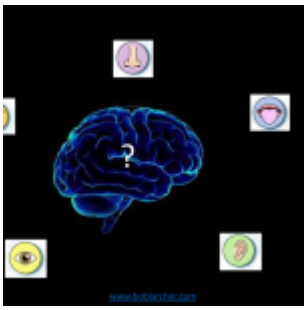
Living with interpretations



“What you see and what you hear depends a great deal on where you are standing. It also depends on what sort of person you are.”

C.S. Lewis

We all live in two worlds; an outer world where we interact with others and an inner world where our thoughts, feelings, needs, and desires originate.

Our outer, social, world is everything that happens around us and our inner, conscious & less conscious, world is everything that happens inside us.

These two worlds are, at the same time, completely distinct and intrinsically linked

In fact, we all live in an “interpretation” of what happens around us; we all “decode” the sights, sounds, smells, etc. around us through filters we have developed.

Of course, growing up we are all equipped with some similar filters; we learn that an outstretched open hand is a sign of welcome, that a smile is a sign of friendship, that a nod of the head means yes, etc.

Even though we all have some common filters, we all develop, in our formative years, our own personal filters; two people hearing someone say the same phrase at the same moment will

often have different interpretations of what was said; likewise, someone's body movement or behaviour, will be, often, interpreted in different ways by different people.

We all know that sound doesn't exist as such, it's "simply" the process of molecules bumping into each other in patterns, the wiggling of little hairs inside our head, the translation into electrical signals and then interpretation by the brain.

The same can be said for almost every "piece of information" that makes its way into our inner world; anything that we see, touch, hear, smell and feel we will interpret with both our "common" filters and our "personal" filters.

This leads us to have similar, but different, interpretations of what is going on around us. The dog charging towards two friends could be interpreted as "dogs are dangerous, runaway" or "I love dogs, go fetch the stick", depending on their respective filters.

Many of the filters we developed in our formative years were outside our control; most of us learned that, "lambs are gentle & wolves are vicious", that "butterflies are pretty & spiders are ugly" and that "princesses are beautiful & witches are wicked" – not to mention a lot of gender, colour, race, religion and national filters, all of which impact how we interpret our environment.

However, as adults we can question ourselves when perceiving, interpreting and reacting to our external worlds; we can try to see things without our filters, we can try to understand other people's filters and we can try to imagine how others may interpret the same situation.

Remember, No one else but you thinks in your brain! you always have the ability to change what you think and feel, the trick is to become aware of it

"Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of

the human freedoms to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way“

Viktor Frankl