

Reframing Is A Way To Shift Perspectives

by Ruth Hadikin



When I was thirteen I used to cry myself to sleep at night. One night my Dad asked me what was wrong and I asked him "why haven't I got any friends?" He replied: "People don't want you telling them what to do all the time." After that I spent years trying to fade to the background. Not stepping forward in case somebody thought I was being bossy.

Now fast-forward a few years and I became a Midwife. As a Community Midwife, I attended a lot of home births. One thing I realized was how important it was to take command. Who'd want a dithering Midwife that seemed unsure of herself? I would arrive at a home where a laboring woman, her partner, her Mother (and usually the Ambulance drivers too!) all breathed a sigh of relief because "The Midwife" had arrived. I loved seeing the relaxation that came on everyone's faces with the idea that 'everything's going to be alright now'.

What might appear to be faults, can actually be our strengths. As a child I was learning leadership and of course I sometimes got it wrong. My Dad was right: people don't need me to tell them what to do. It was up to me to figure out when my 'talents' would be needed, and how to use them appropriately.

In coaching we can take negative criticism and use it as an exercise in discovering our strengths, with a technique known as reframing. We can take any negative remark and reframe it: turning it around to see the positive attributes. It might look something like this:

Take the word 'bossy' and explore: In what contexts and situations could that actually be a good thing? Situations where people need direction. Command. Leadership. So now instead of 'bossy' you have a gift or talent for 'leadership'. You just need to learn to be more skillful in how you apply your gift.

Key Points:

- What appear to be faults can be our strengths.
- Others' perspectives show us where we can improve.
- Reframing allows us to take negative comments and turn them around so they become meaningful and informative.

We really do need others' perspectives on us, so that we can see what we need to change and/or improve, but we don't have to accept the negative contexts in which their views are often delivered. A very wise (and tactful) Midwife named Mary once said to me: "*Ruth, don't attack what you want to change.*" Because most people don't have the wisdom and skill of Mary they are likely to tell you what you need to know, in a much cruder (and possibly hurtful) manner.

By reframing you can take their underlying message and turn it around so that you can see the good in it. This gives it meaning and purpose in your life. The next time someone tells you you are bossy, maybe they really said "*you have leadership potential but you seriously need to polish up your act.*" Then you can hire a coach who can support you in cultivating your newly-found talent until it becomes a real strength!

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