

Bridging the Gap between Differing and Contrary Perspectives

As the day-to-day dynamics between two people in a relationship can certainly be challenging at times, difficulties arise in the relationship when differences and contrary perspectives appear to be disagreeable, oppositional and even resistant. Whether perspectives and the manner in which they are expressed are truly disagreeable, oppositional or resistant is really a matter of differing points of view more than it is truly objective. Thus, acceptance or tolerance of differing perspectives, especially those that appear contrary, usually depends on whose point of view or frame of reference holds more sway and hence is more convincing. Dynamically speaking, expressing individual perspectives is relatively harmless to the relationship and is even healthy except when it causes alienation. As the gap between differing and contrary perspectives widens, alienation widens the gap that much more, eventually undermining the stability of the relationship. Because bridging the gap between differing and contrary perspectives is vital to the longevity of the relationship, lest it collapse unnecessarily at the mercy of sharply contrasting points of view and differing frames of reference, it is essential that the matter of perspectives be put in perspective. To put perspectives in perspective is to understand where perspectives come from, how they are formed, how they affect personal reality and ultimately how they affect the dynamics of the relationship.

Putting the matter of perspectives in perspective begins by taking into consideration that the degree of differences in perspectives is not indicative of someone being absolutely right and consequently the other being absolutely wrong. There are no absolutes. So with the matter of right or wrong to any extreme out of the way, is that differences in perspectives are attributed to a number of contributing factors not to be dismissed in terms of relevancy. The fact of the matter is that no two people in a relationship share the same exact personality traits and constitution of character anymore than they share the same exact outlook on life. Therefore, they do not approach the matters of life from the same exact frame of reference nor are they likely to share the same points of view, hence their individual perspectives. Perspectives correspond to the accumulation of life experiences with all its many causes and effects, which happens to be very strong influences when it comes to how perspectives are initially formed and reformed, including the level of understanding, knowledge, wisdom and insight acquired along the path of life, influences that also affect perspectives. Like it or not, these perspectives, such as they are at any given time are not likely to be in one accord with the perspectives of the other person, whose life experiences are not same nor is the level of knowledge, wisdom and insight thus far acquired the same, though there probably are some shared commonalities, hence the attraction.

Perspectives are not about whose right or who is wrong, it is about seeing things as they really are, objectively speaking. As subjective and objective points of view are by no means birds of the same feather, the difference between them can cause a sharp division in the relationship. Thus, understanding the difference between subjectivity and objectivity is no less essential to

putting perspectives in perspective, as it is essential to bridging the gap between differing and contrary perspectives. Whether or not these differences are occasional occurrences is neither here nor there because it only takes one sharply contrasting or striking different point of view to cause a potentially permanent divide that all too often involves hurt feelings. When these differences are not understood from an objective frame of reference but are viewed from a subjective lens opens the door wide to distorted perceptions, thus creating gaps not easily bridged and is why it is so important to consider the validity of one's own perspectives before seeing fit to disqualify the validity of the other person's perspectives. Judging perspectives from limited points of view and subjective frames of reference is risky business because it automatically puts someone in the position of defense and the other in the position of offense, one defending and the other opposing even to the point of becoming an argumentive emotional tug-o-war. Gaps in differing perspectives widens when no other perspectives are accepted or tolerated beyond the scope of one's own point of view, eventually draining the vitality out of the relationship even to the point of no return. The "my way or the highway" demanding mindset will surely undermine the stability of the relationship, that is, if stability really even exists in such a controlling and dominating environment.

Perspectives do not appear out of nowhere. They are formed in response to all sorts of external stimuli and internal influences; unseen forces working from within influencing thoughts, feelings and emotions, beliefs and expectations, and most especially behaviors, all relative to past and present experiences, as well as the anticipation of future events and expected conditions. Once formed, perspectives undergo alterations as events unfold and conditions change, even creating new perspectives in response to ongoing environmental stimuli and those unseen forces always at work from within. However, a perspective can remain static as if carved in stone or etched in cement. Whether differing or contrary really makes no difference, it simply is what it is unless there is good cause to see it from a different frame of reference. In the meantime, it is likely that the prevailing perspective typically intended to serve as a means of self-protection is not really protecting anything per se, but is limiting one's own experience to some degree, blocking healthy interactions with the other person, thus restricting the growth of the relationship.

Attempting to bridge the gap between differing and contrary perspectives is futile when underlying causes and effects morph into accumulated mental and emotional "baggage" that when rooted in childhood lends credence to perspectives also rooted in childhood, but the story does not end there. Over time, these roots spread, giving way to subjective interpretations of past events and conditions, thereby triggering strong emotional reactions to current events and conditions, hence the accumulated baggage, as well as setting habituated behavior patterns in motion, some that even seem neurotic. Whether or not they really are neurotic is a matter of correctly discerning strong emotional reactions to life events and the subsequent changes that initially are difficult to cope with from that of maladaptive coping skills, which is the inability to adjust to the environment, hence the neurotic behaviors; neither of which are birds of the same

feather either. Outside of a real social or mental “disorder” the resolve often necessitates peeling back any number of underlying and often undetected layers of causes and effects until the crux of the matter is put in objective perspective. Recognition of originating causes and the effects suffered over the year’s can change, alter or eliminate certain related perspectives that in turn change behaviors, in which case the only block to bridging the gap between differing and contrary perspectives is that which one puts upon oneself.

Last but certainly not least is that there is a correlation between subjective perspectives and the damaging implication of the words “always” and “never” when used out of context. In context, the words always and never are appropriately used when and where they are applicable, objectively speaking. However, they are not applicable when subjectivity steps in, especially when based on subjective observations and subjective interpretations, neither of which comes from an objective frame of reference; it is merely a subjective point of view that when taken out of context can be quite damaging. The dynamics in the relationship changes when always and never are used to imply concretely that “you always” or “you never” or that something is in a perpetual state of always and never when in fact it is not the case. Thus, subjectively projecting the perspective of always or never is not just an exaggeration; it is an outright accusation, which will not be a gap easily bridged. Even occasional occurrences, be they what they may, are not the same as always and never and therefore are not birds of the same feather either. The inappropriate use of the words always and never are not differing perspectives, they are contrary in every sense of the word. Therefore, always and never are words that should be avoided when they are not factual representations of a person or a situation but are subjective interpretations that widen relational gaps unnecessarily, thereby making it more difficult to bridge the gap between differing and contrary perspectives.

When gaps in differing or contrary perspectives seem impassible and hence difficult to bridge, taking time to put the matter of perspectives in perspective by understanding that perspectives do not just come out of nowhere, but that they have a subjective or an objective basis, is the first step to bridging the gap. The second and rather crucial step is in discerning between subjectivity and objectivity. The third is making a mutual effort to bridge the gaps between differing and contrary perspectives, which is also the key to avoiding “incompatibility” issues. So not only are the gaps bridged, the dynamics of the relationship escapes disaster.

