



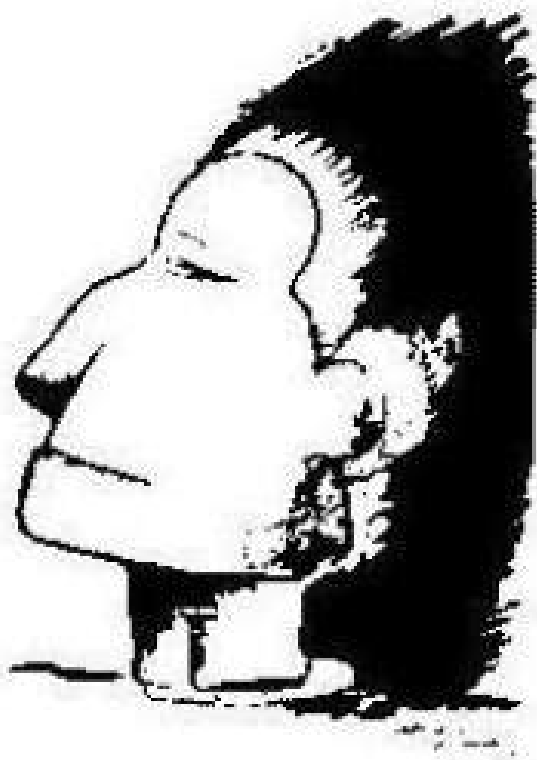
Strive to Be Better

By Lyn Carman

Striving to be a better version of ourselves

I am constantly reminded of the responsibility I have to be the best version of me I can be. It is a choice for us to think, feel and act the way we do at any given time. You may recall my article in the previous edition “Are you living above the line or below the line”, its all about cause and effect.

Lets consider this for minute; how much of our day-to-day interaction with others is based on a perception of what was said; what was meant; how it was interpreted, and how we respond?



An exercise in perception...
Take a look at this picture for a minute.
What do you see first and then...?

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In the book "7 habits of highly effective people" Stephen Covey says, "Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply."

Being that communication is the most important skill in life, how do we learn to communicate? We spend a lot of time in our life learning how to speak, read and write, though when are we taught how to listen? What training do we have to listen deeply to really understand what another person is conveying to us?

If you are like most people, we like to get our point across and wish to be understood, and in doing so may inadvertently dismiss the other person. When the other person speaks we are listening to ourselves preparing our response in our brain while they are talking, and this means we are not fully and deeply listening and may miss the meaning entirely. We then apply our terms of reference to what is being said, how we perceive it to be.

I wonder if you can relate to this, I know I can and have done it myself. You are telling a story about something that happened in your day, sharing an experience and the person you are talking to finishes your sentence for you. They decide prematurely what you mean before you finish communicating, based on their story in their own mind, it may be the same ending or it may be in a completely different tangent.

Some examples of when we don't listen with the intent to understand may be;

when you listen do you

- Hear them, make a judgement and either agree or disagree
- Give advice and find solutions
- Decide on their motives and behaviours based on your own experiences
- Ask questions based on your own frame of reference, perception.

Most of us think we listen well, though we don't. The consequences of not listening well can be costly; when people don't feel heard it could create conflict, they can become irritated, confused and hurt.

At the core of conflict there is always a breakdown in communication and the parties' inability to understand each other. It could be said a conflict is often a dialogue of the deaf.

When someone is listening to us deeply and sincerely, we are able to express ourselves, we lower our defences, and we take down our masks.

There's no better feeling than the feeling of being heard and understood, even if it doesn't mean you get your way or that the other person agrees with you – it's great to feel like someone put themselves in your shoes for a moment.

It's a kindness we can extend to each other that isn't only healthy and beneficial to both parties, it challenges you to be more flexible, more attentive and therefore better at making more complex decisions. It's the foundation for effective participative and collaborative relationships.

In the pursuit of being the best version of ourselves, starting principles could be,

Don't listen to reply, listen to understand.

"Seek first to understand and then be understood" – Covey

