

Is Your Thinking Sometimes Caught In A Rut?

This week, as I was getting ready to tape my TV show (Shrink Rap), the director told me an interesting story. His friend John was hurrying to get ready for work when he realized he needed to iron the pants he wanted to wear. He remembered that his wife had been hemming some other pants the night before and he knew she always ironed all newly tailored clothes. John was a very orderly guy and was frequently frustrated by Nancy not putting things back right away.

He went to the spot where the iron was usually kept, confirmed it wasn't there and yelled in frustration to his wife, 'Nancy, where's the iron?' Nancy came to the closet where John was standing, reached up over him and took the iron from its standard spot whereupon she handed it to her shocked and open-mouthed husband.

John had allowed his expectation that the iron would be gone to hijack his awareness of what was in front of his face. His thinking was running blindly down a rut made from repetitious experiences.

Unexpected events often aren't easily understood because our brains conserve energy by working along familiar pathways and recognizing repeating patterns; we look for and see the expected. When we are faced with a new situation we attempt to interpret what we are seeing or hearing in light of our past experiences and the information we are familiar with. Our minds, like John's, will often try to write the next chapter of an old story without seeing what is obviously there.

Do the ruts in your thinking sometimes run right over your awareness or objectivity? What are you missing with your clients? Learning to see and question is a fundamental part of good listening and building stronger relations with your valued customers. I can give you simple direct ways to improve your working objectivity in interpersonal situations. Call if you'd like more information on developing better relationships with your clients, colleagues and staff.