

# Erroneous Assumptions - the Stuff of High Drama

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Have you ever known, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that something happened a certain way, only to find out later that it didn't actually happen that way at all? Does the following story sound familiar?

Juliet assumed that Romeo would get the message that she was going to drink a potion that would make it appear as if she were dead, when in fact she really wasn't. He didn't.

Later Romeo found her lifeless body in a tomb, saw the empty poison bottle lying next to her and assumed that she was dead. She wasn't.

Overwhelmed by the loss of his true love, Romeo then killed himself with a knife. Juliet woke up moments later and found him lying dead next to her. Stricken with grief - she then killed herself.

Oh, the tragedy of erroneous assumptions.

Unfortunately, incorrect assumptions are not simply reserved for literature. They are occurring around us all the time. And because of them, conflicts occur, relationships are strained and actions are taken that may actually create a problem that wasn't ever there!

Example: Jill walks by Mark. He says "hi" and she doesn't respond. He assumes something's wrong and thinks, "What's her problem?" He treats her a little coldly the rest of the day. She notices this and wonders why he's being so standoffish. She decides not to invite him to lunch with the rest of the team. Reality: Someone a few feet away coughed at the exact moment he spoke and she didn't hear him.

Do you see the trap here? Do you see how an erroneous assumption actually *created* a problem? And why do we make such negative assumptions? I read one study that concluded that the average person has between 40,000 thoughts per day and that about 80 to 90 percent of them are negative. Well, there's part of the problem right there.

Another contributing factor may be our tendency to take things so personally. Most of the time, it isn't about us! We are simply not the center of everybody else's world!

The bottom line is this: we don't have to make these negative assumptions. We can make different, more empowering, and much wiser choices when confronted with these types of situations.

We could simply ask for clarification. Mark could have said, "Jill, I noticed this morning when I said 'hi' to you, you didn't respond. That's not like you. Is something wrong?" That could have cleared things up right there. And if there really was a problem, the door has now been opened for discussion.

Here's another idea. When something happens and you find yourself starting to assume the worst, try doing the following 3 things:

1. Stop.
2. Ask yourself, "What other possible, logical, positive reason could there be for this to have happened?" Keep asking the question until you find a reason that would make sense.
3. Behave as if that explanation were true.

When you do this, you'll notice there's no negative energy around the event. You feel good, you are more pleasant to be around, people like you, and life is just a little easier.

Let's keep all that high drama where it belongs - on the big screen!

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