



## New Perspectives



'Begin challenging your own assumptions. Your assumptions are your window on the world. Scrub them off every once in a while or the light won't come in.' - Alan Alda

One of the funnest parts of being a coach is that I get to help people challenge their assumptions. I've always like to ask questions. I've always liked to ask 'Why?' I remember my brothers finally just asking 'Why not?' to shut me up! In my public accounting days, some people probably had the perspective that we were always striving to learn together. Audit clients probably had the perspective that we were trying to prove the numbers right or wrong. Other people probably had the perspective that they were being challenged personally. I'm guessing that my perspective was usually that I was just curious.

For the most part, perspectives are not right or wrong. They are just the way someone sees something from their vantage point. For instance if 3 people stood around a chair, one would describe it from the front, one would describe it from the side and one would describe it from the back. All three perspectives are 'right' from each person's perspective.

Any assumption or challenge can be looked at from various perspectives as well. The most poignant one that sticks in my mind is when I was working with my executive coach and thinking about going into coaching. I brought it up to him immediately following it up with saying, 'but who am I to think I can do what you do?' He immediately fired back, 'Who are you to think you can't.' WOW, I thought. From his perspective, he saw someone who had thrived on coaching people for 22 years. He saw someone who had made lots of changes in their career and was adaptable (audit to IT).

The other night I was working late with a prospective client. His spouse called 3 times during our conversation. I challenged his assumption that he was being pestered and couldn't help asking him 'What if' he was being missed and longed for.

Here are some other examples of assumptions I've gotten to challenge:

- I'll never get along with my boss or a colleague.
- I am not (or I am) a good leader.
- We'll never be able to make those sales goals.

- I should have already mastered this.
- I'll never be good at this. I can only hope to keep it from hurting me.
- I could never switch industries to find new work.
- They don't understand me.
- They don't see my value.
- I can't be who I really am when I am at work.
- Work should be all work - it's not about fun.
- I'll never be able to make that person happy.
- I can't have balance working in this profession.
- I'm past the mid-point in my career; It's too late for anything else.
- I can't run a half-marathon.
- I can't ride a bike 100 miles in the MS Bike ride.

So when I help people challenge their assumptions and all of a sudden they see a new perspective, it's like all of a sudden they scrubbed off that window and the light gets to shine in. It's fresh. It's enlightening. It's warm and comforting to them. It's invigorating. It's inspiring. It's fun!

How cool is that?

