

RESOURCES FOR CHANGING PERSPECTIVE

Here are six ways perception affects us...

1. Beware of First Impressions

First impressions can make a lasting impact that is hard to shake. This is related to a phenomenon called the halo effect, in which a person's initial positive perception in one thing carries through to similarly positive perceptions in the future whether warranted or not. The reverse is also true.

If a negative first impression is made, it becomes difficult to replace it with a positive one. Unfortunately, the halo effect distorts reality. These false impressions are the reasons why con artists can fool so many victims and why innocent people are sometimes wrongly accused of crimes they did not commit.

2. Stereotypes Can Negatively Impact Perception

Our perceptions are influenced by a complex array of factors. For instance, they can include labels we assign to others based on age, sex, ethnic background, sexual orientation, social status and religion. (Reference Implicit Bias Training [here](#))

These stereotypes may have been learned in childhood and can be difficult to overcome. They lead to inaccurate and unfounded assumptions without a thorough review of evidence.

3. Selective Perception

Selective perception or tunnel vision occurs when only a few facts become your main focus while you simultaneously ignore or minimize all others. This often occurs when a person is trying to solve a problem.

They see only one solution and in doing so may minimize or ignore not only other solutions. However, the negative consequences of the one they have chosen. This can have disastrous results.

4. The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

This occurs when we have internal expectations and then subconsciously set up our environment to fulfill them. They can be positive or negative expectations, which directly influence our interactions with people.

For instance, if somebody thinks of themselves as a failure then they may not put much effort into successful completion of a task or pick one that is complex and new. When they fail, they use their failure to reinforce their negative perception of themselves.

5. Confirmation Bias

Confirmation bias is the tendency to interpret and search for evidence to confirm your own beliefs even in the face of contradictory information. It involves a systemic error of inductive reasoning whose effect is strengthened in emotionally charged situations. People will interpret information in a biased manner to support their own conclusions.

The Power of Perception: Thinking Makes it So

"...there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so."

~ William Shakespeare, Hamlet

Life events in life aren't imbued with universal meaning. Instead, **it's your interpretation of life's events that dictates how you feel.**

Since all events are up for interpretation, a given life experience could cause you to feel one of many different ways.

Controlling the Narrative

"You have power over your mind – not outside events. Realize this, and you will find strength."

~ Marcus Aurelius

Choosing your narrative may be one of the greatest skills you can develop in life.

With skill at hand, it doesn't matter what life throws your way, because **you can always choose the most empowering narrative.**

Here's what the process of choosing your narrative looks like in practice:

1. **Notice** when you are getting swept away by an automatic response to a seemingly negative event.
2. **Pause** to collect yourself.
3. **Let go** of your automatic reaction.
4. **Consider** how else you might interpret this event.
5. **Choose** the most empowering narrative.
6. **Go forth** with enthusiasm!

Examples:

- **You're walking home from work and a thunderstorm catches you by surprise...**
- Automatic Reaction: *Rain is not good! Getting wet is uncomfortable! This is bad!!*
- Choosing the Empowering Narrative: That was unexpected! Now that I'm all wet, I realize it's actually pretty calming and refreshing to be outside in a storm! My clothing gets wet in the wash anyway. It'll all dry off when I'm home.
- **You felt great about your performance in a job interview but don't get hired for the job...**
- Automatic Reaction: *This stinks! I really wanted that job. Maybe I'm no good at this after all.*
- Choosing the Empowering Narrative: It must not have been a mutual fit! If that's the case, I probably wouldn't have enjoyed working there as much as I thought I would. Now I can find a job that's truly aligned with my values and interests!
- **It's your night to cook dinner, and just when it's ready, your partner calls and says they'll be an hour late...**
- Automatic Reaction: *How disrespectful! Don't they know how hard I worked to make this meal? And the food's going to be cold! >:(*
- Choosing the Empowering Narrative: That's no big deal, the food will stay warm in the oven. I can use this time to read that book I've been meaning to start.

What are some strategies for changing one's perspective?

Changing one's perspective can be challenging, but it can be achieved through various strategies, here are 10 of them:

1. **Reframing:** Reframing is the process of looking at a situation from a different angle or point of view. It can help you to see things in a new light and identify new solutions to problems.
2. **Expanding your knowledge:** Seek to learn new information and gain new knowledge by reading, listening to lectures or podcasts, or taking classes. This can help you to understand different perspectives and develop a broader understanding of the world.
3. **Empathy:** Practice empathy by trying to understand and relate to the feelings, thoughts, and experiences of others. This can help you to see things from their perspective and understand different viewpoints.
4. **Questioning assumptions:** Challenge your assumptions by questioning the things you take for granted. This can help you to identify and challenge your own biases and prejudices.
5. **Travel:** Traveling to different places and cultures can expose you to new perspectives and ways of thinking. A simple change in routine can help change your perspective, and traveling is a game-changer!
6. **Seek out diverse perspectives:** Seek out diverse perspectives by interacting with people from different backgrounds and cultures, and by listening to voices that are different from your own.
7. **Practice mindfulness:** Mindfulness practices such as meditation and yoga can help you to be more present in the moment and to see things as they are, rather than as you expect them to be.
8. **Reflect:** Reflect on your thoughts, feelings, and actions. This can help you to identify patterns in your thinking and to see things from a different perspective.
9. **Take a break:** Sometimes stepping back from a situation and taking a break can help you to come back to it with a fresh perspective.
10. **Seek guidance:** Seek guidance from a coach, therapist, or mentor who can provide you with a different perspective and help you to see things in a new light.