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## Most things are not what they seem

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Raleigh certainly had a white Christmas this year (2010). The previous Raleigh Christmas (Dec 25<sup>th</sup>) snow was in 1947. When I was walking around in it on Saturday, Dec 25<sup>th</sup>, 2010, it was amazing. It was great trying to catch it on my tongue. It was great seeing the white flakes come toward me as I drove in it in the darkness. It was simply magical.

Sunday morning, seeing my driveway, lawn, streets, trees blanketed with the softness was almost spiritual. I wanted to both romp in it AND keep it pristine, undisturbed and beautiful. I called several local friends and out-of-state folks to share and describe the beauty.

By noon, I needed shovel off my driveway. A friend reminded me that I rather shovel the soft, wet snow than a block of melted/iced/hard snow the next morning. Shoveling it now would allow me to more easily travel on Monday. So I worked hard to clear off a path to the street. The snow had not changed but did not have the same magical appeal as earlier.

Sunday afternoon, I was busy rearranging my Monday morning meetings and lessons plans. I was changing face-to-face meetings to phone calls, and delaying my dance lessons until the afternoon. It resulted in several phone-tags and emails with several people. The coordination and confirmation churn required to confirm various appointments were slightly frustrating.

Sunday evening when my dance venues started to cancel and I had no place to play – my attitude toward this entrapment changed again.

Once again, the snow situation has not changed. But my outlook on the “unchanged external events” had.

In the mist of all of this, I received an email from someone (let’s call her Jane) telling me to contact someone else (let’s call him John). She instructed/demanded me to tell John that Jane cannot meet him for a business appointment until noon because of the snow. Maybe the snow was already annoying me or maybe I was just cranky – but my knee jerk response was “Why is it my responsibility to convey your message to him?” I did not work for her. I was just someone that knew both Jane and John. So I righteously emailed Jane back telling her that I did not want the responsibility of “go-between” and that she needs to contact John directly (to which I forward the guy’s phone number and email address). I wrote that I didn’t want to be blamed for John not getting Jane’s message.

Then I realized – well, I shouldn’t let John get inconvenienced just because I’m aggravated at Jane. So I begrudgingly decided to “unofficially” send an email and call John about the change in Jane’s appointment calendar. I admitted to John in email that I was slightly irritated at being the go-between and that this was a one-time thing. But that he didn’t deserve to be left standing in the cold just because I was aggravated. I also left a voice message on his phone. I tried to cover all the basis to get the message to him.

When I was writing John, I then considered – “Oh, Jane was probably texting me from her cell phone. She did say that she was out-of-town. Maybe Jane wasn’t using her email account. She was probably texting from her phone.

Maybe Jane didn't have John's email or phone number on her phone. Perhaps she didn't have John's contact information on her or convenient. Maybe she only had my contact info on her and was only able to text me (and not him). Maybe I just reprimanded her for being considerate of John's time. Maybe she was trying to communicate to him the only way she could at the time – which was through me. Maybe – because she was texting, she didn't have the patience to text/explain any of this. Therefore, her request seemed to come out as a demand and out of nowhere. **OH CRAP** – I owe Jane an apology.” ....which I wrote immediately.

Once again – no external circumstances changed in this scenario. Jane's email to me didn't auto-magically change from the time I received it, had my knee-jerk response to the it, relayed the information to John and had my epiphany on what may have actually happened. Nothing changed except the way I looked at the event.

### **Most times things are not what they seem**

I promise to you that I do know better. I know that things are rarely as they seem. It's just that at the moment they are occurring, we're so caught up with "WHAT IS" that I don't take the time to review what I know. So I sometimes forget to give folks the benefit of the doubt. Don Ruiz and his book "the Four Agreements" is a great reminder of these things I consistently and temporarily forget. Below is a quick summary. But if you haven't read him, please check the book out. It's great.

### **The Four Agreements (summary from Don Ruiz's great book):**

#### ***Be Impeccable with your word:***

Speak with integrity. Say only what you mean. Do what you say. Avoid using the word to speak against yourself or to gossip about others. Use the power of your word in the direction of truth and love.

#### ***Don't take anything personally.***

Nothing others do is because of you. What others say and do is a projection of their own reality, their own dream. When you are immune to the options and actions of others, you won't be the victim of needless suffering.

#### ***Don't make Assumptions.***

Find the courage to ask questions and to express what you really want. Communicate with others so clearly as to avoid misunderstanding, sadness and drama. With this one agreement, you can transform your life.

#### ***Always do your best.***

Your best is going to change from moment to moment. It will be different when you are healthy as opposed to sick. Under any circumstance, simply do your best and you will avoid any feelings of self-judgment, self-abuse or regret.

### **About the author**



Laura is a certified efficiency and business coach. Laura offers one-on-one career and life coaching, small group coaching, seminars and workshops. She has been in the software and testing industry for over 20 years. She's worked with such international companies as IBM, Ericsson, Staples, Fidelity Investments and Sogeti in various client advocacy and project management roles. The techniques she uses in her business coaching and client advocacy work saved these companies both time and money, which resulted in on-time, quality product delivery with higher client satisfaction.

Laura now uses her client focus, project, quality and people management skills in her business and personal life coaching career. As a personal life coach, she helps people integrate their goals and dreams into their everyday lives. Laura uses creative and practical tools to help her clients realize what really matters to them in their professional careers as well as personal development. They then follow-through with project and time management techniques to create the reality they really want.

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