Perception and Reality…

I know that intrinsically, inside me there is a kind, loving and caring person – just trying to get out! A person who listens to others and wants to help them succeed; a patient, trustworthy and kind person. Well trustworthy and kind (I HOPE), as even I know I'm not really very patient ☺. A person who works hard and tries to do all the things she has been told will lead to "success"- that elusive thing we can't really define, BUT are sure we will "know once we see or live it".

You see, I truly believe and have been brought up to believe by my "greatest generation" parents that things such as good work, measurable contribution to goals, contributing to team outcomes will earn me the promotion, next steps in my career and admiration of my peers, colleagues and bosses. In short, I deeply believe in a meritocracy and not an "ocracy" based on how I look and who I know – or, as I was once asked by a real estate agent when looking for a house – "Darling, who *are* your people?" An "ocracy" built on an Enlightment view of a gender neutral American Dream. AND I believe I am doing what is required and expected to live this Dream. But I could be wrong…

I know that I am NOT (always? usually?) perceived in all the ways I wish I were, and despite my never-ending PollyAnna-like belief that it will all work out - things don't always work out just because I want them to or because I have tried soooooo hard to make it happen or was convinced I had jumped through all the right hoops in the right way and *deserved and was qualified for* this next step.

As a woman, like many of us, my first reaction has usually been "what did *I* do wrong??? How could *I* have worked harder, been smarter, proven myself more, talked less, talked more…anything to make the outcome different.

As time has gone on, I've learned to question this perception of "it's all about me" and so in addition to inward reflection (which is valid and important but when done alone and exclusive of a broader context is really so ego-centric and assumes I can control everything with my mere actions – which obviously is NOT the case or I would have gotten the desired brass ring), I work hard at taking a broader view to ask - so what's wrong with this *picture*?

When I am able to stand back and stop making it "all about me" and what I can unilaterally do or not do, and am truly honest, I have been able to see the picture from a broader perspective – and many times – that has made all the difference. It has allowed me to stop blaming me, or others, and start taking positive action – no matter how painful or challenging.

So *IF* this situation happens to you, my suggestion is to look at it openly and remember a cute saying I like to use "all companies, organizations, and institutions are CRAZY and all people are CRAZY. So all you have to do is find an organization that is CRAZY in the same way you are, and by definition you are both SANE."

Organizations just like people, have images, brands, and beliefs associated with different positions within the company and the company overall. If you aspire to a new position these all contribute to subtleties and nuances in the new job or role to which you aspire. They are not always easy to discover

or tease out or *always written down* – regardless of gender. But I've learned that if I do not dispassionately take stock of the role, the requirements, and the brand required – and honestly compare it with *my* brand, who *I* am and what *I* bring – I may be disappointed in the outcome, *whether I get the desired position or not!* So, if you find yourself in a disappointing situation, this careful look at your PERCEPTION about yourself in comparison to the PERCEPTION of others about you and what is expected for a new role could help you to – PICK yourself up, DUST yourself off, and decide WHERE you need to be to start all over again – and that may be in a *different crazy organization that is better aligned with you.*

I would LOVE to hear your thoughts, stories, disagreements!

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