

## **Being Imperfect Together – 06-04-15**

### **We do not see things as they are. We see them as we are.**

Helen Gennari, MSW, LCSW

The loss of a limb, human or otherwise, is a significant severance. Some weeks ago, when I looked out my window, I discovered that a major limb had been removed from my tree. It was the limb that, for the past seventeen years, I have watched grow closer to my deck, and, as of last year, could finally reach out and touch. But this spring, it did remain bare while the other branches greened gleefully.

Now, all that remains is the round, open space from which it was disconnected by someone's saw, the only evidence that it even existed. For weeks I have gazed at that open wound with sadness and tried to adjust to the large, open space between me and my tree. I have focused only on my loss.

This morning, as I reflected on the tree's loss of its limb, I shifted my perspective to the whole tree, and felt such gratitude for its presence, that it's still here, shading my deck, holding the nest of robins residing there, and hosting a variety of song birds, including the cardinal that sang to me last night.

It occurred to me that how I look at a situation, or person, or event makes such a difference in how I experience them. How I look at you and what I choose to see either allows me to feel connected (or sense the potential for connection) or not. There are so many factors that influence how I look at another and what I see. And all of this is within my control. I can choose what I will see or focus on when I look at a person, situation, or event. What I choose to see (or not) colors the inside of my heart~~and is revealed in how I am feeling and how I choose to respond.

So I ask myself:

- Do I take the time to really look at the other?
- What catches my attention? What do I first notice?
- Am I pre-disposed to see certain things if the person is ethnically / culturally different?
- Do I take the time to see more than the external qualities?
- Am I intimidated by what I see? How, then, do I respond?
- Is my seeing accompanied by judgment?
- What interferes with my vision as I look at someone with whom I've had a disagreement?
- Does how I look at the other exclude them from my heart?

We see, not just with our eyes but also with our mind and our heart and our soul. In our seeing, we also define much of our life, including ourselves. We are observers, and through our observations, we become aware, we learn, and we are able to choose. In our choosing, we create much of our experience, which then reflects something of who we are and how we are in relationship to who/what we observe. The anonymous author of the quote that forms the title of this article was right: "We see them as we are."

"Whatever we call reality, it is revealed to us only through an active construction in which we participate." (The Quantum Self)

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