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Limiting Personal Use of Stereotypes

In the book “*Blink”*, we meet two unique individuals: psychologist John Gottman, a man who can accurately predict a marriage’s long-term success and Bob Golomb, a car salesman who manages to withhold judgment and limit stereotyping. Golomb examines how well individuals can withhold judgment or limit personal use of stereotypes. Throughout the book, he used several examples that compared or contrasted subjects on how they withheld judgments or how they would go against it.

Stereotypes and judgements are common actions/thoughts that everyone has done, it comes naturally more so. Not many will admit, but everyone has been racist, judgmental and using stereotypes against someone or to describe an individual before knowing who they are at some point in their life. “The part of our brain that leaps to conclusions like this is called the adaptive unconscious…” (Gladwell 11). Several times I have done so, with guilt sometimes lingering when I have. At some time in high school, there was a kid in my class who dressed inappropriately, sagging pants, oversized shirts and a look on his face that made it seem like he didn’t want to be there. I didn’t really stereotype or judge how he presented himself; everyone expresses themselves in a different manner. I withheld my judgements, because sometimes the way someone dresses themselves isn’t a good telling of how they are educationally and behaviorally. He turned out to be a good student academically and was easy to talk to. It was attention to how he acted that helped prevent me from thin-slicing incorrectly. “He figured out that he does not need to pay attention to everything that happens” (Gladwell 32).

Bob Golomb was an excellent salesman who used several abilities that would rather be hard for most people. “Beign a successful salesman like Golomb is a task that places extraordinary demands on the ability to thin-slice” (Gladwell, 89). He used thin slicing with customers to decipher what they feel and processes it in the moment to figure out how he will resolve or understand what they are wanting. Although, he constantly makes snap judgements about a person he puts efforts into not judging anyone, he treats everyone the same regardless of how they act or appear. Unlike most salespeople, they would let first impressions such as appearance; come in their way of how they perceive the customer and leave out any other information. (Gladwell, 91). Like in Chicago, an experiment was done to see how salesman treated each customer that came in to negotiate a price for a car. There were both black and white people coming to buy a vehicle, the end results were that white men received lower prices than black men. Golomb was different, he treated everyone the same, like they all were coming in to purchase a vehicle at the same fair deal.

I need to be empathetic by putting myself in the shoes of other people so as to understand the circumstances and reasons of why people are the way they are. This will bring out the important realization that all people have weaknesses and prejudgment is delusional and misleading. I am planning to start getting real by accepting that stereotypes are a common phenomenon within the surrounding environments such that people engage in them unknowingly. This realization will be the starting point of beginning to stop the bad habit. I intend to get educated by reading books about people’s cultures, reasoning, decision-making strategies, personalities, and habits. “We develop a theory. And then finally we put two and two together. That’s the way learning works” (Gladwell, 9). I also intend to read information about stereotypes so as to ascertain its effects and more ways of avoiding it. It is important to refer to a situation the way it appears as opposed to beating around the bush by forming unreasonable generalizations. This means that I should be a personal advocate of informing my friends or family members the negatives of using stereotypes.

From common knowledge, it is imperative to note that everyone uses stereotypes in one way or the other during conversations. Similarly, it is universally agreeable that the persistent and consistent use of stereotypes should be shunned by individuals with full commitment and energy. There are several ways that can be used to limit the use of stereotypes in daily conversations and they include allowing people into personal life, stopping to engage in stereotyped conversations, focusing on the positives, examining personal motivations, finding different forms of focus, volunteering, being empathetic, getting real, getting educated and staying true to who you are.

Works Cited

Gladwell, Malcolm. *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking*. N.p.: Back Bay, 2005. Print.