

## **Your Beliefs and Your Expectations—Part 2**

by Dennis Hooper, copyright © 2007, published in the Houston Home Journal on Saturday, Oct. 27, 2007

Your beliefs and expectations are in control of your life. That may not seem fair, since you had little role in generating them—your parents and early friends had that honor. Admittedly, they probably did not understand the power they would have on your future!

Without your conscious awareness, however, the beliefs and expectations they installed in you are influencing your every choice!

If you don't like what you are creating with your life, can you change your beliefs and expectations? Fortunately, yes! It requires first that you become aware that your values, your beliefs, and your expectations are perhaps the most significant contributors to your moment-to-moment behaviors.

Your beliefs and expectations affect the goals you set, the risks you take, the help you are willing to request, and the degree of persistence you exhibit.

We all flip-flop between two worlds of deception. One is a state of doubt (more about that below). Where most of us live most of the time, however, we believe we "see" things as they really are. We act based on what we consider to be "the truth." We think we understand the motivations and probable actions of those who work with us. We think we can accurately predict the outcomes of our decisions.

When functioning in this state of confidence, we typically have no awareness that we are actually being influenced by our biases and assumptions. Our perspective of reality is really quite distorted and incomplete. Yet if we take action and the outcome is quite different from what we had predicted, we are genuinely surprised.

Because of the decisive role we are expected to play, we leaders operate as if we perceive "the truth" perfectly. We speculate as to how we got to this point, and we think we know what to do to get us where we want to be. We think we know what will work, as long as everyone cooperates with us. So we assume the stereotypical "I'm the boss, so do what I tell you" dictator approach.

Sometimes we realize that our perspective in a given situation is incomplete. At times like this, we can easily flip into the other extreme: we doubt our abilities. We question our capacity to comprehend what is happening around and to us. Lacking certainty, we feel powerless. Our doubts can "make us lose the good we oft might win, by fearing to attempt." (William Shakespeare)

We usually realize when we are operating from doubt. It's an uncomfortable feeling for most of us. We tend to resist making any major decisions that will affect our future.

So, we have some built-in protection from taking radical action when we are in doubt. Can we also protect ourselves from the other extreme, the deception of acting with the belief that we see "the truth" of our situation?

I know only one way: by holding our paradigms loosely and inviting others to share their ideas. Modeling a spirit of collaboration leads to a culture of interdependence, where individuals feel comfortable offering their insights, knowing they will be respected for their perspectives.

Still, as a leader, it is your responsibility to provide direction. You generate options, then must select a response. You cannot remain immobilized by the lack of certainty. You need to take action in the direction of resolving unacceptable situations. People are looking to you for clarity.

So, in addition to your competence, you need to exhibit confidence. But what if those you influence have beliefs and expectations that don't align with yours? How do you engage reluctant followers who resist your direction? We'll talk about that situation, which every leader experiences, next time!

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