathmandu, Nepal. Stan was spending a year as a Fellow at Oxford and I had arranged for some cross-cultural research opportunities for both of us in Nepal.

Our trip to the Khumbu region near Mt. Everest would involve a plane ride to the village of Lukla, a landing on a tiny dirt runway on the edge of a 5,000 foot precipice, and a 14 day hike to Everest. The majesty of the Himalayan range is difficult to comprehend. Whereas no other chain has mountains higher than 7,000 meters above sea level, the Himalayan range contains 14 peaks over 8,000 meters and hundreds over 7,000 meters. Valley walls of 5,000-15,000 feet are common, making flying in small planes a very hazardous activity.

The plane to Lukla departed only once in the morning and only in perfect weather, and for three days we spent our mornings waiting anxiously for the weather to clear. By the fourth day we began to wonder if our trip would be possible. Because we planned to hike higher than 20,000 feet we needed at least 10-14 days to make the trek to Everest from the landing site. Rushing our hike would mean a very real possibility of fatal altitude sickness.

On the fourth morning it rained and we decided to resort to another plan. We agreed to take the bus to Jeri, a city near the Khumbu region, and from there hike to Everest. It was a long bus ride and would lengthen our hike, but this seemed our only hope of reaching the mountain in time.

Throwing our gear into a cab we rushed to the bus station. The roads of Kathmandu are not made for cars. Hordes of oxen, cattle, chickens, bike, rickshaws, and an occasional camel blocked our path. I was beginning to feel desperate. If we missed the bus our last chance to see Everest would be one plane tomorrow morning, and the weather report was bleak. My lifelong dream was slipping away.

We missed the bus to Jeri by several minutes. Sitting down on the curb I felt as depressed as I can remember. A lifelong dream is a lot to lose. How could we be so unfortunate! To come all the way to Nepal and be denied our goal –it seemed so unfair. I spent the night staring at the ceiling and listening to the rain on the roof. The next morning the weather miraculously cleared and we flew off to the mountains. What a glorious trek!

After two weeks of the most beautiful scenery I have ever experienced, we began the march back from our campsite at 20,000 feet to the landing strip at Lukla. We had spent almost two weeks in the mountains without running water or indoor heat. The warmest room in the warmest house was 35 degrees Fahrenheit. We stopped, exhausted, at a tiny stone hut for lunch. As we rested a woman came up the trail. She was a neurologist and adventurer from Australia. We sat in the cold kitchen on a dirt floor, tightly clenching our mugs of warm soup, and listened to her tales of travel throughout Africa, India, and the Middle East.

She had come to Nepal to see the mountains and work for the U.N. medical mission. Her trip to Everest had been postponed by a gruesome task. She had been called to assist at a disaster in the valley. She told us the bus to Jeri had gone over a 1,000 foot cliff and all the passengers had been killed. Her words left us dazed. It was clear from her description of the date that it was OUR bus to Jeri that was doomed.

I will never forget that moment. Every detail of sight, "sound, and feeling is as vivid as the day she spoke. My mind raced back to the wild cab ride to catch the bus to Jeri. Every camel, every cow, every bike in our path had instantly been transformed from my worst enemy to my best friend. What seemed at the time one of the worst moments of my life had, in hindsight, been one of the best.

As mortals, we share such a limited perspective. Without the wisdom of hindsight, we cannot know whether events are truly victories or defeats. The next time you are sure that something "terrible" has happened to you, ask yourself, "Is this the bus to Jeri?"

What may seem like your worst moment in tennis or in life may be your greatest source of enlightenment and improvement.

“What the caterpillar calls the end of the world the master calls a butterfly”

--Zen proverb

The Bus to Jeri, Nepal

Describe the scenario:

If you were playing the role of the victim, how might you react to these circumstances?

What perspective might you choose to re-look at this situation?

Describe a new way to look at this situation:

How does this new perspective make you think and feel?

Tis' nothing good or bad, but thinking makes it so.

-- William Shakespeare

Compared to What?

by

R. Christopher Barden, Ph.D., J.D.

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Preface

I once had a student that came to my office feeling dejected and depressed over the events of his day.

He reported a series of mishaps he found very troubling. Prior to driving to campus he and his girlfriend had broken up. In addition, his homework wasn't complete and it would compromise his grade. Then, on the way to class, he had a tire blowout, making him late to class.

This student told me that because he had experienced a “very bad day” that “he could not possibly” take the scheduled exam and would need an extension.

I was curious as to this student's ability to see his troubles in proper perspective. I asked him to rate his “bad day” from 1, a neutral day, to 10 the most horrible day possible. Amazingly, this student claimed his experience that day rated a “10”.

Discussion

Faced with such a powerful example of irrational thinking and resultant emotional distress, I cancelled the test and we spent the entire class hour investigating the concept of having a “bad day”. We began by reviewing some history and the truly difficult challenges that people have faced over many centuries.

I began by stating that I doubted anyone in the class had really ever experienced even a 4 or 5 on the real, historically informed, rational” bad day” scale. “How do your bad day experiences compare to seeing your entire family die of the plague as millions suffered during the Dark Ages,” I asked. “How do your bad day experiences compare to living in a Nazi concentration camp, wondering day to day if you will live or die?” If you are looking for a 10 rating on the real “bad day” scale consider the fate of parents not only forced to watch their children eaten by lions in the Roman Coliseum but also knowing they were surely next. “Has anyone in this room experienced such horrors?” I asked.

I told them of several Laotian friends of mine who had survived the concentration camps of the Cambodian killing fields. Some were imprisoned and tortured for many years but all coped extraordinarily well with this horrific experience. Once freed, they rarely complained about the daily challenges of life. They had learned a true, deeper, and lasting perspective on the troubles of life.

It is doubtful that any of us will ever experience the horror and pain these Laotian heroes survived in Asia. Life's daily troubles in the U.S. seem quite trivial on such a scale and these true survivors know this truth in a deep and abiding way few can comprehend.

The students stared in wonder at this discussion. They slowly began to recognize that the travails and problems of city life in the U.S. were simply nothing compared to the experiences of many of our ancestors.

In conclusion, I challenged them to always ask a question of anyone who complains that they have suffered a “really bad day”. Just ask them, “Compared to what?”

The moral of the story is: the next time you think you have it bad, consider the people and times of history where life truly had held extraordinary challenges and dangers. This perspective will give you a powerful tool to reduce negative emotions and cope with stress at all levels.

Compared to What?

Describe the scenario:

If you were playing the role of the victim, how might you react to these circumstances?

What perspective might you choose to re-look at this situation?

Describe a new way to look at this situation:

How does this new perspective make you think and feel?

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-- William Shakespeare

THE POWER OF PERSPECTIVE: The Story of Jason

by

R. Christopher Barden, Ph.D., J.D.

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"I was consulting with the pediatric craniofacial surgical team of a major medical center. Part of my role was to be certain that the team had answered the questions and concerns of families and patients. During one team meeting we entered the room of our patient --little 10-year-old Jason. Jason was born with multiple, severe deformities. Half of his face and one of his arms had refused to grow, and one leg was much shorter than the other. He sat in the room flanked by his very loving and supportive mother, father and two of his seven siblings. Jason beamed with confidence and happiness.

I asked Jason, "We're here to help you today and to try to answer all of your questions." "How can we help you?" I asked. Jason looked at me and the impressive team of surgeons, radiologists, internists and other support staff behind me. He smiled broadly and happily said, "You know, I've been eating too much sugar lately. Can you help me eat less sugar?" Tears filled our eyes as we realized that Jason was grateful for life's blessings and challenges. He understood the power of free will to control his perspective, emotional reactions, and motivation.

We were all very moved that day by Jason's wise perspective on the world. His goal was to control those things he could control and not worry about the rest. His parents (LDS) had taught him that only the strongest of noble spirits are given large burdens to bear in this life. That the noble souls bearing such burdens serve as examples for the rest of us in patience, courage, and gratitude. His mother told Dr. Barden, that "everyone who meets Jason knows that they are in the presence of an amazing, noble spirit." Our team learned the truth of her statement that day and we were all changed by the experience.

The Story of Jason

Describe the scenario:

If you were playing the role of the victim, how might you react to these circumstances?

What perspective might you choose to re-look at this situation?

Describe a new way to look at this situation:

How does this new perspective make you think and feel?

Tis' nothing good or bad, but thinking makes it so.

-- William Shakespeare

Good or Bad? Maybe!

A Chinese Folk Tale of Wisdom and Perspective
as told by R. Christopher Barden, Ph.D., J.D. (1985)

It is said that there was once a gentleman in rural China. His only possession that really amounted to anything for him, his wife and son, who lived in a little hovel, was a gorgeous horse.

The neighbors came by often and said how lucky the farmer was to have this one beautiful horse. The wise old farmer said, "Maybe?"

Well, one night the horse broke out of the corral and fled into the nearby mountains. All the neighbors came by and said how terrible, how bad it was that the mare was gone. The wise old farmer said, "Maybe?"

One morning about a week and a half later, the horse returned to the corral bring two beautiful wild horses with her. Now all the neighbors came by and said what wonderful luck he had. They said, "You have these two additional horses plus your old horse. How fortunate you are!" they said. The wise old farmer said, "Maybe?"

The next day the farmer's son decided to break in these stallions so they could be ridden and then sold at market. One of the wild stallions threw him and broke his leg badly. The neighbors came by and said, "That's so sad, too bad, your son has a badly broken leg. What terrible misfortune." The wise old farmer said, "Maybe?"

The very next week the king sent his men throughout the land gathering troops for a war of conquest. They took all able-bodied young men as conscripts. The farmer's son was excused from serving because he had a badly broken leg. The neighbor's sons all had to go to war. The neighbors came over and said? "Oh how lucky you are that son was not taken off to war!" The wise old farmer said, "Maybe?"

Good or Bad? Maybe!

Describe the scenario:

If you were playing the role of the victim, how might you react to these circumstances?

What perspective might you choose to re-look at this situation?

Describe a new way to look at this situation:

How does this new perspective make you think and feel?

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Changing Your Perspectives

Below, please describe scenarios in your life (past or present) that is or have been a particular challenge to you. In the spaces below, write down how a victim might react to this situation. Now, choose to create a different perspective—one that empowers you and helps you see this issue from a new paradigm or perspective.

Scenario 1:

If you were playing the role of the victim, how might you react to these circumstances?

What perspective(s) might you choose to re-frame this situation?

Specifically how might you re-frame this situation?

How does this new perspective make you think, feel—even believe?

Scenario 2:

If you were playing the role of the victim, how might you react to these circumstances?

What perspective(s) might you choose to re-frame this situation?

Specifically how might you re-frame this situation?

How does this new perspective make you think, feel—even believe?

Scenario 3:

If you were playing the role of the victim, how might you react to these circumstances?

What perspective(s) might you choose to re-frame this situation?

Specifically how might you re-frame this situation?

How does this new perspective make you think, feel—even believe?