



**CULTIVATING THE SEEDS OF CHANGE ©**  
**Renée Canali, Life Coach Vol.3, Issue 3 March 2006**

I recently caught an edition of ABC's Prime Time show that really intrigued me. Barry Nalebuff, Professor of Economics at Yale, set out to test the Game Theory and common perceptions. According to Wikipedia, game theory is "a branch of applied math that studies strategic situations where players choose different actions to maximize their returns." Game theory is a study in how decisions are made when a variety of "players" interact.

The "game", developed by Thomas Schelling in 1950, involved six pairs of people who set out from different locations in Manhattan, NY to find the other pairs. They were strangers and had no information about any other players. All that they were given was \$100 and instructions to find the others.

It took about three hours for the pairs to find each other by brainstorming ideas and putting themselves in other participants' shoes. They tried to think like the people they have never met to determine what choices they might make. They planned their moves based on what they projected others would do. Although the pairs did not all meet at one location, they did all meet by using this strategy.

I began thinking about the many situations in which we use a form of this theory every day. We make choices daily based on what we believe the reactions of others will be. We strategize over where and when to change lanes on our way to work on crowded roads. We delay our arrival or departure in order to try to avoid someone. We guess how quickly the checkout lines will move in the grocery store and guess the fastest line.

By changing our strategy, we have the opportunity to change the results we get. How often have you been drawn towards an opportunity and backed off from pursuing it because of your perception of how other people would react or because someone else "beat you to it"? Do you second guess the reaction of your boss or spouse?

The lesson from the Prime Time game was that your success depends on several things: what actions you take, what you believe others reactions will be and how others respond to those actions. By putting yourself in the shoes of others, it is possible to become more proficient at what is sometimes referred to as the game of life.

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## GARDENER'S ACTION PLAN FOR MARCH 2006 ©

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Game theory studies decisions that are made in an environment where a variety of players interact. More specifically, it is a study of optimal behavior when the benefits and costs of each option depend on the choices of others. Most of our decisions are being made as others are simultaneously making similar choices, such as picking the shortest checkout line or getting the best deal on a car. How can you “play” the game to best benefit?

- **Step into someone else's shoes.** Strategize your next “move” by thinking about how another person is making their decision. A husband and wife both have demanding jobs outside of the home. Friday night, the husband wants to go out to a quiet dinner and spend time with his wife. He can tell her he needs to get out and hope she's agreeable or he can offer to take her out as a reprieve from the stress of the week.
- **Look for evidence** about a situation instead of assuming that it is how you perceive it to be. Remember being in grade school and liking someone? The other person stuck their tongue out and taunted you so you assumed they didn't like you. Instead, they were actually trying to get you to notice them.
- **Verify that a perceived threat is real.** Kids know how to test this well. Give a child a consequence for bad behavior and neglect to follow through as soon as the undesired behavior emerges. How long will it take for them to understand how far they can push you before the threat is realized?
- **Decide what would be best for the desired result** when trying to achieve a group consensus: Should I convince others to see my way of thinking or find those that agree with me? Or, is it best for the result to contain something that each participant can identify with as if it is their own?

*Private choices are not private; they all have public consequences. Our society is the sum total of what millions of individuals do in their private lives." James E. Faust*

For things to be different you have to cultivate change. If you are ready to change your habits and be more productive and satisfied and would like support, you may send an email to [Renee@landofpossibility.com](mailto:Renee@landofpossibility.com) or call (301) 279-2363. All rights reserved. This may be reproduced with copyright statement and credits intact.

