

How to Have a Wider Lens

See your life differently.

A WIDER LENS Blog by Dr. Kenneth Silvestri
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"The major problems in the world are the result of the difference between how nature works, and the way people think."

--Gregory Bateson



Let me share with you a question I ask people who seek help in my practice. You may like to try this yourself.

"What is it that you're not getting in life that causes concern and stops you from making your life work the way you would like it to work?"

Think about this for a minute or so. When you've defined this concern, focus on the consequence of what it is that you're not getting. Describe how it looks and feels not to get what you want. How does this concern influence your life?

Relax your body from head to toe. Take a few deep soft Coherent Breaths (six seconds inhalation and exhalation). In your mind's eye, create a peripheral view of where you are by widening your lens to see beyond the confines of your surroundings. Pause and think about what's happening in your community, nation and world.

After a few moments, bring your lens back to your original concern. Ask yourself again how your core concern or grievance affects you and is connected to all aspects of your life. What insights, sensations and strengths arise as you consider your grievance from a wider perspective?

Wider Thinking

In the 1960's, cause-effect thinking was challenged by the view of seeing nature as a more complex and interacting system; a system that is a collection of items or entities (persons, institutions, societies, atoms, etc.) so arranged that a change in the relationship of one part will produce some change in all the relationships of the other parts of that system. Applied to a family for instance, if one member is disturbed (i.e. out of appropriate harmony with the others) a linear approach involves treating the identified patient. A holistic or systems view offers a wider lens to view the same situation requiring the involvement of all other members of the family to restore a total balance of health and harmony.

The Ecological Perspective

This ecological perspective, if we choose, allows us to better understand how life evolves including how our own mind and body functions. With the advances in quantum physics, defining our world as consisting of fragmented separate parts is now clearly refuted.

That said, there still exist the many contexts of power, manipulation and suppression that hinder collaborative efforts to create more harmonious outcomes, whether it be

environmental or a more inclusive social respect for all. When people work from a linear perspective, hypocrisy and myopic vision can become the norm.

But when we tune in to nature's systemic essence and intent, we can become unstuck. This requires not condoning past evils and creating solutions in the present. If we don't we are vulnerable to dysfunctions.

Systemic Thinking

The best way to be systemic is to have a wider lens, one that is stereoscopic in nature. What I mean by this is to look at whatever situation you may find yourself in as being part of a wider all-encompassing context. Every time you're observing an interaction or problem, as you did in the above exercise, step back and simultaneously see its wider connections. Yes, there may be paradoxes and even inevitable double binds (damned if you do and damned if you don't), but this also creates the challenge and opportunity to find new possibilities.

Nora Bateson, filmmaker and author of *Small Arcs of Larger Circles: framing through other patterns* (Triarchy Press, 2016) describes this process as "Warm Data," the "transcontextual information about the interrelationships that integrate a complex system."

If we use this perspective with a wider lens, we can grasp and respect how nature and human interaction work in a constant part-to-whole interconnected manner.

All systems perceived this way, including our emotional/biological existence, will have the opportunity to maintain a functioning balance. Each interaction or change in one part will eventually have implications in altering the whole system.

This not only pertains to enhancing your optimal body temperature but also how your immune system functions. Like a fine-tuned watch with many interconnected parts, even with a bent gear the clock may still tell time, albeit not optimally. In other words, using a wider lens can help us see how systems can also perpetuate dysfunction.

Why use a wider lens?

The classic example of not using a wider lens revolved around how farmers were heralded for using DDT to rid crops from certain insects. It initially worked, however in a short while, DDT was found to be injurious to many animals working itself up the biological chain and eventually being found in human mothers 'milk. As was the case with the indiscriminate use of antibiotics, now known to sabotage our immune system.

There still are many such instances within our society that need to be explored with a wider lens. The relevance of looking at things with a wider lens is to better navigate all the inevitable conflicts that life and nature throw at us. How we organize and adjust is based on how we respect nature and create beneficial input to blend with it. We have many choices. Most of all being systemic and having a wider lens allows for the opportunity to correct injurious patterns that can create barriers to health and happiness.