



Come Learn With Me

By M.J. Clark

Sometimes when we think "it's all good," and we begin to grow perhaps a little complacent, life throws us a curveball that requires us to look at what's really going on. That's what happened to me this week. And what a beautiful, yet painful, thing that is! There is always room to improve and change; we just don't always see it. Sometimes it just hurts too much to recognize it.

I consider myself an eternal optimist. Although that serves me well much of the time, it can also cause me to not look realistically at what's before me. When I merely assume that things will get better, I'm not dealing with what's not working and what needs to be addressed. It's a state of denial that truly blinds me from reality and a golden opportunity to make positive changes.

Many of us are dealing with the fallout from this sluggish economy, and we try to remain hopeful that we can get through it. But to stick your head in the sand while you dream dreams of better times isn't the most productive method to get ahead. Through an honest and painful conversation with ILS President Steve Anderson, I learned that this is precisely what I was doing. As we processed together the reality of what was not working, I had to admit to myself that I was in denial. That really hurt. Instead of working to change the reality before me, I continued on with blind optimism, hopeful that things would get better. Well, things don't get better when you are doing what you've always done, when what you've always done is no longer working.

In this economic downturn, some of my clients have continued to do business in the usual way. What has worked in the past is not working now, but they have seen the old method work, so they continue to try to make it work again. I, too, have fallen into this trap. When the climate changes, so must we change. And we have to be brave enough to face the reality on a regular basis. My downfall was not stopping to assess the situation and if what I was doing was truly working. It was not, and I waited too long between assessments. I waited because I was too afraid to look at it honestly. Until I can acknowledge that something's not working and accept that, I cannot courageously move forward with new ideas to try. It was a tough lesson for me this week.

Even though ILS consultants strive to help all of you become more self-aware, it doesn't mean we have all the answers. We, too, must continue to work on our own self-awareness. We must struggle, just like you and often with you, to find the answers. And then we must "do it scared," just as we often encourage you to do.