

Lesson #2:

The Power of Perspective: “What Else Can This Be?”

In this seven part series I am sharing seven Lessons From The Stage designed to help you become a much better communicator both in and out of the courtroom. As a trial lawyer you face multiple challenges, or “Obstacles” as I call them, in your cases as well as in your own personal lives. The first lesson “The Power Of The Obstacle: Embracing The Conflict” provided a framework to begin to appreciate and powerfully use Obstacles to your benefit both inside and outside of court. In this next lesson from the stage, we will focus on the Power Of Perspective.

In a recent workshop I gave, a woman told a story that demonstrated how she was able to find a fresh, new perspective in her own life, one that had deep meaning for her. Towards the end of a long day, through a series of storytelling and acting exercises, she walked up to me and said, “I need to write a different story. All I do is talk in my relationships. I can’t stop talking. I feel like I

always have to justify, defend, or say something witty. I've never been an actor but I feel like I'm always on stage and I always have to deliver the perfect performance..."

I asked her, "What if you wrote a monologue about the need to be silent?"

She thought quietly for a moment. That idea seemed to appeal to her greatly—she said she was already thinking of doing something like that. We discussed how silence is so rare to come by in our busy world, about the right to be silent, about giving ourselves that sacred space no matter who we're with or where we're at. I said to the woman (I'll refer her to as "Nancy") "That's your intention, Nancy: your need to be silent. Work with that. And the obstacle of not being silent, not listening, creates the opportunity for you to discover that, and experience that, in your story."

Nancy ended up performing a monologue about a "woman" discovering the need to be silent after arguing all night with her ex-husband. The piece was moving, and there was humor and life in

her story, and people applauded her for her courage... Nancy had discovered the value of silence in her own life. But she wasn't satisfied. She wanted to go deeper with the story. Something was missing. She felt she was still hiding in her own monologue that already revealed her struggle with not being silent tremendously.

The next morning, the second day of the workshop, I asked her, "Where are you in the story now?"

She said, in an authoritative but not unpleasant way, "I don't want to talk about it."

Smiling I said, "Great. You have the right to be silent."

We both laughed. But that turned out to be the name of her story: "The Right To Be Silent."

And she meant it quite literally. She "told" the entire monologue in silence. It was a non-verbal performance of her life leading up to this moment. As the story unraveled, she brought out duct tape and wrapped it around her feet, her legs, her stomach, her arms, shoulders, neck... and then, finally, with very little use of her hands, she was able to tear off a strip of duct tape and place it

over her mouth. The audience (a group of 20 attendees) sat in stunned silence, watching her doing this to herself. But it was clear what was happening. We already knew her story and we watched her go deeper in it. She was expressing the heart of what it meant to not be able to be silent in the world. Then, she reversed all the actions with the duct tape, until all the silver strips were on the ground at her feet. (Mind you, this was a businesswoman with no acting experience-- and you'd never know it!) The last piece of duct tape to come off her body was the one over her mouth. Slowly, Nancy stripped it off her lips. She smiled, breathing deeply. The audience was on their feet. She'd told her story without saying a single word and it was brilliant.

I hear from Nancy frequently. She's made "touching quiet" and staying silent, listening, and giving herself space "within herself" to listen, a daily practice. Through the power of her story, she was able to gain a new perspective on her life that has affected her abilities in business as well as in her own personal life, in all her relationships.

per·spec·tive

pər'spektiv/

noun: **perspective**

1. a picture drawn in perspective, especially one appearing to enlarge or extend the actual space, or to give the effect of distance.

a view or prospect. plural noun: **perspectives**

view, vista, panorama, prospect, bird's-eye

view, outlook, aspect "a perspective of the whole valley"

2. a particular attitude toward or way of regarding something; a point of view "most guidebook history is written from the editor's perspective"

outlook, view, viewpoint, point of view, POV,

standpoint, position, stand, stance, angle, slant, attitude,

frame of mind, [frame of reference](#), [approach](#), way of looking, [interpretation](#) "her perspective on things had changed"

There are many different perspectives in every situation-- there are the physical and emotional perspectives, life perspective, immediate perspective, and then there's the one-year-after-a-divorce perspective-- "Oh, *that's* why that person was in my life!" And there is, of course, the perspective of being excited about seeing other people's viewpoints as if you were watching a movie. On one hand this could be called empathy, but on the other hand, this could also be considered fascination...

Directors ask actors to dig deeper into their scenes and characters by asking "What else can this be?" This question alone can yield a myriad of possibilities to strengthen the depth of the story. When you can experience the power of psychological and emotional perspectives (a lot of excellent theater exercises and improvisations focus on "role reversals") you are one step closer to

delivering the winning story.

Perspective is a powerful and readily available idea and practice that not only makes sense in terms of the courtroom, but in terms of something more akin to a life purpose. Perspective is the foundational tool that can allow anyone to tell a greater story, followed by the one million dollar question: What else can this be?

Try this question on a situation in your own life, whether it's an obstacle or a recent success (which, if you read my last article, is just an obstacle in disguise!)

What else can this be?

This question can point to a greater truth, which will provide the blueprints for leading to the winning story.

Your State Change

Lets look at perspective in terms of the jury becoming empathetic toward your client or witness. When telling stories in the courtroom, if you can lead the jury to see your clients

perspective, through your clients eyes and heart, , you will have them hooked. Once this happens they will be in your movie, and that results in a complete emotional State Change, which is exactly what it takes to win them over and win cases. But that's a two-way street. That also means that you need to be making a complete emotional State Change within yourself.

What do I mean by state change? The technical definition of the State Change is Neuro-Linguistic Programing (or NLP). In essence, when you learn NLP, you're able to breakthrough unhealthy or destructive patterns, habits, and self-limiting beliefs and mindsets, create new choices, as well as receive fresh clarity (perspective) about what it is you really want and how you're really going to get it. NLP work has been proven to provide solutions for grief, shame, creativity, addictions, stage fright, and public speaking. Success in NLP can be produced by a variety of approaches—therapy, music, or theater techniques. But without exception, when it comes to telling a powerful winning story, if you're not able to make the state change within yourself, all you've

got is an empty shell. When the perspective you're seeking to communicate to others is authentic, it's becomes part of a three-dimensional story. And even though it's someone else's story you're telling, it's still *you're* story. In the theater world, that's called making a Personal Connection. We see the value of perspective come alive in certain Psychodramatic Techniques-- "Role Reversals," "The Soliloquy," "Doubling," and "Mirroring," to name a few. No matter what techniques you choose to employ, hidden beneath the layers of a powerful winning story is the State Change. The State Change is the *DNA* of a Powerful Story. And NLP is just another word for what I call SKHH: *Soul Kick To The Head and Heart*.

It's been said that the "the longest distance is from the head to the heart." I believe that attaining true perspective in a winning story is the marriage of these two major crossroads: the head and the heart. And when these two forces are operating together, in perfect harmony, you've got the Lennon and McCartney of the courtroom room case. You've got the right perspective, and it's

firing on all cylinders. You've got the jury seeing the people you're talking about as three-dimensional flesh and blood people. We care about them—and it's up to you to deliver a story that makes that happen. Understanding the value and the power of perspective in your own life allows you to motivate your client or witness. When you're working with a client that is so emotionally stuck to their story that they can't see it any other way, often the best way to get someone to tell a different story in a different way is to tell yours. Tell them how you've made a life change. Tell them about the crossroads in your own life. Tell them about your fears or what's been holding you back. Don't tell them to look at things differently-- *help them to look at things differently* by modeling perspective for them. Through perspective, you can journey into the unknown together... and together, ask, "What else can this be?"

Perspective is so valuable we often take its power for granted or we don't even recognize it. Imagine if you could condition yourself to not simply look at things differently, but to be *inspired*

with the process of looking at things differently? To be fascinated with your life and the people in it.

When you're properly utilizing perspective in front of the jury, you're fully integrating all the 5 senses: the sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch of the story. When you're paying big attention to the small details of the story, you're putting the movie in their head. And when you approach a case in the same way that you approach a powerful story, when everything is strategically placed, you are walking out of the courtroom with the *winning* story.

Here are some ideas to help you practice and implement the power of perspective in your own life.

*Winning communication is always an inside job. Practice "acting out" the stories you are telling. To practice, allow yourself to be overly "dramatic." Find the emotion within yourself and you will draw out the emotions in others.

*I have to be genuine within myself, for a jury to genuinely trust me. List three things in your communication and storytelling that you can do to get a jury to trust you more.

*I have to be “open” to all the different ways to tell a winning story. Before you tell your next story, whether in or out of court, list three COMPLETELY different perspectives you could tell the story from and practice all three.

*Even though it’s someone else’s story I’m telling, it’s still *my* story. (How much of “me” can I use in “their” story?) Use the perspective that the person you are telling the story about is part of your family, someone you deeply care about, and their story is vitally important to tell.

*I will ask myself, in three key moments of the day, no matter what the situation I’m facing is: “What else can this be?” Practice

for a day looking at every situation that comes up and ask “What else can this be?” Take your normal emotional reactions and find a way to see / feel it through the opposite perspective.