

Embracing reality

I was reading about the noted physicist Richard Feynman early this morning. I was reading a bit he had written about the scientific method. Now Feynman's stuff is over my head – about a million miles over my head – but I was struck by one thing he said at a Caltech commencement address: “The first principle is that you must not fool yourself - and you are the easiest person to fool.”

Feynman was talking about science – and for most of us, talking about science is far from our daily needs. Most of us talk about sports, or business, or relationships, or the weather; we talk about other people, other places, other businesses, other families – but in doing so, we rarely choose to embrace reality – we only look at our view of it.

Some people would say that perception is reality – in fact, most of the time, I say that – but Feynman suggested that reality is something that is repeatable, every time it's examined. In referring to science, he said an experiment should yield the same results, each and every time – or the results are suspect – and that we should embrace both the results that fulfill our expectations, and the results that don't.

What does this have to do with us? Most of the people reading this piece are far from worrying about physics.

Well, it has this to do with us: we should embrace the reality of the situation, whatever it may be – and then change it if it's yielding results we don't like.

You'd be surprised how few people actually do this. In fact, many motivation experts will tell you to lie to yourself if you don't get the results you expect – pretend you get them, and everything will be all right.

The truth is, though, that in order to change your results, you have to change your methods – and that's where a lot of us fall short.

There's an definition of insanity that's currently in vogue. This definition, which you have likely heard, is to keep doing the same thing, while expecting different results. We all laugh when we hear this – and yet most of us do it to some extent or another.

We “go on a diet,” but we still eat the same way. We call prospects on the phone, but we use the same, time-worn lines. We drive the same way to work each day – and then get upset at the same traffic lights, the same potholes, and (usually) the same drivers. In other words, we get upset at reality, never changing, never

choosing to do anything different, and always getting the same (or similar) results.

As we go throughout the remainder of this year, let's choose to embrace reality, no matter where it may lead us. Let's choose to examine the good and the bad results, and make changes to give us more good and less bad.

For this year, at least, let's choose to constantly refine our quest and our questions, constantly choosing to examine and embrace reality, until we change the results we are getting to the results that we seek.

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