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Quite often we gain a perspective on the run or in the moment then realize later on what we thought or felt at the time was off the mark. This happens because we have more of a tendency to run with a shortsighted perspective rather than let the wisdom of a farsighted perspective reveal the truth or reality.

Almost all of us have experienced something similar to the following scenario: Someone we need or depend on is not paying us proper attention, not returning our calls or texts. Feeling frustrated, we express our feelings to them or double our efforts to get a response. Or we encounter a problem or a project that is not going well and then we quickly decide upon a strategy and take swift action. Or a new person appears in our life, and captivated by their fresh energy and charm, we become friends with them.

Then weeks go by and we are forced to reassess what had happened and how we had reacted. New information comes to light. That person who is not responding to us was themselves overwhelmed with work or a pressing family issue. If only we had just waited and not been so impatient, we could have avoided pushing away a valuable ally. That problem we tried to solve was not really so urgent, and we made it worse by rushing an outcome. We needed to know more before acting. And that new friend ends up not being so charming; in fact, time reveals them to be a destructive sociopath or a total and complete nut case and it takes us years to heal from the mental damage. A little more distance could have let us see the red flags before it was too late.

Looking back on our lives, we often see we were impatient and overreacted in many instances. We notice patterns of behavior over long periods of time

that eluded us in the moment but became clearer to us later on.

What this means is that in the present moment we lack real perspective. With the passage of time, we gain more information and see more of the truth; what was invisible to us in the present now becomes visible in retrospect. Time is the greatest teacher of them all, the revealer of reality.

We can compare this to the following visual phenomenon: At the base of a mountain, in a thick forest, we have no ability to get our bearings or to map out our surroundings. A map and compass or GPS system may help, but we're relying on faith and the accuracy of those instruments. We can't truly verify until we see for ourselves. We see only what is before our eyes. If we begin to move up the side of the mountain, we can see more of our surroundings and how they relate to other parts of the landscape. The higher we go, the more we realize that what we thought further below was not quite accurate and was based on a deficient perspective. At the top of the mountain we have a clear panoramic view of the scene and perfect clarity as to the lay of the land.

For us humans, locked in the present moment, it is as if we are living at the base of the mountain. What is most apparent to our eyes in the surrounding forest gives us a limited, skewed vision of reality. The passage of time is like a slow ascent up the mountain. The emotions we felt in the present are no longer so strong; we can detach ourselves and see things more clearly. The further we ascend with the passage of time, the more information we add to the picture. What we saw three months after the fact is not quite as accurate as what we come to know a year later.

It would seem, then, that wisdom tends to come to us when it is too late, mostly in hindsight. But there is, in fact,

a way for us to manufacture the effect of time, to give ourselves an expanded view in the present moment. We can call this the farsighted perspective, and it requires the following process:

First, when facing an issue, problem, conflict, or an exciting opportunity, train yourself to detach from the heat of the moment. Work to calm down your excitement or your fear. Create some distance--step away.

Next, start to deepen or widen your perspective. In considering the nature of the problem you are confronted with, don't just grab for an immediate explanation, but instead dig deeper and consider other possibilities and/or other possible motivations for the people involved. Force yourself to look at the overall context of the event, not just what immediately grabs your attention. Imagine as best you can the negative consequences of the various strategies you are contemplating. Consider how the problem or the apparent opportunity might play itself out over time, how other problems or issues not apparent in the moment might suddenly loom larger than what you are immediately dealing with. Keep long-term goals in view and realign your priorities in the present according to them.

As you go through this process, certain options and explanations will begin to seem more logical and realistic than others that grabbed you in the initial moment. Most often the passage of time will give you more information and reveal better options for you to take. Moving up the mountain will give you an elevated perspective and can calm you down, making it easier for you to maintain your presence of mind as events unfold. Decisions made using this process will typically have the best chances of succeeding. Strive to make decisions from the top of the mountain.

~ The End ~