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# talking about...

... *designing better relationships for better outcomes*

September 2005  
Talking About Pty Ltd

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## Different Perspectives

*"Never criticize a man until you've walked a mile in his moccasins"*

... **North American proverb**

Have you ever had an "aha" moment? You know, a time when the light bulb went on and you got it. Really got it! Saw things in a way that you had not seen before and it was like you were looking at the world through new eyes.

As coaches, we are privileged to often find ourselves in the presence of someone having an "aha" moment and one of the most common catalysts for this is a simple idea – that "we all see the world differently". Even though most people would see this as self-evident when they reflect on their own and others' uniqueness, it is something that most do not use as a context for their daily living. Even though this uniqueness of perspective makes sense on reflection, in any given moment most of us tend to assume that what we see is what everyone sees. So what does this mean? Why is this an "aha" moment?

To see the power of this distinction, we need look no further than something that happens to people everyday – dealing with a problem. If I see the problem on the basis that everyone should see it simply because I do, then I will engage in conversations that start from this premise. I would most likely initiate conversations to resolve the "problem" and expect others to engage in these conversations almost immediately. If they do not engage as I expect, then I might think they are difficult to deal with or stupid or any of the myriad of reasons we can think of to explain their inability to help me resolve the "problem".

On the other hand, what do we do if we start from the premise that we all see the world differently? To begin with, from this basis we can assume at the beginning that others may not see the problem we see. This awareness leads us down a different conversational path. Rather than quickly starting in to resolve the problem, I can begin with a conversation to establish a shared understanding of the "problem". This provides a solid basis on which to have more effective conversations as we will be engaging in a discussion where ultimately our focus will be on a perception that we share rather than talking at cross-purposes as too often happens.

In other words, when we genuinely get that we each observe the world in our own unique way, we have different conversations. Rather than having conversations about things, we have conversations about how people perceive things and it is others' perceptions that are the key to generating more effective outcomes. As coaches, when we listen to people's conversations, we can get a good sense of how well they appreciate the idea of "different observers". We invite you to listen to your own conversations to see how well you have this appreciation. It may well provide you with your own "aha" moment.

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*"It is the theory that decides what we can observe."*

... **Albert Einstein (1879 – 1955)**

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## Different Perspectives ...

*This little piece wonderfully demonstrates the idea of different observers and when conversations don't match. Two students were asked to collaborate on a written piece. The process was simple. Each person was to pair off with the person sitting to his or her immediate right. One of them would then write the first paragraph of a short story. The partner would read the first paragraph and then add another paragraph to the story. The first person would then add a third paragraph, and so on back and forth. The idea was to keep the story coherent. The story was to be completed when both agreed a conclusion had been reached. This piece was written by a young female student and a young male student in a creative writing class.*

At first, Laurie couldn't decide which kind of tea she wanted. The chamomile, which used to be her favorite for lazy evenings at home, now reminded her too much of Carl, who once said, in happier times, that he liked chamomile. But she felt she must now, at all costs, keep her mind off Carl. His possessiveness was suffocating, and if she thought about him too much her asthma started acting up again. So chamomile was out of the question.

Meanwhile, Advance Sergeant Carl Harris, leader of the attack squadron now in orbit over Skylon 4, had more important things to think about than the neuroses of an air-headed asthmatic bimbo named Laurie with whom he had spent one sweaty night over a year ago. "A.S. Harris to Geostation 17," he said into his transgalactic communicator. "Polar orbit established. No sign of resistance so far..." But before he could sign off a bluish particle beam flashed out of nowhere and blasted a hole through his ship's cargo bay. The jolt from the direct hit sent him flying out of his seat and across the cockpit.

He bumped his head and died almost immediately, but not before he felt one last pang of regret for psychically brutalizing the one woman who had ever had feelings for him. Soon afterwards, Earth stopped its pointless hostilities towards the peaceful farmers of Skylon 4. "Congress Passes Law Permanently Abolishing War and Space Travel," Laurie read in her newspaper one morning. The news simultaneously excited her and bored her. She stared out the window, dreaming of her youth -- when the days had passed unhurriedly and carefree, with no newspapers to read, no television to distract her from her sense of innocent wonder at all the beautiful things around her. "Why must one lose one's innocence to become a woman?" she pondered wistfully.

Little did she know, but she has less than 10 seconds to live. Thousands of miles above the city, the Anu'udrian mother ship launched the first of its lithium fusion missiles. The dim-witted wimpy peaceniks who pushed the Unilateral Aerospace Disarmament Treaty through Congress had left Earth a defenseless target for the hostile alien empires who were determined to destroy the human race. Within two hours after the passage of the treaty the Anu'udrian ships were on course for Earth, carrying enough firepower to pulverize the entire planet. With no one to stop them, they swiftly initiated their diabolical plan. The lithium fusion missile entered the atmosphere unimpeded. The President, in his top-secret mobile submarine headquarters on the ocean floor off the coast of Guam, felt the inconceivably massive explosion which vaporized Laurie and 85 million other Americans. The President slammed his fist on the conference table. "We can't allow this! I'm going to veto that treaty! Let's blow 'em out of the sky!"

This is absurd. I refuse to continue this mockery of literature. My writing partner is a violent, chauvinistic, semi-literate adolescent.

Yeah? Well, you're a self-centered, tedious, neurotic whose attempts at writing are the literary equivalent of Valium.

Bastard.

Bitch.

The end.

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**"Reputation is what other people know about you. Honour is what you know about yourself."**

... Lois McMaster Bujold, "A Civil Campaign", 1999

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## Upcoming Events

### International Coach Federation (ICF) Australasia Third International Conference

**"Professional Coaching ... from the inside out"**

**September 29th and 30th, at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT), Gardens Point Campus, Brisbane, Australia.**

Talking About's Coaches are members of the ICF and we subscribe to their standards and ethics and support their objectives. For those of you who are interested in finding out more about where the world of coaching is heading, we invite you to consider attending the ICF's third International Conference in September.

The ICFA (Australasia) has designed this conference as a catalyst for continuing to move coaching towards a profession, and to support all coaches in continuing to improve their own professional practices. A large part of this journey will be respecting the diverse paths that practitioners have taken to coaching, and to highlight the shared elements in the practice of professional coaches.

The first keynote address will be delivered by Patrick Williams, renowned psychotherapist and coach. The theme will be **"The Future of Professional Coaching: Taking a Stand for Quality."**

He will focus on how the profession evolved, where it is today, and what is needed for coaching to be recognised and embraced worldwide by consumers, clients, and organizations. Patrick will also offer an Interactive Learning Community - "The Theoretical Foundations of Coaching". He will outline how the theories, techniques, and strategies from decades of psychotherapy research and application have influenced modern day coaching.

Details on Patrick and other keynote presenters, Sir John Whitmore and Marcia Reynolds, and the full program can be found at [www.icfaustralasia.com](http://www.icfaustralasia.com). Keep an eye on the website where you can watch further developments of the Conference Program, Register and learn about local Chapter events.

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