

Chapter 4

THE FILTER OF THE MIND

The filter of the mind is an imaginary concept or theory to explain how the brain gives meaning to the messages received.

1. Knowledge:

Knowledge stored in the filter of the mind is ***a major determinant of the meaning*** we give to perceptions. Our minds serve as a storehouse of knowledge. We store what we learn mainly from experience and through words. Learning begins from infancy. From birth, we begin to receive information picked up by our sense organs, and we give meanings to this information. Much of the information remains with us for very brief moments. Some stays with us for a lifetime. Knowledge stored in the brain is forever changing. The stored knowledge governs the meaning we give to perceptions. Lack of knowledge could lead to misinterpretation. Correct knowledge leads to correct interpretation. Knowledge can be both true and false. For example, the statement '***all snakes are dangerous***' is not correct.

2. Viewpoints or (The Role of Opinions, Attitudes, and Beliefs):

Our viewpoints (Opinions, Attitudes and Beliefs) form ***a second determinant of meaning***. Opinions, attitudes and beliefs are viewpoints of differing intensity.

- a) Opinions: Opinions are the least intense of viewpoints, and are concerned with less critical areas of life such as, the latest fad in women's fashion, advertising techniques, use of CCTV in education, football strategies, a pending piece of legislation, etc.
- b) Attitudes: Attitudes are viewpoints on intermediate concerns of life. Attitudes are more important than opinions, but they are not the most important viewpoint. Examples of Attitudes are equal employment of

women, labour management relations, government regulation of business, appointment to the Federal Reserve Board, etc.

- c) **Beliefs**: Beliefs are viewpoints on the most critical areas of life, such as, belief in God, Angels, the Supernatural, ghosts, immortality of the soul, rebirth, witchcraft, academic freedom, role of the family, morality, religion, ethics, etc.

- 3. **Emotions**: Emotions are the third major factor in the filtering process. Emotions may be defined as the sources of energy that make the mind work. Without emotions, we would be like a machine or a living vegetable. Emotions keep us alive as we can laugh, cry, smile, frown, be unhappy, angry, etc. Emotional energy results from response to our perceptions. ***Our emotions determine meaning.*** The emotional energy becomes part of the filtering process. For example, a cheerful greeting might get a negative meaning from an upset person. The same greeting might get a positive meaning from a happy person.

How Viewpoints Are Formed?

Viewpoints are formed in five ways:

- a) **Through Objective Reasoning**: Some of our viewpoints come from our rational thought processes. We collect evidence in a matter, weigh it and reach a decision through objective thought processes. From the beginning of civilization, wise people have followed this pattern of thinking. Most of us accept or reject new ideas or change our behavior more in response to feelings than to facts. However, human beings are not always rational beings. When we try to reason objectively, we are likely to be influenced, by subjective factors. For this point mentally switch yourself with someone whose beliefs are the opposite of yours.

- b) **Social strata and Viewpoints:** Social strata means the levels of society to which we belong, such as, rich, poor, middle class, high class, male or female, white or black, Hindu or Christian, Asian or European, congress or communist party, etc. Social strata affect viewpoints by controlling our experiences. Social strata condition us to view reality in a manner peculiar to the strata to which we belong. Five components of social strata influence viewpoints, such as, a) Economic class b) Residence c) Ethnic inheritance d) Sex and e) Age.
- c) **Early influence of the Family:** Human beings are like parrots. We copy our parents way of thinking, eating, dressing, observing religion, traditions, etc. From early age, we acquire our families' thinking. We blindly accept much of our thinking from our family members. Our views on matters such as religion, politics, ethics, culture, food, etc. reflect that of our families.
- d) **Change Effect of Groups:** As time passes by we begin to question some of our opinions, attitudes and beliefs. Our viewpoints are changed by the groups to which we belong. We conform (agree) to the thinking of our peers, classmates, colleagues, gang, group. A teenager will start smoking or drinking alcohol because others gang members are doing it. It is the thinking of the herd and not your thinking.
- e) **Self interest as a Determinant of Viewpoint:** We hold some viewpoints to please ourselves or it is in our best interest to do so. For example, we might buy shares because everybody's doing it or it is our self-interest.