

## On perspective and mindset

by Bernice Maslan

"The master said You must write what you see.  
But what I see does not move me.  
The master answered Change what you see."  
— Louise Glück, Vita Nova

When I read this quote, I had just been giving myself grief for not making my environment at home, my meals, etc., more pleasant, varied, and special. This was a reminder that if we don't like what we see, we can change it... Revolutionary! It is always said that what we do have control of is our attitude toward events. That alone can be a good trick in this trying, uncertain world.

Each of us is dealing with the current world in our own way. For me, my focus has been on keeping my spirits up as the weather turns, accepting that the world has changed and is continuing to change, and trying to increase my participation in virtual events. Pre-Covid, the challenge used to be getting myself to leave the house to attend one of the many dances offered, braving traffic and parking contention. Oh for those days again! Now the challenge is to maintain connections with people, keep on top of what is offered and participate virtually, as well as help keep the arts organizations, facilities, etc. solvent.

In terms of re-inventing oneself in the world, having what is referred to as a growth mindset is helpful. I'm reading Mindset: the New Psychology of Success by Carol S. Dweck. A growth mindset accepts that people have a great capacity for lifelong learning and brain development. It stresses the process: gaining skills, finding resources to make progress. If something isn't working, regroup, try again a different way and see if you can get further this time.

Gaining new skills is not something that requires a huge time commitment to start. Twenty hours of focussed work is all that is required to go from "I know nothing about this" to "I am having fun learning." Those twenty hours cannot happen all at once - 10-20 minutes a session keeps you fresh and learning. Just applying yourself for fifteen minutes a day for two months can set a firm foundation in a brand new language and teach you enough to participate in a simple conversation.

Focusing on a growth mindset inspired me to work on an item which had been languishing on my to-do list, posting previous Folkdancer columns on my website. Since I hadn't done much with the website for five years (alas!) and had forgotten how, it literally took me hours, and included numerous frustration breaks and watching parts of some youtube tutorials. In the end, it proved to be enormously satisfying. If you're interested, here they are: <http://www.seattleklezmer.com/nfdi-articles>

Perhaps re-inventing folkdancing will take a growth mindset. Although Covid limitations endure, live folkdancing is coming back in a few places, outdoors, socially distanced, with masks. This, believe it or not, is progress. Many dance activities are going virtual, as you may have read in recent issues. I just heard of a drive-through fundraising pancake breakfast for a dance group. Creativity reigns!

No matter the limitations of the world, all of us, but especially those of us lucky enough to have health, shelter, food, and discretionary time can still change and grow. The closing lines of Mary Oliver's poem *The Summer Day* reads: "Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?" Whatever it is we plan to do with our wild and precious lives, let's get started.

Here's to continued health, dancing, connection and life!