

## Changing Perspectives for Personal Growth By Sherry Nipko

Recently I hiked to the Peak of a mountain close to my home. This mountain has always been in my backyard. I've looked at the peak my whole life and it has seemed massive and difficult to reach. It began on a switchback trail to the east of the peak. It was 16 miles round trip. The view from the top was incredible. I could see different cities and valleys in each direction. I saw mountain goats with their babies (I had never seen those from my backyard). My perspective was completely changed from what I observed from the top of the peak. From my backyard all I could see was the straight up jagged rocks of the face. It was one perspective. From on top I could see fields of wild flowers lots of green leafy trees, birds and other wildlife.

Less than a week later I drove partway up the backside of this same mountain and hiked in from the East. This time it was at night and from that direction it was a five-mile hike. We arrived at the peak just as it was getting dark. The view of the sunset on the way up was incredible. We could see the city lights on each side of the peak. Fireworks happened to be going off in one of the cities. From where I stood I felt like I could reach out and put the firework out with my two fingers. It seemed so small and insignificant from this perspective. I thought of all the times I had sat beneath firework shows and they seemed so much larger than me, so powerful, so daunting... my perspective changed again.

A few weeks later I camped on the northwest side of the same mountain. Down on the ground but on the opposite side of the peak from my home. The peak from this perspective looked like a small hill. It didn't look daunting or difficult to get to. Now it was a small mound and easy to hike. What a completely different perspective again of the same mountain peak!

Perspective changes with situations in our life. The way we personally grow through any situation is to change our perspective. How can we begin to change our perspective? Observing our problems, to see them from different angles so that we can clearly get a proper perspective. Maybe we can go around our problem and see it from a different angle. Maybe we can just choose to see the less intimidating side (such as seeing a firework from the peak of a mountain instead of being right under it) From the peak it is put into perspective as to how small it is in the whole scheme of the universe, even though at the moment it may seem to be right over you and overwhelming.

In order to change perspective we have to be aware of our behavior. Be aware of what is creating bad behavior or self-sabotaging efforts. Be aware of what is holding us back.

Observing feelings and emotions instead of reacting is a good start. Take a minute to step back and breathe, just feel the emotion and try to understand where it is

coming from. What fear is being triggered to create this feeling? Are you worried about being perceived badly, or worried about failing at some level or losing out on what you wanted? Observe the situation carefully... is it really as big as what you initially thought when you were reacting? Is it a firework right over you or could you choose to see it from a peak where you can reach out and fix the problem? Could you change your perspective to see things differently... exact same peak, yet vastly differently views. See the whole picture. See it in 3d.

Be aware of where you are on your journey. If you are just starting a new adventure, whether it is school, a job, a hobby, or a new phase of life. Be aware of where you are. Don't compare yourself to those who have years more experience and effort. Many times we get discouraged and give up simply because we refuse to be aware of where we are in the journey. If today you are in the backyard looking at the peak. Enjoy the view! Choose to see the good things around you and choose to be aware and grateful of the opportunity that's in front of you without comparing!

If you want your view to change, if you want things in your life to change, if you want your perspective to change then the next step is to put it into motion. You have to act on the observations and awareness. You have to act and create motion, go through the process to change perspective!

Most days I am content to sit in my backyard and enjoy the beautiful view of my mountain peak. However, I am very aware of the different perspectives because I got up and moved. I prepared myself physically and mentally to be able to endure the hike. It was effort, it was difficult at times and I was completely worn out when I arrived home. It was the motion, the action that actually changed my perspective. Being exhausted was worth the effort when I was standing on that peak. Some days will be that way, exhausting with effort. Putting things into motion and creating action is what will change perspective! Just start! Do what you can.

In his book "The Practicing Mind" Thomas M. Sterner says, "If you have never considered it, think about how everything we learn and master in life, from walking and tying our shoes to saving money and raising a child, is accomplished through a form of practice, something we repeat over and over again. For the most part, we are not aware of the process as such, but that is how good practice manifests itself when done properly. It carries no stress laden anticipation, no internal question, "when will the goal be reached?" when we practice anything properly, the fact that we are engaging in a difficult learning process disappears, and, more important, the process dissolves into a period of inner calming that gives us a rest from the tension and anxiety that our "get it done yesterday" world pushes on us every day of our lives. For this reason, it is important to recognize and be in control of the process and to learn to enjoy that part of life's activity."

Sometimes our problems seem insurmountable. Sometimes they seem doable. As we trust in our perfect journey and see each experience for what it can give us and what we can learn from it, we observe it, we are aware of what it is bringing to us

and move forward, acting and practicing on what we are able to at the moment we automatically begin to change our perspective. You never know how incredible the view can be!

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