

Clear Vision

By G. Susan Rivers, LMFT

Occasionally in life there are small events that have lasting effects. Some of these events move us forward in life. Some, however, create barriers and obstacles to achieving our goals and to seeing ourselves and our world clearly.

I remember at age twelve I received my first pair of eyeglasses. Riding home from the optometrist's office, we passed a street lined with many trees. All of a sudden, I could distinguish separate leaves in the trees rather than a mass of green. Never before had I known the quality of clear vision. Leaves were no longer blurred or distorted – they held their own shape and character.

It was an amazing sight! Not only could I see the differences among the leaves, but at that moment, I knew things in life weren't always as they seemed. Now, I could clearly see what was in front of me. My past knowledge and experiences involving the world around me had been based on blurred vision. I was now experiencing life beyond my past distortions.

Sometimes the events in our lives blur our vision of ourselves, as well. We begin to see ourselves through the fuzziness of past events or misunderstandings. Just like my experience with trees and leaves, when our vision is blurred, it is often difficult to distinguish signs, pathways, directions or even obstacles that clutter our lives or cause us to be “stuck” behind some barrier to success or to fully living out our potential.

If we consider ourselves to be “works in progress” then we can expect delays, detours, wrong turns, and sometimes misdirection as we move ahead with careers, relationships or even finances. Gaining clear vision may require strategies, feedback and assistance from others (e.g., coaches, therapists, good friends, and event God).

The first step toward gaining clarity about where we are going and who we are is the conscious act of recognizing the blurriness. This “awareness” that there is a problem provides us the opportunity to think and move differently. As a twelve-year-old, I had no idea there was something wrong with my vision. I assumed everyone saw the world as I did. In fact, it was an observant and caring teacher who identified my distorted vision. Reaching awareness that a distortion or obstacle exists allows us to entertain new ways of approaching solutions.

Next, even if awareness is present, we may continue to find ourselves caught in those familiar and blurry places which can hinder our movement forward. Embracing change based on a new awareness can produce resistance, especially if there are deeply embedded lies that need to be combated. Despite awareness, our head may say “move forward” but our heart (which holds our

beliefs) may override forward movement with internal fears and negative messaging.

When this happens, the best question to ask is: “What is the good reason?” Predictably, I hear from clients, “there is no good reason.” The truth is, however, there must be a good reason, even if it doesn’t seem like it at the time. Some very popular “good reasons” are:

- “I’m not good enough”
- “I can’t handle any more failure”
- “I don’t know how.”
- “What if I make a mistake?”
- “At least I know what this place feels like; this is familiar.”
- “I’ll embarrass myself/my family.”
- “I’m not smart enough.”

Without any truthful challenges, these distorted mis-beliefs will cement our status quo and perpetuate our blurred vision regarding our lives, relationships, careers, and more.

Past failures, abuses and mistakes are often the culprits in causing “blurred vision.” However, they are just that – past. The truth is: we are more than our past. It may be true that bad things happened in the past, but those bad things don’t have to continue to define who we are today. They are simply bad things. We are more than those bad things.

In order to identify what is true, we must be able to find the good reasons for the “blurred vision” and our seemingly immovable stance. Challenging the lies allows us to discover new truths about ourselves. By doing this we can enhance the clarity of our present situation, explore new strategies and embrace a clearer vision for ourselves and our future. Just as the leaves in the trees became clearer in their shape and character for me, so too, we can recognize and adjust the lens of truth about our own shape and character in our careers, relationships, finances, etc.

When clear vision is based on truth about us, rather than distortion and disguise, we begin to identify our own shape and character which distinguishes us from others. This includes such things as our obvious strengths (abilities, values, faith, passions) and character (perseverance, honesty, integrity, compassion, walk and talk match, peacemaker, bold, innovative, etc.). As we gain a clearer picture of our defined shape and character we can continue to embrace truths rather than old distortions. Now, it will be easier to reshape our direction or to make wise decisions based on our strengths and clear vision. We will then be able to plan for our future with a realistic expectation of achieving our goals.

In his book, *Your Best Life Now*, Joel Osteen states: “The key to future success is to not be discouraged about your past or present.” As “works in progress” we are not alone. Again, friends, coaches, therapists can help us with clarity and our

evolving shape and character. Setting aside the negativity linked to our past, we can now focus on truths, such as “I am more than my past,” “I can learn new ways to. . .,” “I can do many things well,” “I am smart.”

The truth is we are not perfect. We are also more than our past. Restructuring our beliefs about ourselves is the solvent that frees us to move beyond immobility and toward a “clearer vision” of who we are and who we are becoming. Restructuring our beliefs about our pasts, especially if there has been brokenness, allows us to reframe “the bad things” and consider ourselves now “experienced.” Our brokenness or failures may include divorce, job loss, financial disasters, childhood abuse, etc. Like a laser surgeon, we must remove the distorted beliefs and lies about our past and allow truths to take their place. When we do this, we open the door to reshaping, restructuring and redefining ourselves in a way that honors the strengths and perseverance of who we are.

Restructuring our beliefs is the powerful tool of truth that promotes clear vision, moves us forward and boldly sets in motion the celebration of our true shape and character – now redefined. Restructuring our beliefs and achieving clear vision about ourselves, frees us from the things that had us “stuck” and sets us free to achieve our goals and to become our true selves. Restructuring allows us to live life vibrantly.