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# SPIRIT, MIND & BODY

**BALLARD STREET**  
by Jerry Van Amerongen

## What You See Is What You Get

How often have you heard the expression, "What you see is what you get"? A lot, right? But have you ever stopped to think about the meaning behind these words?

At first, when I hear this expression, I think of children on a playground, spouting off sayings like "sticks and stones will break my bones" and "maybe I am, but what are you?" At another glance, I see the obviousness that the statement implies, like when someone exclaims that the sky is blue or that 110 degrees is really hot.

Yet after many years of life experience and focused studies on how the mind works, the expression "What you see is what you get" also offers me one of those "a-ha!" moments. I feel as if I've been given a secret gift, like when you finally understand the wisdom in childhood fairy tales such as The Wizard of Oz or Mary Poppins.

What I hear now when I listen to this expression is that we create our own real-

ity through our perceptions of life's experiences. Wow! What a wonderful discovery. Let me put it another way. Essentially, what we take away from any event is the way we interpret that event. Life certainly has its ups and downs, but by taking responsibility for our perceptions, we can do something to maximize the ups and minimize the downs.

Assume that we both witness the same accident but, when our testimony is taken, our stories are not the same. What I saw and what you saw were different. We perceived the same event differently because we brought our own prior experiences and expectations to what we saw.

Another example familiar to many of us is the experience of driving down the freeway with someone tailgating you. One day, if this happens, you may feel challenged and threatened and start waving your arms in irritation. The next day, the same thing may not bother you so much. You may even feel concern for the person who is in such a rush and calmly move over to let

the other car pass.

What changed here, between one day and the next? Your perception changed, that's what! One day, your interpretation of the tailgating made you angry; the next day, you had an entirely different interpretation. The difference was within you – the actual events were identical.

In general, the expectations we bring to life's events tend to shape the way we perceive them. Understanding this allows us to take responsibility for our own experiences. We can deliberately "set" our expectations in advance and in that way find more of what we hope for in life. The beauty of life is ours for the taking. We only have to recognize that it has been ours all along.

*"Beauty in things exists in the mind which contemplates them."*


...David Hume 1711-1776



Carl communes with nature.

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