

A Matter of Perspective

By Karel Murray

Alright... who turned up the heat? It seemed that the sultry breath of summer came upon us quickly and storms reared their fierce heads. Tempers flared at the Minneapolis airport when our flight to Cedar Rapids, Iowa was cancelled due to impending bad weather.

Two couples cluster at the far end of the boarding gate, obviously making strategy decisions - four faces gray with fatigue and pinched with panic. "But we have to get there before 8:00 tomorrow morning! Who will..." drifted into a whispered discussion as they paced the aisle.

Accompanied by a six year old child, a woman sits in shocked reflection, eyes round with disbelief. She is taking her grandchild home after a week long trip to California. But, she has no money... certainly not enough to pay for a hotel room, taxi transportation and meals for another day. Her hands clutch her wallet as she watches the gate attendant deal with the onslaught of inconvenienced customers...

"No, there will not be any other flights out of the airport tonight. The next scheduled flight to your destination isn't until tomorrow morning at 9:35 AM. I can put you on stand-by, but understand that flight is completely booked. I'm afraid we might not be able to get you onto a flight until tomorrow afternoon. It doesn't help to shout, sir. No, we don't pay for hotel rooms or meals when it's a weather related delay. I can provide you with a list of possible hotels where you can get some sleep tonight and return tomorrow. What would you like to do?"

The slim, blonde-haired gate attendant gestures sympathetically to the customer and does her best to help him reach a workable solution. Her face registers frustration when the gentleman continues to be very aggressive and insists upon flying out that evening. Quietly she advises him that all flights have been cancelled and there is no hope of leaving Minneapolis to his destination this evening. He strides away from the reservation desk and pushes past me, the next person in line.

The attendant looks at me expectantly, a small rueful smile on her lips. She waits patiently for another onslaught. Must be thinking she's earning her pay tonight... I smile broadly at her and ask if the airline will credit me for the unused leg of the flight. She provides me with the 1-800 number to call. A look of relief in her eyes as I accept the information and move on.

Looking around the gate area, I wondered if getting angry solves problems or makes it easier to deal with inconvenience or unexpected situations... I used my cell phone to set up a one way car rental. The charge of \$375 is capitalism at it's best...taking advantage of the situation. Scanning the crowded waiting area, I

walk up to the lady with the child. Speaking calmly, I advised her I'd be driving to Cedar Rapids and she could come along if Cedar Rapids was her final destination. Quietly she tells me that she does not have the money to split the car rental with me. I shrug that off and tell her there are 3 other seats empty and I was going anyway.

I will never forget the look of wonder and gratefulness she directed at me. Clutching her granddaughter's hand, she identifies herself as Sharon and the little girl as Sade. Another dark haired, short, frantic looking woman taps me on the shoulder "Hi! I'm Gloria and I overheard you have a rental car. I must be in Cedar Rapids tonight... I'll be glad to split the cost with you if you drive." Her voice is high pitched with anxiety and uncertainty. Within 30 minutes, four weary travelers were on the road.

That evening, I discovered it's a matter of perspective that dictates how people act. It's amazing what we can accomplish if we look for solutions rather than attacking others for problems that were beyond their control. What did the others expect the airline to do ...combat tornado force winds and placing human lives in peril? Holding the gate attendant and baggage claim personnel responsible for an act of nature borders on ridiculous.

During the 4 hour drive to Cedar Rapids, I gained new music (as sung by Sadie), discovered how a 65 year old woman can attend college for her master's degree while writing a historic novel, and watched Gloria slowly come down from overwhelming panic as she realized everything would work out.

Now that puts the wind right back in the sails.

Keeping a positive, solution oriented perspective helps keep you on an even keel. My mother's advice rings in my brain "If it is just about money, you have no real problems. Everything is relative." Understanding that health, the love of family, and positive personal self esteem are priorities in life... a cancelled flight shrinks down to an inconvenience.

A matter of perspective...I'll never know what adventure I'll have if I shut mind to the possibilities.

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