



A Carrot, An Egg and A Coffee Bean

With all of the election talk over the last while, it has been interesting to watch how candidates and their supporters respond when faced with a shocking question or a daunting task. The various reactions I've seen remind me of a story that I heard recently...

A young woman went to her mother and told her about her life and how things were so hard for her. She did not know how she was going to make it and wanted to give up. She was tired of fighting and struggling. It seemed as one problem was solved, a new one arose.

Her mother took her to the kitchen. She filled three pots with water and placed each on a high fire. Soon the pots came to a boil. In the first, she placed carrots. In the second, she placed eggs. In the last, she placed ground coffee beans.

She let them sit and boil, without saying a word.

In about twenty minutes she turned off the burners. She fished the carrots out and placed them in a bowl. She pulled the eggs out and placed them in a bowl. Then she ladled the coffee out and placed it in a bowl.

Turning to her daughter, she asked, "Tell me, what do you see?"

"Carrots, eggs, and coffee," the daughter replied.

Her mother brought her closer and asked her to feel the carrots. She did and noted that they were soft.

The mother then asked the daughter to take an egg and break it. After pulling off the shell, she observed the hard-boiled egg.

Finally, the mother asked the daughter to sip the coffee. The daughter smiled, as she tasted its rich aroma. The daughter then asked, "What does it mean?"

Her mother explained that each of these objects had faced the same adversity...boiling water. Each had reacted differently.

The carrot went in strong, hard, and unrelenting. However, after being subjected to the boiling water, it softened and became fragile.

The egg had been delicate. Its thin outer shell had protected its liquid interior, but after sitting through the boiling water, its inside became hardened.

The ground coffee beans were unique, however. After they were in the boiling water, both the bean and the water were changed.

"Which are you?" she asked her daughter.

It's all about you...

Often at work, people are faced with adversity:

- personal differences
- desk moves
- procedural changes
- increased production goals
- delay in career goals

How do you respond?

What response will best serve you in your situation?

Regardless of how you see yourself – carrot, egg or bean, here are some approaches you can take:

- Do you look to work with the very circumstance that is upsetting you?
- Do you look for ways to resolve the situation?
- Do you look for not only the challenges, but also for the benefits of experiencing the adversity?

- If the situation involves another person's behaviour, have you looked at all the circumstances around the situation – stress levels, your behaviour, timing, chosen words and intent?
- What lessons do you learn from missed job opportunities, procedural changes, desk moves, 'personality' differences, etc?
- Imagine yourself a year from now. What can you do today that would make you feel proud or satisfied when you look back on this difficult situation?

How can I help myself?

Ultimately, it is your reaction to a crisis that will have the greatest impact on your stress level.

So when faced with a difficulty, it is important to consider your well being by carefully choosing how you will react.

And as the carrot, egg and coffee bean illustrate, there are always choices regarding our responses.

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