

THE JORDAN HARBINGER SHOW

Worksheet for Beau Lotto | Why You See Differently When You Deviate (Episode 177)

If you've ever read up on perception, or perhaps just made a cameo at Burning Man, you might be familiar with the idea that our eyes and ears don't really see and hear. Our senses take in electrical signals that our brain decodes and creates pictures of inside our heads. This is why people can learn to see with their tongues, develop powers of echolocation to see objects when they're blind, etc. In the future, we'll most certainly have entirely new senses and ways to perceive the world around us, aided by technology.

[On this episode](#) Beau Lotto — neuroscientist, perception expert, and author of [Deviate: The Science of Seeing Differently](#) — and I dive into why this is the case, explore why our shared (and unshared) delusions of the world are useful, and discuss some methods to develop new perceptions of the world that might serve us better. Listen, learn, and enjoy!

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Thank Saccades for Sight

Beau says that saccades and microsaccades "are tiny, involuntary ballistic movements that your eyes are always making" in a constant search for differences in what you perceive -- which is what makes vision possible. In other words, what you see when you look around the room where you are right now isn't quite what's there, but an approximation constructed by the brain based on relational differences between incoming information. If you were to somehow restrict these saccades from doing their job, you'd stop seeing what's right in front of you.

You don't have to take Beau's word for it -- you can test it right now for yourself.

[\(Follow along in the video here.\)](#) With one hand, cover one eye. With the other, place your thumb and forefinger gently on the top and bottom eyelids of the other eye. Then, keeping this eye open, hold it in place. The more still you keep this eye, the more quickly you'll see (technically, not see) the effect. Look at a stable scene and try not to move your head. Crazy, right?

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Changing History from Within

We don't have the ability to time travel or change history, but human imagination allows us to change the way we feel about things that have happened in the past and how we behave as a result.

"While I can't change the things that happened [in the past], I can change the meaning of the things that happened," says Beau. "So if everything I'm doing right now is a consequence of the history of my meanings and that determines what I'm going to do in the future, how do I change what I'm going to do in the future? Change the meanings of the things that happened in the past."

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Try to remember an event from your life you think back upon as unpleasant. While you obviously can't change the event that's etched into the stone of history, you can reassign whatever bad feeling you've traditionally felt. For example, maybe you still feel anxiety over the time you flubbed a line in the school play. Instead, try to relive it, but with calm in place of anxiety. This takes practice, but ideally the next time you're in a similar situation (like public speaking or giving a podcast interview), you won't default to your previously reflexive anxiety, but calm instead.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write their response to the prompt above.

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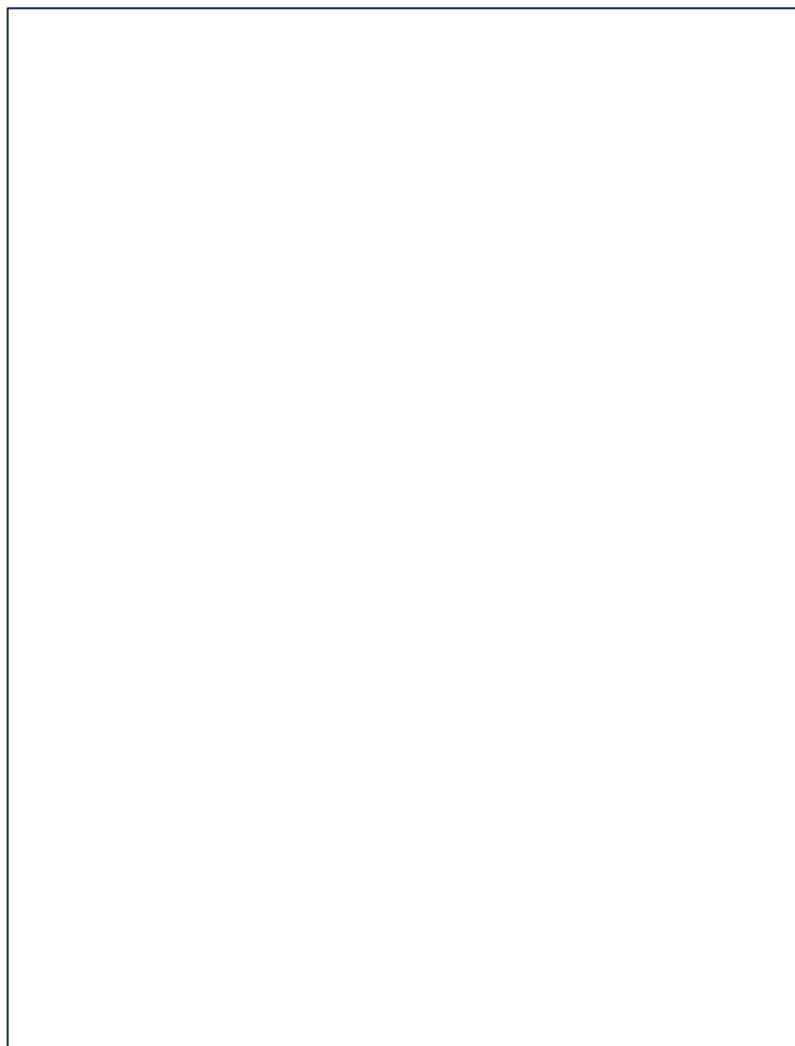
Choose Your Delusion

"It's only when you have awareness of why you're doing what you're doing that creates the possibility of doing it differently," says Beau. "So the point of choosing your delusion is to evoke that idea that you can actually be an active agent in the constructions of the meanings that you give.

"So if someone shouts at you, whatever you do at that moment -- how you respond to the thing -- determines its meaning. You could argue [that the shouting] has no meaning to it. I project the meaning onto it, and I project that meaning by deciding how I'm going to respond to [it]. So if I respond...with anger, that's what that means. If I respond...with compassion...now that's a very different response and a very different meaning to the same stimulus. The stimulus hasn't changed, but my meaning has. So in that sense, I have a choice. And I only have that choice if I know I have one. And I only have that choice if I know how perception works!"

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At some point this week, try to deviate from your usual response to a common stimulus. It could even be someone yelling at you, though I hope that's not common! Note how giving the stimulus a different meaning changes the overall experience.



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Examining Assumptions and Biases

So now that you understand how perception works, how can you strengthen the skill of deviation from that perception?

"First of all, you have to begin with awareness," says Beau. "If you don't have awareness of how and why you're seeing what you do, you have no potential freedom. Now that you have that, the next step is that you have to realize that everything you're doing has a bias and assumption -- not sometimes. All the time. And most of the time, those biases and assumptions have a real significant, advantageous value to them.

"Right now you have an assumption that the chair's not going to give way. When you take a step, that your legs aren't going to give away. These assumptions keep us alive and they're embedded in us.

"The problem is we don't know what they are. So the practice is often having this awareness. That awareness gives you humility, and that humility creates the possibility of doubt. And it's through that doubt that gives you the possibility now of responding differently.

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"Because if you are seeing the world as it really is, why would you ever want to see it differently? That's the beauty of not seeing the world as it really is -- by seeing the utility -- because the world changes, which means you need to change with it.

"So the message is that you have an agency, and then you have to practice that. And you have to practice it by letting go and then creating new ones."

What assumptions and biases do you take for granted on an everyday basis? Which ones might be worth further examination and the possibility of doubt? Which assumptions and biases that served you in the past have been outgrown, and how have you adapted past them?

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Practicing Deviation

How can we change our assumptions and biases? How can we practice the deviation required for such change?

The first step is to know what they are.

The second step is to expand them. "But to do to that, you have to first let them go," says Beau.

Here's a simple exercise he recommends.

"Go into the shower, and have it be cold," says Beau. "It doesn't have to be excruciatingly cold, but it's going to be cold. The point is: it's not going to kill you! It's not even going to hurt you. In fact, physiologically, it's actually good for you.

"What your assumption is -- what your bias is -- is that it's bad. So what you're feeling at that moment is the badness of it. It's not objectively bad. But that's your perception that you're projecting onto the water. So try letting go of that assumption, and what I mean by that is don't pretend it's not cold -- too often, that's what people think is the solution. Just feel the water. Feel the coldness. But let go of the idea that it's bad. Just have it be neutral. Just have it be not uncomfortable. Just sit with that.

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"And what people find is that it will start feeling not uncomfortable. And then at that point, you're now in the space of what I call "not A" and now you're just training your brain to let go of these immediate reflexive responses."

And if you ever find yourself driving past a car accident, here's another simple exercise Beau recommends.

"Try not rubbernecking at all," says Beau. "You're aware there's that accident; try not looking. You'll feel the power and the strength required to not look. It's really hard to not look at the obvious. We've been wired to look at the obvious. Attention is not what you look at -- it's what you choose not to look at. It's looking away from the obvious. You'll feel the energy required to not look. And then in not doing that, it's just like lifting a heavy weight. Now if you keep doing that, after a while, it won't be so hard to not look as you pass an accident."

Full show notes and resources for this episode [can be found here.](#)

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We deconstruct the playbooks of the most successful people on earth — and learn new strategies, perspectives, and insights you can't find anywhere else. Then, take these valuable insights into your own life and live what you listen.

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