

Sue Thompson's

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BeExceptional

[Your Character is Showing](#) | [About Sue](#)

It Depends on How You See It

I'm prone to catastrophizing—falling into a pit of “nothing good is ever going to happen again” because of my failures and imperfections. I can remember times I've become an emotional wreck because the sun isn't shining and it must mean God is mad at me. I know when I'm doing this, and I know I need help. I call upon my friends with perspective.

When a skilled photographer picks up a camera and shoots a scene, he or she has the ability to make a part of the picture bigger and clearer or small and out of focus. The photographer sees the spatial relationships of the objects being photographed and can enhance or minimize their importance in the finished product. That's perspective, and it's how we've coined phrases such as “my comments were taken out of perspective” or “things got blown out of proportion.” The skilled eye can see the proper relationships and doesn't become overwrought with what appears out of place, because they understand optical illusions.

That's what people with perspective do. They've developed the ability to step back, run the evidence through their knowledge and experiences, and weed out the facts from the fallacies. They're more rational about problems and people, less prone to emotionalize a situation. They can see the big picture where some of us can only see the immediate, detail-laden little picture. We'll engage in damaging, negative self-talk, but they know it's not the end of the world. They assess their perceptions and weigh options while we're contemplating going back to bed for a month. They can judge consequences in a way that makes them seem like Yoda: “Drop the ball I did, but few noticed. Better will I be next time.”

Perspective is wisdom. It's that wonderful quality of having been through the wilderness and realizing there are far worse things one could be experiencing than this little event. People with this strength know themselves, their abilities and limitations, and understand people and human nature.

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www.BeExceptional.biz

Sue@BeExceptional.biz



These are folks who, when finding out someone they know is an axe murderer, will say something along the lines of, "I'm shocked but I'm not really surprised, because nothing people do surprises me."

Your friends and coworkers who have developed this characteristic are usually valued for their counsel, because they're good at helping people think calmly and analytically about difficult situations. The people I go to who have loads of perspective talk me through my desolation and help me view my stuff objectively, building a case to prove to me I'm not worthless, I don't have to leave town, and this too shall pass.

Like any great strength of character, it takes some effort to increase perspective, but it's so worth it. Here are some ways to prime the pump:

- Consider challenging circumstances you have managed and come through successfully. What did you do well in such situations? What kept you going? How can you apply what you learned the next time you're facing a fear?
- Write down all of the good things in your life—everything, from family to pets to being able to afford groceries. Whatever they are, list your blessings and mentally compare them to the difficulties you face. I just saw a piece on a television show about a family who lost their house in a tornado but found their seven cats alive and unharmed in the rubble, and the miraculous survival of their pets made them feel like they had everything they needed to go on. There are some things in life that are just way more important than the things we believe will destroy us.
- Someone once encouraged me to practice visualizing the worst that could happen and consider how it wouldn't be so bad, all the way to "I could die, but that wouldn't be so bad, because I'd go to heaven." This may seem a bit weird, but it has helped me with perspective many times. "I may be fired, but that wouldn't be so bad, because I could start over, " or "I may never find someone who wants to marry me, but that wouldn't be so bad because I could come and go without being concerned about anyone else." This exercise has its limitations, but it can help expand the way we see a problem.

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- Think of the person in your life who is able to help you gain perspective. What is it they do, exactly? How can you imitate their skill, follow their lead? You might even tell them how valuable they are to you and ask what their thinking processes are so you can learn from them.

Over the years as I've learned about myself, I've become aware of my tendencies. I can see the truth that good has come to me even on rainy days. I've experienced the fear of disaster that didn't turn out as I expected and saw I'd sweated the small stuff. Even when I have faced sincerely troublesome moments, I know I'm not some special case. I'm not the only person on earth going through the same thing. Someone else managed the same kind of crisis, and maybe they had to do it without air conditioning.

I love perspective. I'm glad I know how to work it. It makes the world a little more manageable, and we can all use some of that! *



When I'm not in my right mind, my left mind gets pretty crowded.



What happens if you get scared half to death twice?



If you think nobody cares about you, try missing a couple of payments.

Steven Wright

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YOUR CHARACTER IS SHOWING

Join me for my monthly teleseminar in which I interview interesting people about their character

Next Character Teleseminar: Tuesday, May 22, 7:00 p.m.

My next teleseminar on character strengths will be with Carla Mathis. She consults on image—yes, that’s how you look, and how you feel about how you look—with individuals and groups, but “image consultant” doesn’t begin to describe her. She’s a published author, a world-renowned lecturer, and president/co-founder of Body Beautiful, based in Los Angeles, California. Her landmark book, *The Triumph of Individual Style*, is used in design schools in the US and abroad has become a ‘bible’ of the fashion and image industries. One of 9 Certified Image Masters (CIM) worldwide, Carla consults in the USA and internationally and teaches Body Beautiful Institute courses locally and abroad. Body Beautiful has a network of 200+ stylists worldwide, trained to offer the highest level of individualized service in the industry using the Body Signature System of Master Color Sets and Consultation Guides with their clients. You can see more about Carla’s exciting work at www.BodyBeautiful.net. This intriguing woman is motivated most powerfully by the character strength of zest, which will not be surprising to anyone who knows her!

Click [here](#) to sign-up. It’s free. **Limited to 100 participants.**

About Sue

Sue Thompson is a personality expert, etiquette trainer, and an instructor in life lessons. Her work on recognizing and developing talent, identifying personalities and working effectively with the people who possess them, responding appropriately to difficult experiences, treating others with respect, and behaving like a professional have caused companies and business organizations throughout the country to value her consulting skills. She trains those entering the workforce how to present themselves with style and authority; new employees in the importance of respecting one's work and the workplace; managers in the value of understanding employees' talent and temperament; and everyone in the timeless rules of behavior that will always bespeak excellence.

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