



Module Six: Your Perceived World

In the last Module, we talked about your Quality World. In this Module, we will be discussing perception.

Perception:

Remember last week when I said if you could just live all day in your Quality World, you would be happy? However, we all have to deal with what is known as the Real World. In the Real World, there are some things you want and many you may not. How you experience the Real World depends completely on your perception of it.

Have you ever heard the expression, "Your perception is your reality"? Choice Theory backs up this conventional wisdom. Yes, there is a Real World out there, and yes, you exist within it but how you experience it is completely dependent on your perception.

You go through life each day perceiving people, things and experiences around you as "real." But are they? How can you actually definitively know what is real when you are experiencing things through your unique perceptions?

Do you remember the old Indian parable as told by Robin Wood about the blind men and the elephant? Each man described the elephant they encountered based on their unique perception of it which derived from their experience of where they touched the elephant.

The man touching the side of the elephant described the elephant as being like a large warm wall. The man touching the elephant's leg, found it to be like a pillar. The man touching the elephant's trunk, thought it felt like a snake. The one feeling the tail believed the elephant to be like rope because he felt hair. And finally, the man touching the ear believed the elephant to be like a sail. Each man was absolutely correct from their unique perspective but none had the entire picture, yet each was convinced he was 100% correct and the others were completely wrong.

This is what our perception is like for us. We experience the Real World through our senses and immediately believe it is accurate and only correct interpretation of reality. However, Choice Theory tells us our perceptions are unique to each of us. When we disagree with someone, it is

frequently not because one person is "right" and the other is "wrong," but rather it is simply because perceptions are different.

So, what exactly is perception? Let's take some time and examine how you actually experience the "Real World." First of all in order for you to experience anything, you have to come into contact with something with one of your five or six senses, depending on whether you believe in the existence of extrasensory perception. So, unless you hear, taste, smell, touch or see (or sense) something, it will escape your perception completely. And even then, it is possible for you to glimpse something unimportant at the time that never really makes it to your level of conscious awareness or your perception. This is why oftentimes, victims of violent crime will be able to recall details when placed under hypnosis. They actually sensed something but it never made it to their level of conscious comprehension.

Once you sense something and the information enters your perception, it must pass through your total knowledge filter. This represents the sum total of everything you know and all the experiences you have had up to that point. You compare the information that is entering your perception with the information you have stored in your total knowledge filter. You are looking for a match or recognition. You are attempting to make sense of the information you are bringing in from the Real World.

Let's say you are in a meeting at work and someone in the room has a mechanical object sitting on the table in front of him or her. You look at the object, you register it as something metal and mechanical but when the image passes through your total knowledge filter, you don't have a clue what it could be.

At this point there are two things you can do. You either decide it is nothing that interests you and you forget about it or you decide you want to learn more about it and you take the steps necessary to do so. Let's say that on the way to work that day, you were experiencing car problems and when you arrived and parked, you weren't sure your car would start to get you home later that afternoon. You know it is a long shot but this mechanical part sitting there could possibly be the very thing you need to fix your car and get home successfully. Now, you have motivation and incentive to learn more about the object so you ask the person, "What is that thing?" Once you have that answer, the information will proceed deeper into your Perceived World.

Another possible scenario is that you see the object and you do have a match for it in your knowledge filter, meaning you know right away what it is. If there is a match in your knowledge filter, then the information automatically proceeds to the next level of the Perceived World, which is the valuing filter.

Notice I did not say value filter. I said valuing filter to indicate the active decision-making process for determining the value of the information you perceive. Until information about the Real World gets to your valuing filter, it has a neutral value. It is neither positive nor negative. It is the job of the valuing filter to determine if that neutral information is positive, negative or will remain simply neutral. It's the valuing filter that helps you determine whether information is positive, negative or neutral.

This valuing filter is a critical component of Choice Theory. I'm sure you have heard the thought that it's not what happens to you in life that causes problems; it's what you do about what happens to you. John Demartini, in *The Breakthrough Experience*, tells us that in every experience lie equal positive and negative characteristics. You can find the positive if you look for it or you can stay mired in the negative. It's completely your choice once you have the information about the power of your perception.

All of your perceptions--the positive, negative and neutral--come together in your Perceived World to equal the sum total of how you are experiencing the Real World.

Conclusion:

I know this lesson has been quite theoretical but it is necessary to lay the foundation for what lies ahead. In order for you to understand the power of perception, please complete the Perception worksheet (same worksheet as Lesson 3-Relationships).

Write down some things that create problems, angry and frustration for you in the left-hand column under the word "Negatives." Then take some time to think about what John Dimartini says regarding everything having equal positive and negative aspects associated with it. Ask yourself the question, "How does this help me? What is the lesson or gift for me in the situation?" It might be that the situation provides you with an opportunity. You may find you are able to do things or have things you wouldn't otherwise. Or it may provide you an opportunity to strengthen your character in some way.

When you have an answer, please record it in the "Shifts" column. Make sure you actually experience a shift from negative to positive in your perception.