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—Nido R. Qubein, international speaker and consultant



Gain a New Perspective

It's what keeps you sane.



by Bruce H. Jackson

IN MY STUDY OF PERSONAL potential and performance, I find it useful to reference five dimensions: the physical (arousal, stress management, wellness, fitness); the emotional (emotional intelligence or emotional literacy); the psychological (goal-setting, focus, self-talk, time management); the philosophical (ethics, creed, core values); and the spiritual (purpose, prayer, perspective).

In this article, I focus on one performance strategy in the mental dimension—gaining access to perspective. It's a strategy you can use when you feel stuck or mired in apathy or mediocrity. At times your perspective (or window of seeing) becomes blocked. Since you can't see things from different angles to gain a complete picture, you often look through a narrow range of possible options. Recognize that there are an infinite number of perspectives for looking at a person, issue, or situation.

Regardless of your problem, issue, or life situation, there remains an infinite number of perspectives that can be accessed in order to effectively process a particular life scenario or dilemma. The problem is, most of us get stuck and struggle to find new perspectives that can help us more effectively deal with the situation we are in.

The next time you feel you are stuck or simply can't see beyond a limited point of view (for instance, being negative, mired in self-doubt, not seeing any possible solution, making sense of what happened, managing your emotions) consider these eight perspectives as a starting point for developing your access to perspective:

- **Meaning perspective.** Viktor Frankl, POW survivor, commented that prisoners who found little meaning perished quickly while those who had a strong reason to live (they knew what they were living for) had a better chance of survival. This is an important lesson. We might consider how we can find meaning and purpose surrounding the difficult events in our life.

- **Humor perspective.** In one story of an impending airplane crash, humor was used to shift perspective. A

mechanical failure guaranteed that the commercial jet would miss its landing point and crash. However, a wise air traffic controller remained in constant communication with the pilots—even making fun and joking with them as they prepared for the event. The banter changed the mood in the cockpit and relaxed the pilots. This helped the pilots remain calm and focused. While the crash did occur, the pilots were able to ditch the plane with so much skill that the losses were limited. With this story in mind, consider using a little humor when dealing with highly stressful situations.

- **Gratitude perspective.** In the most difficult of times, there is still something that can be learned from any experience. For this I am grateful. The next time you find yourself stuck or in



a jam or dealing with a difficult situation, consider being grateful for the opportunity to learn and grow—regardless of how painful the situation. If you choose to be grateful, recognizing that everything is an experience, you will be amazed at how you can use the situation to your advantage instead of remaining the victim.

- **Optimistic perspective.** When you need access to perspective, can you squeeze the lemon and make lemonade? Consistent with the perspective on gratitude, you can always find something positive and useful from every situation. Seek the angle that can give you this perspective and look for the good in any difficult situation.

- **Comparative/relativistic perspective.** In the history books there are many descriptions of torturous behavior, horrific deaths, plagues, dark ages, and great depressions. Compare these times to your current issues. Comparatively, do we have much to complain about? Remember, when things are rough and you feel stuck in a funk, compare your worst day to those of history's, and life

may not look so bad after all.

- **Short-term vs. long-term perspective.** Recognizing that no one ever knows the ultimate outcomes in life, it's wise to keep a long-term perspective and reply, "Maybe; we'll see."

- **Philosophical perspective.** Despite his misunderstood reputation, Friedrich Nietzsche grounded himself in a valuable philosophical perspective. Despite life's challenges and difficulties, he developed a philosophical perspective known as *Amour Fati*—the belief that greatness comes from wanting nothing to be different (whether it be good, bad, or neutral) and that one should not just bear what is necessary, but love the process of life no matter what the circumstance. Might this perspective change the way you see your problems and concerns? What other perspective might give you such freedom?

- **Unique perspective.** This constitutes the category of all possible angles of perspective so it can be used creatively. If you have ever seen "A Beautiful Life", the award winning movie depicting a Nazi concentration camp during WWII, you will be touched by the scene where a young father and son are standing in a processing line, waiting for instructions. Not knowing what to do, and seeing that his young son was scared, the father decided to re-frame the entire experience for his son by explaining that everyone was in the camp as part of a competition: a competition to win a tank. While the reality of the situation never changed, the re-framing of this event gave his son—even the father himself—a new and unique way to view the situation. Since the prisoners had little ability to control their fate, the father decided to alter his own, using, in contrast to Viktor Frankl's meaning perspective, one that suited his need to protect his son.

While truth may exist at the center of every experience, there are an unlimited number of perspectives that you can tap into to develop a useful view of the situation.

So consider these eight perspectives. The next time you seek to get un-stuck or simply to see a problem or issue differently, try putting on these different perspective glasses. Better yet, seek to create your own category of perspective. Simply seeking ways to locate a different angle will help you in your mental flexibility—giving you greater access to perspective.

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Bruce H. Jackson, Ph.D. is the director of The Center for the Advancement of Leadership at Utah Valley State College. Call 801-863-7431 or email jacksonbr@uvc.edu.

ACTION: Gain a fresh perspective.