



Perspective: What we are missing

By Pam Morris, Early Learning Center director

Last weekend I went to a celebration at the Chandler Center for the Arts for Chinese New Year; the Year of the Rabbit. What an amazing show! The dancing, the singing, the artists themselves - all combined together for a spectacular experience. And the emcees began the show by welcoming us all, commenting on how it had been nearly three years since they had put this program together because of COVID. And for many in the audience, as is typical around the world, many had not seen their families, in person and on the same continent for the same amount of time. Wow! (no pun intended!) Did that put things in perspective?

Everyone comes with their own set of challenges, concerns, baggage. And we all carry that around with us throughout our daily lives. What do we do with the frustrations so that they don't overwhelm us? And how do we ensure that we appreciate where someone else is coming from when our orbits intersect?

Listen First

It is so important to listen to what someone else is saying. Let them share their story, to the extent that they feel comfortable, so that you can have a baseline for where to begin your interactions. Don't worry about fixing the challenges they are having. That isn't your job. You just need to have compassion for where they are and understanding about how where they are might affect how they can react to you.



Be Open and Honest

Now it is your turn. It is your time to share your story. Again to the extent that you feel comfortable sharing. No need to put it all out on the table, just tell where you are now and what your needs are. Why is this important? So they can meet you where you are and help you get to that next stage. In education, that is often referred to as scaffolding.

Scaffolding

If you have ever walked down a big city street, you have seen scaffolding. It is the bars of metal or of wood that are built around the building so that it can be worked on while the building is still in use. Scaffolding in education is supporting an individual, meeting them where they are and giving them the tools and guidance to get them to that next level. And that is what, I believe, needs to happen in relationships. If we don't know where someone is coming from, then our interactions might not be helpful, useful or even kind. What we do might alienate the other person.

Don't Put People into Categories

It is so important to really get to know someone and not assume anything based on an external characteristic or even an internal one. We all have our individual needs and ideas. I am a Jewish woman. I am a Jewish woman who was born in New Mexico. I am a Jewish woman who was born in New Mexico who grew up on Long Island. I am a Jewish woman who was born in New Mexico who grew up on Long Island who went to college in upstate New York. And does this mean that I fit into the "Jewish" box? Or into the born in New Mexico box? Or the Long Island box? I have parts that are representative of the Jewish experience, beliefs, mannerisms, preferences and ideologies. But not all.



Perspective

Really hear where someone is coming from. You need to know them a little better before you can truly understand their perspective and allow that to help shape your relationships, no matter how brief. Think about a painting or a drawing. The perspective is an incredibly important piece of knowing what the artist was trying to depict.

We don't all need to be artists to recognize the importance of perspective and how it will shape your relationships. We just need to respect the perspective.

Shabbat Shalom.