

# We Are Artists Of Our Own Reality

While shopping in a local store a resident overhears a tourist complaining to the shopkeeper about the problems in his own town and his life in general.

The tourist says he is considering moving to this town to start over. The owner sighs and advises him not to move.

The owner sighs and advises him not to move. She says she doesn't think he'll improve his life much by moving because he'll find that this town has many of the same problems.

Not more than five minutes after the man leaves the shop, a second out-of-towner enters and begins talking to the owner about moving to this town so he can live closer to his daughter.

The visitor says he hates to leave his pleasant town because of his many friends and activities.

Surprisingly, the shop owner confidently advises him to move. She tells him he will easily be able to find new friends and interesting activities in this lovely town.

When the second man departs, the resident confronts the shopkeeper and asks why she has told one man that this town has problems and turned right around and told another that it's lovely.

The shopkeeper replies that the town's appeal depends on the eye of the beholder – that we largely create our own reality.

According to diverse experts including Harvard professor Chris Argyris, business consultant Stephen Covey, and cognitive and emotional intelligence coaches, this fictitious shopkeeper's words could have some truth.

Perhaps we do have a role in creating our reality – our misery, happiness, and success, by how we think.

We seem to use our minds uniquely when selecting and interpreting information so that it largely confirms our personal expectations.

Billions of stimuli are constantly bombarding us; we choose a fraction to attend to. We immediately attempt to arrange the data into a pattern that makes sense to us. Based on our interpretation and the meaning we attach to this judgment, we arouse emotions and may become mad, sad, or glad.

Our beliefs about the world are confirmed as we continue our search for information that supports our conclusion. This process is often called climbing the ladder of inference; it operates quickly and unconsciously.

As our mind jumps from noticing certain data, to interpreting the data, to judging and feeling, we idiosyncratically leap through the ladder of inference.

How we individually climb the ladder largely determines how we view not only our towns, but also our friends and family, our work, our portfolio and every aspect of our lives including our half empty or half full glass.

Over our lives we may find ourselves exposed to changes in capabilities, time, income, appearance, relationships, and activities. We have choices about how we attend to, interpret, and judge these events. These choices impact on our health, vitality and success.

We are artists of our lives who compose and color our world with our attention and thoughts; we can make a heaven of hell or a hell of heaven.

As William James the father of psychology said, "Human beings can alter their lives by altering their attitudes of mind."

When we accept the possibility that we are projecting what's inside of us onto what's outside of us, we can begin changing our reality for the better.

When we become more willing to challenge our ladder of inference we may find a richer world with more beauty, love, and happiness.

We may notice that the good life seems to be following us around wherever we go.