



Amber

concepts that will alter your thinking about how you communicate with others.

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Amber's flight home

A victim of autobiographical judgment

Young Amber was on her way home from her 1st Junior Olympics. As she settled in her seat, the Flight Attendant servicing her section noticed the Junior Olympics tee shirt Amber was wearing. She questioned Amber about the shirt wondering if she was a spectator or a participant. Amber proudly explained that she had indeed been a participant in the recently completed World Junior Olympics.

"What event did you compete in" the Flight Attendant inquired?

"The high jump", Amber proudly replied.

"Wow", the Flight Attendant exclaimed, "How did you do?"

"I came in 14th place."

"Oh! How many participants were there in the high jump?"

"14!"

"I'm sorry," said the Flight Attendant, "maybe you'll do better next time."



Judging: a tool used to dam a conversation.

This account went from fact to story in one statement. Up until the Flight Attendant's judgment, the story of Amber's Olympic experience was a series of facts. Our lives are made up of a series of facts, acted upon by the story we choose to tell about the facts.

ANALYZING THE FACTS

Let's consider Amber's account from the Flight Attendant's fabricated story. Fabricated because the Flight Attendant doesn't know very much about the story, so she autobiographically filled in the unknown parts.

Let's review the facts:

- Amber competed in the World Junior Olympics.
- She is a high jumper.
- She came in 14th out of 14 in her field.

The Flight Attendant's story:

- Amber came in last place.
- Last place isn't good.
- Amber must be disappointed.
- To show she cares, the Flight Attendant shows her sorrow through sympathy.

What stories are available for Amber to tell had the Flight Attendant not judged, related, or assumed? Consider what questions the Flight Attendant could have asked had she been less inclined to judge.

Possible questions before she judged the experience a failure...

- How did you get into track and field?
 - I played basketball.
- What happened?
 - The track coach saw me and thought I had good spring to my legs and invited me to try out.
- What did you do?
 - I made the team, set the school record, and took state.
 - Then I was invited by the US Junior Olympic team to try out. I took 3rd.

Here are some more facts that Amber could have shared, had the Flight Attendant been interested and shown genuine interest in Amber's story.

- This is Amber's first year competing in the high jump.
- There are 100,000 other young women, world wide, competing in her age bracket in the high jump.
- Amber came in 14th place in the world.
- She finished in the top 1/10 of 1% for her sport.

- Amber learned a lot during the competition that will aide her performance next year.

Amber's story is dramatically different than the Flight Attendant's. Imagine where the conversation could have gone had the Flight Attendant been present and interested? At the conclusion of her discussion, it would be appropriate for the Flight Attendant to compliment Amber, which is positive judging, and by so doing end the conversation.

“It is a pleasure to meet you. Your accomplishments are impressive and I wish you all the best in the future.”

Both parties would have experience deep satisfaction with the discussion.

When we twist or assume existing facts into stories that fit our paradigm, we miss reality and sojourn through life on false pretenses, also known as assumptions.

Learning to maintain neutrality in our space with others allows greater learning. Neutrality also nourishes trust and respect. The Flight Attendant, upon hearing Amber placed last, quickly judged, made an assumption of sorrow, and stopped listening.

She changed the tenor of the space from being a Ted, to being a Ting and sought agreement when she expressed sorrow, fully expecting Amber to reciprocate.

Imagine you are Amber in this situation. How would you respond to what is perhaps the highlight of your young athletic career with someone seeking agreement and expressing sympathy for a poor performance?

This is the difference between being a TED and being a TING.

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