

Controlling Emotions and Perspective

Years ago in the midst of a personal crisis, I made a conscious decision to seek out answers as to why my life wasn't "working". I was doing everything I was supposed to. I was a devoted wife, mother and homemaker; I regularly attended services; I volunteered at church and my children's school functions; I did everything I could think of to make my life work. But it wasn't. I reached the point where I cried out and said, "Why isn't my life working, God? I'm doing everything I'm supposed to. I don't know what to do anymore."

That was the moment I gave the Universe permission to offer me a choice to remain on the path I was on, or walk down a different road. I chose the path less traveled.

Once I chose the path less traveled I met people who were quite different than anyone I had ever known. Books came into my life I would never have read before. I had experiences that shook my world. And everybody had advice. One authority would say, "Control your emotions, don't let them control you!" But the next would say, "FEEL your emotions, don't control them or you can't let them go!" I was confused. Should I control my emotions so they didn't control me – or should I feel them because if I didn't they would be with me forever? Controlling my emotions was something I had done for years and it was pretty obvious to me it wasn't working. Feeling my emotions was a wonderful breakthrough, but there was still something missing. I was stuck.

And then the answer came. I got it.

I thought about people who survived slavery and depressions and wars and holocausts. How did they do it? The answer came unexpectedly through a book, but what surprised me was that it was something I had gradually been doing myself. In order to deal with the challenges in my life, I had had to create a different understanding of them. By assuming a different perspective and looking at *why* I was going through the challenging situation, I was actually controlling my *reactions*. I wasn't controlling the *emotion*, but because I was looking through the lens of awareness, I gained a deeper realization of why something happened, and was able to take the situation to an entirely different level, ultimately leading to acceptance and forgiveness.

Try an experiment: Next time something happens that brings up a strong reaction, try creating a different perspective. If someone cuts you off in traffic and forces you to slow down, perhaps it happened to help you avoid getting a speeding ticket. Start by looking at some of the smaller things that happen to you during the day and later on the larger ones. At first you may talk yourself back into

old attitudes, but gradually you'll notice that you see things differently and even react with less emotion to the larger things that come your way. Sometimes I fall back into my old patterns of reacting, but that happens less and less frequently, and with the awareness I've developed over the years, I realize there is a rhyme and reason to everything we go through, which we create by understanding through perspective.