



VIOLENCE FREE
MINNESOTA
THE COALITION TO END RELATIONSHIP ABUSE

Perspective Exercise

“If peace comes from seeing the whole,
then misery stems from a loss of perspective.

We begin so aware and grateful. The sun somehow hangs there in the sky. The little bird sings. The miracle of life just happens. Then we stub our toe, and in that moment of pain, the whole world is reduced to our poor little toe. Now, for a day or two, it is difficult to walk. With every step, we are reminded of our poor little toe.

Our vigilance becomes: Which defines our day—the pinch we feel in walking on a bruised toe, or the miracle still happening?

It is the giving over to smallness that opens us to misery. In truth, we begin taking nothing for granted, grateful that we have enough to eat, that we are well enough to eat. But somehow, through the living of our days, our focus narrows like a camera that shutters down, cropping out the horizon, and one day we’re miffed at a diner because the eggs are runny or the hash isn’t seasoned just the way we like.

When we narrow our focus, the problem seems everything. We forget when we were lonely, dreaming of a partner. We forget first beholding the beauty of another. We forget the comfort of first being seen and held and heard. When our view shuts down, we’re up in the night annoyed by the way our lover pulls the covers or leaves the dishes in the sink without soaking them first.

In actuality, misery is a moment of suffering allowed to become everything. So, when feeling miserable, we must look wider than what hurts. When feeling a splinter, we must, while trying to remove it, remember there is a body that is not splinter, and a spirit that is not splinter, and a world that is not splinter.”

— Mark Nepo, *The Book of Awakening: Having the Life You Want by Being Present to the Life You Have*

Discussion Questions:

1. What resonates with this?
2. Where have you lost perspective?
3. Where are you willing to broaden your view?
4. What else?