

## *Is There Another Perspective?*

There's nothing like a new year to inspire us to be healthier, to get those projects done, to break an old habit or start a new one. *A fresh start.*

As we walk into the possibilities of 2018, what is it we want to do different this year? A fresh start ought to come with greater personal awareness or something meaningful to us. I know you won't be surprised, but I have a suggestion. *What if we acknowledged that there may be another perspective other than our own?* Not that radical really.

I should clarify, I'm not suggesting you entertain ideas that conflict with who you are and what you believe at your core. But there are times when the distance between some of our firmly held beliefs and someone else's perspective isn't that vast. But without an intent of listening to the other side with an open mind we never get to discover that.

We each bring our "suitcase" of experiences to every conversation. We have it sitting next to us when we listen to someone share their story, struggles or frustrations. How hard is it to listen to someone share their thoughts when we are diametrically opposed to what they're saying? There are times when instead of really listening to what they're saying or the impact their opinion might have, we're busy thinking through our counter point. We're so busy preparing our response we don't really listen to their perspective.

Someone once told me they seek out people who disagree with them because they learn more about their own beliefs when they're challenged. They feel there's nothing less inspiring than listening to

someone who completely agrees with them. I thought that was pretty profound. So I tried it. Here's what I learned:

- Just listening to someone else's perspective didn't particularly inspire me. But when I started asking questions of why they believe it, how they got to that conclusion, and what difference that has made in their life, it became impactful. Now I wasn't just hearing someone spew words, it had a human component to it and made me feel as well as think.
- When you listen, you really get to know someone on a different level. As a result, you are more forgiving of many things.
- When I listen intently to someone else's perspective, I give myself the opportunity to become more connected to them. I open myself to the possibility that I don't have it all figured out. It sometimes takes me days of pondering what I've heard before I can grasp it.

A lot of what I do every day is listen to people, to families, as they navigate challenging circumstances. Every time I sit with a family I'm reminded of the validity of perspectives other than mine. Learning how to listen openly has been a blessing in my life. I wish you that same blessing.

*This article is a reprint of a blog posted by  
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