

What Colors Your Viewpoint?

I was in an exercise class the other day and the instructor started out with her usual joke that gets the class of mostly women relaxed and ready to go. This one was about a woman who was approaching her 50th birthday and remarked to her husband that she wished she were six again. He decided to give it a try and started her birthday with Cap'n Crunch Cereal, got her a Happy Meal for lunch, took her to a carnival for a merry-go-round ride and ended up the day with an ice cream party at a local shop.

As they were ending up the day the wife turned to him and thanked him for the fun day, "but dear, what gave you the idea to do so many unusual things?"

He gave her a hug and said, "Well Hon, you said you wished you could be six again."

She stared at him in shock. "I meant I wished I could be a *size* six again."

The exercise instructor paused, scanned the group then asked us if we knew what the moral of the story was. After another dramatic pause she explained, "Even when men pay attention and listen, they still don't get it right."

As she cranked up the music and started the routines I groaned, here was another example of seeing the world from a restricted viewpoint. My professional brain started working the possible morals – woman often aren't any clearer than men in their communications, none of us ask enough questions, our experience (read gender, social status, race, religion, sexual orientation) colors our expectations and therefore our interactions.

The only effective way to open our eyes to the reality of our clients and colleagues is to get into the habit of being more inquisitive, hesitate before we speak and adopt tentative language that reflects our awareness that we can never be sure we see the whole picture. We may not completely eliminate our filtering process, but we can hesitate before we accept the obvious first impression and pull aside the curtains to let in a little revealing sunlight.

If you're seeing things in monochrome, we can help you develop a richer palette of colors that will help you attract and retain more clients, increase your productive encounters and probably add to your enjoyment of life. Contact us today to arrange a 30 minute staff training on, "What's Your Story?"