



When fully understanding a problem is a bad thing.

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Raleigh has many lovely parks and lakes in the area. One such lovely and convenient lake is Shelly Lake at 1400 W Millbrook Rd. This park is centered on 53-acre (21-hectare) Shelley Lake, and offers greenway trails that are popular with cyclists and those who walk for fitness as well as families and pet owners who want to take the kids or dog out for a romp.

During one such walk, one guest was lamenting over a specific issue or problem that she was having. She spent much time and energy repeating and retracing the events. Like walking the circular lake, at the end of the 30 minutes, this young lady was back where she started — no closer to a solution than when she started.

Albert Einstein understood: “We can’t solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.”

Unfortunately, we often disguise the “need to vent” in the form of “understanding the problem”. We typically spend too long describing how the problem was “invented” and the circumstances, people involved, the history, etc. Fully understanding the problem (it’s in’s and out’s, the motive and even it’s results) actually slows down the “solution” process.

In reality, the only piece of the “problem” information that is truly required is that *“the problem exists”*. How it came about may be interesting and even entertaining — but it rarely helps with the solution.

The “thought-process” that brings out the “solution” needs to be totally different from the “thought-process” that created the problem. Therefore, spending lots of time discussing the “problem” in detail only keeps us in the same thinking space that created the problem (which is where we DO NOT want to be).

I liken it to the modern day “GPS” system. The GPS system never asks you “how did you get here?” It only asks you “where do you want to go?” It doesn’t focus on where you have been, how you got there, what roads, issues, circumstances that you encountered to arrive ‘here’. It only asks you “where do you want to go?” It simply focuses on the solution of your desire.

THEREFORE, diminish the “problem discussion” in regards to both time and importance. The “problem” is just an indicator that a fabulous solution is lurking out there somewhere. So let’s bounce our self’s there as quickly as possible. After a short amount of time is devoted to the problem recognition, re-iterate in your own words what you understand the “problem” to be. Then immediately focus on the “end results”. Clearly articulate the results that you are currently looking for using descriptive but concise language.

A great book on changing the way you look at “problems” and transforming them into solutions is Roger’s Van Oech book “Whack on the side of your head: How you can be more creative”. The intent is to give you a jolt out of habitual thought that got you into the problem in the first place. It assists you into looking at things in a fresh way. I actually recommend and give “A **Whack on the Side of the Head**” in the playing card version, to my clients as a problem resolution tool.

Some examples from the “Whack Pack” include (but not limited to) are:

- 1) Find a Pattern
- 2) Make a metaphor
- 3) Combine ideas
- 4) Substitute
- 5) Exaggerate

- 6) Rearrange
- 7) Ask "What if"
- 8) Reverse
- 9) Simplify
- 10) Challenge the rules

Check out that book or cards and let me know what you think.

This is also why having another person (not skilled in the problem) to talk to is very helpful. They can provide the outside view, the reverse view, or the devil's advocate perspective. These conversations help bring you out of the "problem thinking cloud" and into a different space.

One magic trick I often play on my clients is the "positive aspect" slight of hand. Every problem is actually an opportunity to shine. Everyone can "smell sweet" when everything is going great. But — for me — I don't know what I "know" until I'm asked a question. I don't know how capable I am until I am challenged. The universe has this intriguing way of only supplying us with circumstances and events that allow us to shine. It's just that some folks don't yet realize that fact. So they don't take that leap into the knowing that they can handle whatever comes their way.

Now you know that you already know and already capable. Armed with that realization, your "leap" won't be that large. Try it and let me know what happens.

About the author

Laura is a certified business and personal life 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 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 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. They then follow-through with project and time management techniques to create the reality they really want.

You can learn more about her at www.RoseCoaching.info and contact her at LauraRose@RoseCoaching.info