



Pay attention to the metaphors by which you create your perception of reality

Bởi:

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“We have found... that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature.”

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson: *Metaphors We Live By*

A picture is worth a thousand words, and the most important pictures are those we use to create the stories by which we define reality. Usually without even being aware we're doing it we use metaphors (and similes, as when you say one person reminds you of another, which for our purposes are the same thing) do define ourselves, other people, and the world around us. These metaphors powerfully influence our self-identity and our beliefs.

If someone asks how you're doing and you respond “I'm hanging in there,” you've just used a metaphor. You're not really hanging, but you've just told that other person – and more important you've just told yourself – that things are not well in your world. After all, who hangs? Desperate people hang – by their fingernails at the ends of their ropes. So do the worst of criminals. Not a very encouraging way to describe how your day is going, is it?

Now, if you've just gotten a promotion and a big pay raise and are about to leave for a Caribbean cruise and someone asks how you're doing, you're probably not going to complain about just hanging in there, are you?

Once when I was going through a pretty rough patch I caught myself saying that every time I came up for air it felt like a giant thumb came down from the sky and pushed me back down underwater. That is obviously a metaphor – there really wasn't a giant thumb

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and I wasn't really drowning – it was a word picture. Then it occurred to me that I could just as well have said that every time I sank beneath the waves it felt like a giant palm came up from the deeps and lifted me up to catch my breath.

Exact same circumstance, but the metaphor I chose to tell the story would give it a completely different interpretation.