

Lessons from My Father by Denis Waitley

My dad had a keen imagination, and we would often play a little good-night game that became our special ritual. He would come into my room to talk to me and listen to the triumphs and tragedies of my day. As he was leaving, Dad had a way of leaning back against the switch by my door and rubbing against it to "magically" blow out my light like the birthday candles on a cake.

As he did his little routine, Dad would say: "I'm blowing out your light now, and it will be dark for you. In fact, as far as you're concerned, it will be dark all over the world because the only world you ever know is the one you see through your own eyes. So remember, Son, keep your light bright. The world is yours to see that way. I love you, Son. Good night."

When I was very young, I used to lie there in bed after Dad left and try to understand what he meant. It was confusing to think that the whole world was dark when I was asleep and that the only world I would ever know was the one I would see through my own eyes. What Dad was trying to tell me was that when I went to sleep at night, as far as I was concerned, the world came to a stop. When I woke up in the morning I could choose to see a fresh new world through my own eyes, if I kept my light bright. In other words, if I woke up happy, the world was happy. If I woke up not feeling well, the world was not as well off.

My father's guidance about self-perception and the power in the eye of the beholder was invaluable. What he was trying to teach me with his little light show was this: "Denis, everything depends on how you want to look at what happens in life. It doesn't make any difference what is going on 'out there.' What makes a difference is how you take it."

Instead of teaching me "my glass was half-empty," my father taught me "my glass was more than half-full." He taught me to view life as something that was continually opening and expanding with new opportunities and events to enjoy.

Somewhere he picked up a bit of quantum physics theory. Depending on the kind of experiment you conduct, a particle of light can become a light beam or a light wave. It all depends on how you want to examine it. The light can change form, not because of its properties—it still remains light—but because of how you choose to behold it. My dad taught me that ugliness or beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Want and abundance are in the eye of the beholder. Being mediocre or being the best depends on the eye of the beholder.

Those good-night rituals with my father taught me that it didn't make any difference what the other kids said, what the other kids wore, or what they did. Their opinion of me wasn't that important. What was important was the way I handled what they might do and say.

And the same is true for both you and me today. People's opinions of me isn't what is important; it's the way I handle their opinions and actions that makes the difference.