



What is Personal Development?

Essentially, personal development is about enjoying your life while making conscious decisions on a daily basis about everything you do. It's about having more control of your own actions and emotions and staying motivated no matter what situation or environment you are in.

Personal development teaches you how to become more productive and effective at work and how to maintain focus on what really counts in all aspects of your life.

Your Perception is Everything

Let me tell you my story. The other day a friend of mine came over to my place for just one reason; to complain about a recent event, a disturbing event as he explained it to me. When he finished his "monologue" (I am sorry, but I have no other word) I just said one thing: perception is everything. Instantly he was angry and started yelling at me. "What do you mean by that, Ms. Philosopher?" he asked, incensed. "Are you saying I am a liar or crazy or that it's my imagination?"

When these words came at me, I felt there was just one option. I let my friend cool down a while, not saying nor doing anything. The story is not yet over and I need to explain to that angry man the meaning of what I said to him.

This is my explanation in terms of what can be learned from it. Our perception--how we become aware of success, failure, happiness, friendships, love, and everything else--is just a perception. It is how we perceive failure or defeat, and what we do with it, that makes all the difference. Actually, perception is our personal opinion or our point of view about any particular event. Of course, the event is a fact, not imagination, but at the same time there is a very personal view colouring the event. We really need to accept the truth about our emotions and perception: our thoughts and attitudes create our emotions - not the external event!

Our own perception depends on many things. These include our attitude, which, in turn, includes self-acceptance, self-confidence, self-respect and other things. Because your mental structure is different from my mental structure we see the same situation differently. The same pleasant or unpleasant episode is not the same for you and me. You choose your own perception and the consequences are yours, not mine.

Is it clear? If not, may I remind you about cognitive distortion?

Cognitive distortion simply means that our thoughts and our way of thinking sometimes misrepresent the facts. Our own mental filter chooses how we feel. This filter will pick up any detail to prove that things are as we perceive them--negative or positive--but mostly negative! Sounds strange but any kind of behaviour is a conscious choice. I didn't choose for my friend to be angry or upset. I am sorry if I am unkind but this is a reality that my friend doesn't want to see and understand. It was his attitude, his perception, of this "disturbing event" that led him to his behaviour.

It is necessary to understand that sometimes the next day we will see the same event differently. How is it possible? The next day we are wearing a different "pair of eyeglasses." That is, a different mental filter. Yes, we are very fashion-conscious in that respect--we change our mental filter every time we process our thoughts. Now you know why some days are "so bad, boring and disturbing" for you. Your emotions-fear, anger, anxiety and guilt are a direct result of your mental processing system that day. Don't blame the weather, the event, the company, the other person or the government.

Our emotions are an indirect response to our environment, based on our inner thought processes. When our thoughts are in conflict with one another--cognitive distortions--or with reality, they will produce a sensation we will call emotion. All emotions are actually a result of an inappropriate response to external events. Actually, they are cognitive distortions

If you see my friend around, tell him to change his "pair of glasses". He will feel better. I, however, was not able to do it. I couldn't explain to him that he feels so negative and angry because he assumed things were otherwise than they really were.

We all need to accept one thing: our emotions follow our thoughts. It took me a long time to logically understand that the only person who is in charge of my feeling and emotions - is me. I am responsible for my "pair of eyeglasses". Whenever I start to feel inappropriately "emotional," I ask myself: What kind of mental filter is in my mind today? Where is the twisted thinking?

The more depressed or miserable I feel, the surer I am the more twisted my thinking is! In the absence of mental distortion I cannot experience my anger, fear, anxiety or depression. What about you?

Persevering from a different perspective is a very healthy way of living. We will save a lot of energy and do our nerves a favour if we can wear the appropriate "pair of eyeglasses". And we won't save just energy - maybe you can save your marriage, or friendship, or even a job!

Next time when you or someone else says, "I am sorry, that's my mood," don't be afraid to say, "Yes, I understand that, but you can change it. You have an obligation to feel better about yourself."