

# Perspective



Send her mail.

*“Love Perspective” is an original column appearing every other Thursday at Everything-Voluntary.com, by Serenity. Serenity is the mother of 4 boys and both a recovering mainstream parent and statist. She seeks to share what she has learned along her journey to voluntarism, radical unschooling, and living a counter-culture lifestyle. Archived columns can be found [here](#). LP-only RSS feed available [here](#).*

The most remarkable tool humans possess is the power of perspective. Also known as point of view or perception, the ability to visualize life from varying angles is an amazing asset. When we recognize this truth and learn to consciously evaluate our own perspective, we can literally decrease our stress, which improves our health, and work toward healing or creating positive, loving, life-affirming relationships with others. As the expression goes, “There is no reality - only perception.”

From the moment we are born, our minds begin to form perceptions. These perceptions are the basis of our perceived reality. If our families were loving, nurturing, and kind to us, we learned the world was a good place, and that we were good people who deserved to be treated with love and kindness. However, if we were treated with disrespect, cruelty, indifference, or inconsistent affection which we had to work to earn, we came away believing we deserved to be treated that way. Every single thought and idea you have ever had has been filtered through your perceptions, and that is the foundation for your belief system. Your beliefs have shaped your life, your own personal reality. You have most likely surrounded yourself with people who have similar filtering processes and who can relate to you based on their life’s experiences.

Let me give you an example of how the power of perspective has played out in my own life as a parent. A few years ago, I filmed a clip of my youngest son doing his “Firefighter Guy Dance” followed by “The Scooby Doo Dance.” I lied to him by saying I’d put the camera away if he danced for me. I encouraged him to perform like a trained monkey when it’s clear he has other things he’d rather be doing. I muttered, “I see prom night in your future.” I then edited the short video to add credits and finished with, “Future shame and humiliation brought to you by...” and, “Show this to your therapist.” Sandwiched between those were the words, “I love you, son!”

Today, I look back on that video and feel my own shame and humiliation. I cannot see how it was loving to my child. It's not that the video has changed, but my perspective sure has! My perspective at that point in time was with the mindset that it would be hilarious to break out a video of my toddler to show his future female friends how awesomely cute and funny he was when he was little despite how it would make him feel (ashamed and humiliated). That is the mainstream perspective I have since left behind.

If I could climb into a time machine and go back to that day, it would be a vastly different video. I would start by *asking* if I could record him doing his awesome dance. If he declined or showed no interest, I would stop right there and respect his wishes. However, if he chose to perform it, I would not lie to manipulate him into continuing, nor would I be plotting to use the video against him 14 years down the road.

Someone once told me, "There are three sides to every story - yours, theirs, and the truth." I believe it was attributed to Dr. Phil, though I cannot verify that. While that struck me as fairly profound at the time, I now know it's still not quite covering the whole spectrum of reality. You do have your side to any given situation, but as a thinking being, you are also able to expand your mind to imagine a variety of different ways you could *perceive* that situation. Looking back on the video of my son, I can choose to continue seeing this is a negative moment in my life as a mother - one where I disrespected my son's autonomy, where I gleefully planned to shame and humiliate him, where I found humor in knowing he would dislike what I had captured - or, I can choose to say, "Wow, I have really come a long way! I am so grateful that I have continued learning more about being a gentle parent who truly operates from a place of love and grace." My own perspective can go a hundred different ways, but the fact is that *I am in total control of it, just as you are in control of your own*. We can choose to believe the worst of any situation, or we can choose to find a silver lining. We can choose to beat ourselves up with words which reinforce that we are worthless or stupid or an idiot, or we can choose to be loving and gracious with ourselves by remembering we are just human, and everyone makes mistakes.

The power is yours. Use it well.