

## Lesson 32: Perceptions and Personal Identity

Every human being possesses a perceptual concept of who they think they are and will define themselves with a related identity. The characteristics of consciousness carries with it the need for perceptions so as we form our personal identities through our perceptions we are not aware, generally speaking, that we might be erecting fences that place unnecessary boundaries on our identity which limits the potential for future expansions. Thus the identities we form about ourselves may not always be a true representation of who we really are, individually speaking, but are, in fact, based on how we perceive ourselves and our realities. Identities by their nature should be fluid in that they can and should change through the years and those changes should be beneficial to our personal growth as we progress through the stages of life. So to be locked into an identity that does not allow for a natural growth expansion is to block the potential for probable changes. The lesson this week will take a look at some of the ways in which we define and form our personal identity and how it is possible to redefine ourselves, thus expanding our identity.

By the age of seven we begin to form our identity based on a number of internal and external factors and will continue to form and reform our identity well into the latter stages of adulthood. In early adulthood we begin building an independent life which for most of us means leaving the familiar world of home, parents or caregivers, family, community and school. We leave the nest and go off to make something of ourselves but in order to carve out our niche in society we need an identity, something that defines us and separates us from everyone else that gives us a sense of distinction. For some people the identity they wish to be defined and recognized by might be the result of having furthered their education beyond high school for the purpose of pursuing a lucrative career or profession or perhaps venturing into entrepreneurship. They begin to paint a picture of how they want to be identified by their colleagues or peers in terms of being respected for their accomplishments. However, not everyone finds themselves on the road to success by way of an advanced education, a lucrative career, profession or a successful business. Many people struggle right out of the starting gate of adulthood and construct identities based on past experiences that are often more of an illusion than a true reality.

In such situations, and there are many variables to numerous to describe in this lesson, the act of forming an identity is generally related to our personal environment, i.e. level of education as well as social, cultural, religious and financial backgrounds. When we encounter difficulties in our childhood we not only carry the memories of those difficulties, we carry the ‘feeling’ of them; thus our identity often becomes an outer reflection of our inner turmoil’s which we define ourselves by default. The memories of those personal experiences are stored in the subconscious mind which is subjective to the emotions associated with those memories. For many people this means being bound

to a number of disabling beliefs such as fear, insecurities, inferiority, inadequacy, lack of confidence and a sense of worthlessness. These crippling beliefs represent the inner turmoil's influenced by external factors and will usually remain embedded in the subconscious mind for years to come; perhaps until some unexpected event occurs that results in a life changing experience that serves to reprogram the subconscious mind.

In the meantime the identity we formed is based on perceptions that might be distorted; consequently we erect mental and emotional fences to the extent that our identity actually hinders our personal growth as well as the potential for having desirable experiences. Sometimes we hide behind the superficial identity we created because we erroneously believe that if we put on a front by pretending to be someone or something we are not others will be fooled and will not see or know the real person behind the mask. What we do not realize is that the so-called real person behind the mask may not be as 'real' as we have led ourselves to believe. When internal turmoil's are left unresolved, consciously or unconsciously, we live in a state of mental and emotional upheaval and we will create a reality that correlates to our state of mind and attitude. It is entirely possible that the reality we experienced, generally in childhood or in adolescence, did not really occur as we thought it did but might have been a distorted perception of what occurred based on certain beliefs held in the conscious mind at the time. In this case the identity we formed as the result of an inaccurate perception from an undesirable past experience is not a true representation of who we really are but rather is a distortion of our identity. Even if certain undesirable events or circumstances did actually occur we are never limited to defining ourselves as the result of such situations. Dr. William Glasser states in his book, Choice Theory, that we choose everything we do, including the misery we feel. He says that other people can neither make us miserable nor make us happy. Thus we always have the liberty to redefine our personal identity by making a conscious choice to do so.

Another way we define ourselves and form our personal identity relates to our personality traits. Many people are inclined to identify themselves in accordance with how they perceive themselves in terms of their personalities which can erect mental and emotional fences as well. The so-called personality traits that we define ourselves by and are what makes us tick are not etched in stone and can be quite deceiving in the sense that you might be of the belief that you are a certain way by genetics when in fact nothing is further from the truth. Personality traits are often the result of learned behaviors generally experienced in childhood or adolescence that are later mistaken as actual traits. These traits can be modified or completely eradicated by choice; hence the identity is altered too. For example if you tend to be a perfectionist and believe this to be an inherited trait you might be surprised to find out that it is nothing more than a learned behavior attributed to a forceful external influence from a parent, family member, school teacher, or anyone else who may have heavily influenced you in some manner of speaking. In this sense you might have formed your identity around being a

perfectionist but if given the chance to modify the trait you might find that you really have little desire to be a perfectionist; that perhaps by your own nature you are much more relaxed and not quite as concerned with the details as you believed you were. Once you become aware of this you can alter your identity by making a conscious choice to define yourself as yourself as opposed to being defined by someone's standards or expectations. How liberating is that?

Many people fall into the trap of forming their identity through their careers, especially workaholics. They become removed from their own individual identity as they become a living extension of their work and forego doing things that are fun such as hobbies or other interests that can take them away from the stress and strains associated with their work environment. This is a very dangerous place to be psychologically speaking because if some life-changing event occurs which causes the career to abruptly end they can find themselves faced with a bona-fide identity crises. This occurs when they discover they have no identity with which to relate too outside of their work so the sudden loss of an identity that was built around a career can be devastating to say the least and can potentially send them into a mental downward spiral. The climb back uphill can be an overwhelming experience because a new identity must be formed which usually follows a period of reflection and a reassessment of one's life experiences and redefining what is really important to them. Charting a new course in life can be a frightening experience but is one that often times proves to be most rewarding.

The same can be said for women who build their identities around the needs of their families and then one day find that they have no idea who they really are as they face being an empty-nester. Men often experience a mid-life identity crisis during which time they too reassess their lives in terms of not just their age but by what they have or have not accomplished. These are pivotal moments in life because they can make or break identities sometimes even dramatically because such evaluations are perception based. So if the perceptions are distorted the personal identity will be distorted which for many people equates to making choices and decisions that are not ultimately in their best interest or those who are directly affected. Choices and decisions made under the influence of distorted perceptions have a domino-like effect as it relates to cause and effect.

Realities are created based on what we perceive and it is those very same perceptions that become the basis from which we form our personal identity. It is beneficial to our overall life experiences to define ourselves based on authentic realities that are not the result of distorted perceptions. How we perceive ourselves and our circumstances today may not necessarily be the way we will perceive ourselves and our circumstances later in life which may not be to our benefit if we remain oblivious to the misrepresentations that formed our identity to begin with. This is why it is so beneficial to examine our perceptions which of course are always directly tied into our core beliefs that ultimately

affect our state of mind and our attitude. A personal identity can be redefined, altered or modified so as to reflect who we really are not who we believe we are either by our own admission and/or by some forceful external influence. The process of living life contributes to periodic changes in how we will choose to define ourselves and be identified by others. The entity known as Seth describes our sense of identity as 'changing physically' through the years. The idea is to become more than we were before or as Seth says "you add on to yourself through experience" while maintaining a sense of our identity. You can see then how the idea of adding on to ourselves is truly beneficial when those experiences are desirable rather than undesirable.

Thomas Troward who was a very popular author back in the early nineteen hundreds wrote in his book, *The Creative Process in the Individual*, a very fitting description that aligns perfectly with this discussion as follows:

Spirit creates by Self-contemplation;  
therefore, what it contemplates itself  
as being, that it becomes.  
You are individualized Spirit;  
therefore, what you contemplate as  
the Law of your being becomes the  
Law of your being.

As we contemplate and perceive our circumstances we become and as we become we develop the law of our being which translates into how we define ourselves, thus is the identity we form. It is obvious then that what we contemplate and how we perceive our circumstances contributes to our overall development which directly affects our personal growth. That growth is either enhanced or hindered by the identity we form that we will either hide behind or benefit from. Personal growth leads to the expansion of our identity which leads us to further growth experiences throughout life. We cannot experience such growth if we are bound to the limitations of a perceived identity that does not truly represent us. So then how can we experience such growth if we are entangled in the limitations of a perceived identity? The answer is this: by taking responsibility and accountability for our own actions since we cannot change the actions of anyone but ourselves. When we move into this mindset we begin to effect change and as we effect a change within ourselves we expand and we do so because we become aware – aware of ourselves and the choices and decisions we choose to make regardless of our past experiences.

This is precisely why it is not always necessary to spend time immersed in our past experiences as they truly serve no purpose other than to lead us out of the deserts of our conscious and subconscious minds. It is not nearly as relative to know exactly who did what to us and when as it is to understand that in spite of our past experiences we can

still make a huge difference in the quality of our lives when we come to terms with the fact that the matter of choosing and selecting our experiences today aligns with what we truly desire in our hearts. The quote above indicates that we are in fact spirit first and foremost and that spirit will succumb to the desires of our hearts if we will but allow it the freedom of its expression which it cannot express freely when it has been bound to deceptive perceptions. Personal freedom comes by way of making choices that enhance our experiences vs making choices that hinder or limit our experiences. So who we choose to become is a responsibility we place upon our own shoulders of which we will have to bear the burden of cause and effect if we choose to create the Law of our Being in opposition to what we truly desire for ourselves.

We hope that we have indeed opened your eyes to a matter you might otherwise not have given much thought too. If you have been creating an undesirable law of your being we hope that you will take the initiative to make the necessary adjustments to how you identify yourself and that you will start the process by redefining yourself as you contemplate who you are and who you really want to become.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve you yet again,

Linda, Z and the Collective We

**Resources and Recommended Reading listed by title:**

Choice Theory. William Glasser, M.D.

The Creative Process in the Individual. Thomas Troward.

The Human Odyssey. Thomas Armstrong, Ph D.

The Individual and the Nature of Mass Events. A Seth Book. Jane Roberts.

The Philosopher's Handbook. Stanley Rosen.

Seth Speaks, The Eternal Validity of the Soul. A Seth Book. Jane Roberts.