

Selecting Your Past

By Mel Schwartz

We tend to think of our past history as a verifiable, concrete reality. We do this not only on a personal level but on a universal level as well. For instance, the history that our textbooks reveal is ordinarily taken as fact. However, it's really quite relative and contextual. Was Christopher Columbus the heroic explorer that we have come to celebrate or the exploiter and murderer that the native population experienced? If the history books are written by the nations that conquered it reads one way, if the history is restated by the vanquished it would read altogether differently. Imagine what history would look like if written by Native Americans. In other words, history is truly a matter of how we choose to look at it and from which particular perspective. To that end, it is not in the past but quite alive in the present, as it very much affects the present.

This is particularly true in terms of our personal history and the stories of our lives. The events that we choose to focus on script the self that we create. Ordinarily we see the notion of time in a very linear way as a straight line leading from past through present into the future. If we shift that perspective we may come to realize that past, present and future all tend to blur into one, unless we come to clarity in the present moment. If we focus on events of our past that have constrained and limited us, then we have selected a past that ordains the future. It is exactly here that we struggle with creating effective change in our lives. At times, such selection of past history enables us to see ourselves as victims and justifies the continuation of our struggle. Many adults have memories of an abusive or loveless childhood. Regrettably, they didn't receive the nurturing and love that is every child's birthright. Nevertheless, the continued focus on that past aspect of their history tends to script a somewhat negative future. In this circumstance one might select differing childhood memories; developing the coping skill of comforting oneself or the capacity to survive harmful or traumatic incidents, can be seen as virtues and strengths. In just such a circumstance an individual with whom I was working chose to focus on the powerful coping skills that he developed in response to his very daunting childhood. By selecting to look at this aspect of his past, he permitted himself to actualize his self-empowerment and better his relationships and further thrive in his life.

I am not suggesting that we either avoid or suppress painful memories. By all means they need to come into the light before we can decide to release them. Painful events produce painful memories. However, the continued selection of these memories leads us to suffer. Suffering is literally, a choosing to focus on negativity and pain. There may come a time when it is beneficial to cease choosing this aspect of our past and script a different present. The thought that we choose in the present moment is almost entirely responsible for who we are in the moment. And the moment is all that we truly have. Yet, our thoughts are typically a rather habitual replay of the same past events which in turn form our personal belief system. The past is only a memory and the future is not yet realized. The ability to select a past that enables us to move forward rather than justify further struggle is the goal.

In quantum physics it has been revealed that the act of observation creates the reality. In other words, the act of looking at something summons it into being. Before the observation all that exists is an infinite state of potential. Our potential is very directly affected by the way that we see our personal history. What we choose to look at creates the self that we have come to know.

Selecting a past that fosters our growth and well-being is a choice.

*All is potential, waiting to be created,
What we look at summons it forth,
Our thoughts of yesterday,
Create today,
And so the past is not dead,
But alive in our choice*

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