



talking about...

June 2011

... designing better relationships for better outcomes

Unique Observers

"The source of genius is imagination alone, . . . the refinement of the senses that sees what others do not see, or sees them differently."

... Eugene Delacroix (1798-1863) French painter

One of the key ideas of our work lies in the concept of different observers. This is not just to say that others observe the world differently to us, it means we all are different observers compared to all others. In other words, rather than say we are different observers, we might say we are all **unique** observers of the world.

This idea is obvious to most people when they think about it. After all, it is easy to see that you and I do not observe the same thing even if it is just from where we physically stand in the world compared to others. The thing is people don't generally consider this in daily life.

When explored further, this idea is more profound than simply "we observe or see the world differently". We are also unique "experiencers" of the world. Indeed all we know of life is our own experience of it. No one else's, just our own. When I ask you how life is going, you will tell me about your experience of life. When you tell me something you know, you know it because you have experienced knowing it. Again, most people get this when they think about, yet once again, they rarely do. The upshot is people tend to believe they directly observe what is real rather than seeing this as their experience of what is real.

When we take this even a step further, we can see that we are also unique "interpreters" of the world. You may recall our basic premise we shared with you some time ago that states, "the human condition is a continuous yet momentary experience of living". As we go through each moment, we are uniquely cognitive and uniquely interpreting our cognition in some way and taking actions as a result. This is what we are all doing all the time. Everyone of us.

Even when others tell us of their own experience and interpretations, we have to put it into the frame of reference that is our experience. We cannot do otherwise. When you tell me that you are angry, I consider this from the point of view of what anger is for me. When you tell me about how you feel about someone, I consider this in my own experience and stories of them. And so it goes.

All this uniqueness begs the question as to how we get on with each other at all! We seem to do so by making the assumption that others are pretty much like us. In general terms, this obviously works. Yet, when it doesn't work, it is often challenging for us to explore why it doesn't work in the context of our uniqueness. Too often, we continue to assume that our experience and interpretations are the same as everyone else. Or more to the point, their experience is the same as ours and our experience or interpretation is the "correct" one!

These ideas provide a great opportunity for us in our relationships. When someone does something we do not understand, we can always be in the question of what they might be observing, experiencing and interpreting at that moment in time. We can never see through their eyes, experience as they experience nor interpret as they do, for how could we know that was the case. Yet, simply being in the question provides for a greater understanding and more effective way of relating.

"Cubism is like standing at a certain point on a mountain and looking around. If you go higher, things will look different; if you go lower, again they will look different. It is a point of view."

... Jacques Lipchitz (1891-1973) Polish/French/US painter & cubist sculptor

Talking About LinkedIn

If you are on LinkedIn, we invite to join the Talking About group and join the conversation. Each month, we will be discussing our newsletters in more depth and also regularly invite you to consider other questions that we pose.

We would love for you to join us to hear what others have to say and also share your views.

Talking About Pty Ltd

PO Box 6652,
St Kilda Rd Central,
Victoria, 8008.

Ph: +613 9504 3558

info@talkingabout.com.au
www.talkingabout.com.au



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Psychiatry and Proctology

A bit of humour to get you through the week!

Two doctors opened offices in a small town and put up a sign reading "Dr. Smith and Dr. Jones, Psychiatry and Proctology".

The town's fathers were not too happy with that sign, so they changed it to "Hysterias and Posteriors".

This was not acceptable either, so they changed the sign to "Schizoids and Hemorrhoids". No go, so they tried "Catatonics and High Colonics".

Thumbs down again, so they tried "Manic-depressives and Anal-retentives." Still not good, so they tried "Minds and Behinds".

Unacceptable again, so they tried "Lost Souls and A-- holes". Still no go.

Nor did "Analysis and Anal Cysts", "Queers and Rears", "Nuts and Butts", "Freaks and Cheeks" or "Loons and Moons" work either, so they finally settled on "Dr. Smith and Dr. Jones, Odds and Ends."

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ACN 112 307 892
info@talkingabout.com.au
Telephone: +61 3 9504 3558

