



Purposeful Wanderings

A Monthly Newsletter for Clients and Friends of **The Road Not Taken**

Volume 11, Number 2 – February 2012

© 2012 Bradford L. Glass • www.RoadNotTaken.com

There Are No Contentious Topics

“You can either have what you want or you can have the reasons why you can’t have what you want.”

----- Alberto Villoldo, in *The Four Insights*

My newer clients often speak of the contention and conflict they experience, at home and work. The contention may show up as complaint, argument, anger, stress, anxiety, frustration or worry. Given its pervasiveness, it would be easy to conclude that contention is simply an inherent part of life. It’s not. Whether you notice contention in others or feel it inside you, here’s a new view, one with the potential to eliminate most of the negativity in your life today.

The view is simple: *Issues do not create contention; only how we see and think about issues does.* Contention arises when we make things personal. If someone blames you for their problems, it’s probably not even *about* you; they’re blaming because that’s what they do all the time; it *isn’t* personal. As you learn to see things from a less personal perspective, contention simply disappears. For example, when you stop seeing things as ‘happening to you’ and start seeing things as simply ‘happening,’ your entire *relationship* with those things changes, often instantly. If you doubt this, consider, for a moment, that your doubt could just be one of the old ways of seeing and thinking that serves to keep contention alive for you. If you’ve been down the same well-worn path of conflict for a long time, a new approach may help. Here’s a three step process you can adopt, starting right now, for any conflict you experience, either with others or with yourself. The model is adapted from this month’s book recommendation, *The Four Insights*.

1. *Name the story you tell.* For a specific source of contention bothering you today, create a simple, but honest, assessment of the way you see it. Speak it out loud; then allow the meaning of the words to impact you. Example: “Everything is so insane at work; the only thing people do is complain.”
2. *See the story you tell as a story ... then as your story.* Now rephrase your story so it’s something *you do*, something you bring to the situation. This isn’t a way to deny the issue exists or to say you’re at fault, but a way for you to see your own *thinking* more clearly. Example: “When I dread being at work, everything appears as complaint.”
3. *Write and tell a new story.* You may have to ‘play pretend’ for a bit here because it may be new territory for you. Look at the polar opposite of the issue you’ve named. What if everything were completely different, if new potential could arise from an old situation? Example: “As I begin to see what’s *possible* instead of what’s *wrong*, opportunities emerge. Not only do I find new ways to do things, but others begin to follow.”

The power you have to make fundamental change in the way you experience life (yourself, others, work and world) is phenomenal. This kind of transformation comes from learning to see and think in new ways, not from waiting for the world to change. If you are waiting for the world to change, see the quote at the top of this article. The difficulty here lies not in changing how you see and think, for you are 100% free in each moment to choose how. The difficulty lies in the unconscious, yet life-constraining belief that you are powerless to do so. It is that *belief* that holds you from the freedom and peace you desire.

You might start right now by examining how you’ve reacted to what you’ve read here. I’ve offered clues along the way about where reactions might arise. For now, just get to know your reaction. **Name** what you see as nonsense. **Name** how this view is unique to you (not everyone reacts the same way, so you are unique in some way). Pretend the world or others were different, and that your reaction was unnecessary. **Name** how you would see things *then*.

As you become a student of your own ways of seeing – and yes, *becoming* that student is also a choice – you’ll find your ways of seeing and thinking *change*. Where you used to see contention, you’ll see possibility. Where you used to see problems, you’ll see potential. Where you used to believe life never gave you a break, you *create* the breaks.

A River Runs Through It [Life lessons offered by nature]

There is no contention in nature. It's all just "what is." The problem we have is that we *see* contention in nature. We see contention that isn't truly there, simply because we've been programmed to see that way. (That's why the idea and exercises in this month's article carry such potential ... they break the unconscious, incessant stream of thought that sees the world as a problem.) When a river wears down rocks in a canyon, it's not "doing it to the rocks." The rocks are not upset. When a hawk nabs a mouse in a meadow, there's no vindictiveness going on. And when a deer narrowly escapes a wolf's jaw and runs free, both just shake it off and go back to what they were doing before.

You might want to make two separate forays into nature this month. Sit for an hour or so in one spot, watching and hearing everything that happens. Notice the judgments you stir into your observations. Perhaps they are about good vs. bad, about blame, about right vs. wrong, etc. Just notice how you may ascribe thoughts that pervade your human world to the natural world, too. On your second visit, ideally to the same place, notice sights and sounds with the intention or purpose of non-judgment. You may want to ask yourself, "if I saw no contention in nature, how would I tell this story?" Just notice what you discover.

Sometime later on, recall both visits to nature and investigate the differences between the two. Because it was the same place both times, how did the differences come from your way of seeing and thinking? What have you learned about yourself from doing these exercises?

Openings to New Possibility

Reaching Your Life's Greatest Potential: Consistent with many of my monthly articles, you may notice that exploring the edges of your own world – worries, unknowns, fears, hidden assumptions – is not something you can do very well alone. Like so many other adventures into the wilderness of our own uncharted territory, it helps to have a guide, one with a map and experience of the landscape, to make your own self-reflection and inquiry more meaningful and productive. After pondering this month's article, and perhaps seeing my website, you might consider a coaching program for yourself, an investment in reaching your life's greatest potential. There's no cost or obligation to you for an exploratory conversation. Contact me, and begin to shift forever your view of what's possible. Perhaps the only block is one of your "thoughts."

New Website: Check out my redesigned website, www.RoadNotTaken.com. You'll notice that you can now gain access to more articles, blogs, and newsletters, so you'll find "new stuff" on a regular basis. This newsletter will now also be found as a blog entry (under the category Purposeful Wanderings). Several back issues are also posted there. I'm creating a video that will be posted on the site as well.

Book of the month – The Four Insights, by Alberto Villoldo. My second recommendation by Villoldo and the fourth of his books I've read. Perhaps I'm hooked. The Four Insights provides a model for making conscious and powerful shifts in your level of perception, the "way" in which you see what you see. In addition, it offers practices and exercises to help you make your new ways of seeing a "permanent" part of you, so you approach the world from higher and higher levels of thinking. With each shift upward, you connect more deeply with your true self, and you connect more deeply with the oneness energy of the universe. The world "works" on your behalf.

Contact me – for details, with questions or comments, or for a "conversation for possibility" about a life you'd love.

© 2012 Bradford L. Glass • Brad@RoadNotTaken.com • 508-454-1100 • www.RoadNotTaken.com