

# Chart Your Change Now Newsletter

Change Your Thoughts and Change Your Life

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## In This Issue

The Flat Tire Story

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## Quick Links

[Uncover the Fundamental Lie](#)

[Checklist of Hidden Anger](#)

Dear Flo,

*"Reality doesn't bite, rather our perception of reality bites."*

*-- Anthony J. D'Angelo*



In this month's issue, we are telling stories. You may have heard them before but with a different spin. Here's the short version of the one about bricklayers: You pass a construction site and come across three bricklayers and ask them what they are doing. One bricklayer says "I'm laying bricks." Another bricklayer says, "I'm building a wall." The third bricklayer says, "I'm building a cathedral." It's all about perspective, perception, and how we frame our thoughts and vision. The story makes the point that how we see ourselves, how we view the world and how we grasp what is possible, is indeed what makes all the difference.

I'm sure you heard the folk tale of the six blind men who (never having seen an elephant) identified the animal very differently from each other by the different parts of the body they touched. One felt the squirming trunk and thought it was very much like a snake. The one who felt the foreleg, thought it was much like a tree and the blind man who touched the ear thought the animal was much like a fan.

Each of the six was left with his own opinion and they all disputed each other in utter ignorance of what each had "seen." How often, do we bring a point of view to a meeting based on our perception of reality? How often are we willing to entertain another person's point of view? Perhaps, if we look at all the different perspectives, the bigger picture emerges.

The last story is the feature article, "The Flat Tire Story." Enjoy the tips at the end.

I love hearing from you. Send your thoughts, questions, and comments. Click on [Just Ask Me](#).

The Flat Tire Story

*"There are things known and there are things unknown, and in between are the doors of perception"*  
*-- Aldous Huxley*



## The Flat Tire Story

One night somewhere in deepest rural America, a man driving along a lonely stretch of country road blew his right front tire. After pulling over and scrambling out of his car, he walked to the trunk, opened it, and noted with disgust that his jack was missing.

After ten minutes of nothing but frog and cricket noises, our traveler concluded that he was on his own. It was then that he noticed that off to the west, across a long stretch of open ground, was a lone farmhouse. It was late, but there was a light on in the front window and surely the farmer had a jack.

After squeezing through a break in a barbed-wire fence and nearly tearing his suit, the man started his trek across the field. "People in this part of the country need to pull together just to survive the elements," he imagined. "The farmer will be glad to lend me a hand."

Five minutes of tripping, trudging, and twitching later, our stranded driver caught a moonlit reflection of himself in a muddy puddle. "Darn, I look like a city slicker. That's not good. Farmers don't take much of a shine to 'city folk.'"

As our traveler continued his quest for a jack he thought to himself, "There's a chance the farmer won't even answer the door. With all the murders they show on TV nowadays, who could blame him? Besides, in every slasher movie it's always guys like me in fancy cars and expensive suits who the audience is made to hate." As the traveler drew closer to the farmer's door his concerns escalated. "I've walked all the way across this huge field and the farmer will probably open up the door a few inches, listen to my request, and then tell me that he ain't got no stinkin' jack. And then he'll slam the door in my face! What's wrong with these people anyway?"

At last our desperate traveler stood at the door. He figured that he might as well knock since he'd come all that way-so he did. The door open and the farmer asked:

"May I help you?"

"You can keep your stupid jack!" the traveler shouted, and then spun on his heel and trudded back to his car.

\*\*\*\*\*

What kind of story might we be telling ourselves, about our coworkers, our neighbors or strangers? We start by trying to make sense of things and often end up making up a story that fits our perceptions. We tell ourselves stories to keep disappointment at bay or protect our image. We may even create vilifying stories about others so we can treat them poorly and not feel bad about it. The man in The Flat Tire Story prepared himself for an encounter with a stranger by steeling himself for the worst possible scenario and actually created that for himself. Well, at least he wasn't disappointed. He saved himself from that.

We are very good at conjuring up stories. We have a tendency to explain how others are behaving based on our perceptions (not observations). It is easier to

attribute poor performance, for example, on a sales worker's laziness than it is to acknowledge that the competition has introduced a superior product and that you, as a manager are challenged to provide a more innovative approach. It is easier to stay stuck in our story and blame others than it is to be willing to learn the truth. Changing our story would mean that we are willing to change.

### Tips on how to tell your "story" and change the outcome:

- Objectively tell the "story" by looking at all possibilities
- Be aware of your reactions; own your reactions; remove yourself from reacting
- Be aware of the human tendency to attribute evil motives to others - telling this "story" will prevent you from communicating effectively
- Change your "story" from making the other person wrong to solving the problem
- Create a climate of safety by making it easy for the other person to interact

Often, telling our story with truth is a conciliatory process. It may begin with an apology or owning responsibility or expressing positive feelings. Showing some vulnerability allows the other person to feel a degree of safety from which new levels of understanding can be achieved.

*"To be aware of a single shortcoming within oneself is more useful than to be aware of a thousand in somebody else. Rather than speaking badly about people and in ways that will produce friction and unrest in their lives, we should practice a purer perception of them, and when we speak of others, speak of their good qualities."*  
-- Dalai Lama

I love hearing from you. Send your thoughts, questions, and comments. Click on [Just Ask Me](#).

Have a Joyful Month,

Flo Mauri  
Thinking Well Consulting  
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