



Perspective

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For a great majority of us we get caught up in a situation and lose ourselves in our automatic response to it. The true skill is to come to terms with the fact that the situation has happened - that the event is simply the event. It is neither good nor bad. The real power comes in accepting the situation has played out as it has, but the meaning we give to it is solely determined by us alone.

It is us, in our heads, who set up the rules. We can take the perspective that it is achievable or unachievable; that there is hope or it is hopeless; that we can be tenacious or we can be defeated; that we will rise or we will fall.

There are many cognitive techniques that I teach to help clients to get a handle on this. One of these techniques is giving context. Not too long ago a pipe in our house burst streaming water onto the ground floor. I immediately ran to turn off the faucet all the while mumbling every possible English profanity.

A little later when my wife and I were mopping up the water and she could see I was fixated on the situation with the question, Why the hell did this have to happen?, painted all over my face. In her classic calmness she simply said, "At least it wasn't the sewage pipe that burst". I looked up and there was an immediate change in my perspective and I actually became happy that I was mopping up clean water rather than stinking sewage.

Context is everything!

In this case the damage had already been done and there was nothing I could do to reverse or rewind what had happened. It was simply a neutral event amongst a countless other events which happened in that specific moment. In the end, it was me and me alone who gave meaning to the event. One very effective way of changing meaning is by placing the situation in a different context.

Is the glass of red wine half-full or half-empty? No worries. We've just opened a new bottle! Context is everything.

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