

## Reframing (ii) - from Running *The* Race to Running *Your* Race

Life has a way of conditioning us. Our life experiences train us to operate in ways we may not be conscious of.

We begin life minding our own business, but find ourselves constantly compared with others. That teaches us to rank others too. We compare, compete and strive to outdo others, and this becomes our default mode of operation. Sometimes we experience the thrills of winning. At other times, we suffer the defeat of lagging behind. This makes us strive further or withdraw in resignation or self-condemnation. Somehow, we get sucked into a race -life's race- one that we seem to have no control over.

Life is a race. There is no running away from it but we need not be at its mercy. Unbeknownst to ourselves, we hold unhelpful beliefs about this race. These beliefs we hold unquestioningly disempower us.

Is there an alternative? One proposal is to *not* look at life's race the way we are accustomed to. It is to *not* perceive it as a competition. It is to debunk the belief that only one champion wins at the finishing line. It is about reframing our beliefs to effect a change. No one needs to lose out in life's race. Everyone can be a winner, if each runs his or her race, and runs it right.



When we believe right, we think right. When we think right, we focus right. Only then do we run right.

### Believe right

One unhelpful belief about life's race is formed because of our experiences of the hierarchical systems in the various contexts we find ourselves in. Whether in school or other communities, there is always a hierarchical order. This conditions us to perceive ourselves and others as existing in *tiers*.

Tied to this belief is the misperception that one's 'worth' corresponds to the positions in the hierarchy. This misleads us into thinking, for example, that when we hold a higher office in an organisation, we are ranked higher. Correspondingly we feel a greater sense of worth. We subconsciously check who we are above or below to. And since no one wants to be ranked bottom, we perpetually strive to overtake others.

It is true that there is clear structure, system and order in creation. These exist only in function. The idea that inherent worth is tied to function is a faulty one.

Let's take our body and its parts to illustrate this. The body has only one head or heart. Each is a critical part. In function, that is, not in worth. Another part, say, a fingernail or a tooth, is not of less worth than the head or heart. In function, each is designed to fulfil a different role for the body.

There is only one CEO in a company. But he cannot exist on his own. As a *human being*, he is not of greater worth than a salesperson although he holds a more important function in the organisation. While we accord honour to him for his office, we are not inferior to him. The CEO enjoys the honour given him, but he should not lord over his subordinates. They are equally worthy of honour as *human beings*.

Instead of perceiving human beings as existing in tiers, seeing ourselves as scattered dots will be more helpful. We are scattered, not ranked. Each dot has a responsibility to achieve something for the greater body. The greater body accomplishes a higher purpose through some system and order, the way the stars in the sky form the galaxy, perhaps? Which dot are we? What is our destiny in the body of mankind?

### Focus right

A part of our life's race is finding out our design and destiny. This gives us the road map for the rest of our race. If we are designed to be the eye, we work towards becoming the best eye that we can be for the greater body.

The obvious solution to understanding our design and destiny is to seek after our Maker for the answer. A handphone can be used as a ruler, but it does a bad job. Our Maker endows us with abilities, gifts, passion, propensity and a unique personality that incline us towards, and enable us to fulfil our destined purpose. While we are searching, doing

what we are good at and committing ourselves to becoming better each day than the day before, will certainly move us towards the right direction. If we are a wife, daughter and mother, making it our goal to improve the 'old us' in these roles progresses us in our race. The extent by which we put our focus on becoming the best that we can be is the extent by which our goal will be reached. It is the extent by which we win our race.

The focus is on ourselves, not on others. The eye does not look at the nose and compete with it. Each has his own unique race to run, a unique goal to achieve.

### Run right

When we focus right, we run the race right. The race is not a competition. There are no opponents, only fellow sojourners running their own race. What we run against is the occasional temptation to quit when times get rough. We run against the lack of discipline. We run against mediocrity, complacency and apathy. We ourselves can be our greatest 'obstacles'. We run to overcome self-imposed obstacles.



## Connect-Point

In not focusing on others but ourselves in the race, we shift from the external to the internal, from boosting our external image to refining our inner-man. We have been conditioned to look at how others fare to determine where we are in the race. When our peers progress in their careers and attain a certain social 'status', we feel left behind and want to catch up with them. That is running *the race* focusing on the externals. Running *our race* focuses us on becoming better versions of ourselves. We measure our performance today against yesterday's, this year's against last year's. We live with the motto, 'I will be better today than yesterday, tomorrow than today.'

This shift motivates us towards becoming mindful of breaking old habits of thought patterns, behaviour and lifestyle. We will desire to form new, helpful ones. We will become intentional in improving ourselves. In time, we naturally grow holistically, in spirit, soul and body.

Does this mean that our race trajectory will be like Diagram 1, a straight upward path? Never. Diagram 2 is more realistic. No matter how focused we are,

there will be circumstances beyond our control causing us to seemingly regress. The trend, nevertheless, should be an upward one. Our next peak after we recover from our dips, should always be higher than the last.

Diagram 1

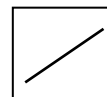


Diagram 2



Reframing our beliefs about life's race is a re-conditioning process. It begins with first choosing for ourselves. Do we want to be bound to old unhelpful beliefs about life being a race in competition with others? Or do we want to be set free by reframing our perspective?

Choosing the latter means fully accepting that the eye will never be the leg or neck. It means finding out and accepting our unique destiny. It means not thinking in terms of who is running ahead or behind us but whether we are progressing inwardly. It means determining to finish *our own* race and finishing it well.

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