

# Information Filters

Have you every wondered how ten people could drive on the same motorcycle ride and remember (or not recall seeing) so many different things? Have you ever watched the same movie three times and found something new each time? It is this concept that makes repeated training and continued learning so important.

Thinking is very chaotic. The neurons in your brain fire at a speed of a hundred billion times per second and make connections randomly with past experiences and present information, while trying to adapt to the current environment or the current challenge. How do you obtain the information? How do you store and use the information? How do you give that information meaning? Studies on listening have found that a person retains only about 25 percent of what is heard twenty-four hours after hearing it. A better system is needed to learn what is already known, as well as for retaining and storing information so that it can be recalled more efficiently.

One model of this process involves information filters. Think of this information filter as having four circular layers. Each ring of this filter feeds into the next one toward the center, resulting in the total of all you know.

1. The outer circle represents **exposure** or the things you have experienced in your life. There are always going to be limits on what you have seen and experienced no matter how active, well read, or well traveled you have been. If you want to know more, you need to increase the number of things you are exposed to - more ideas, more experiences, and more overall information.

2. Going inward, the next circle is **attention** or what you have paid attention to during those “exposures.” Keep in mind that many things do not enter your perception because you aren’t paying attention to them as they occurred. Try to notice more patterns in things, people and feelings. Look around for more details. Typically these details will help you to better understand and retain what you have experienced.

3. The next circle is called **perspective** or point of view. The way you look at things can limit how much of the details you perceive or what aspect of the experiences you perceive. Try to see things from different angles. What’s going on in your mind? Can you switch to a different point of view, or are you rigidly locked in to only one? Can you stretch your point of view to consider ideas from others? The more ways you can see something, the more elements of it you will perceive.

4. The innermost circle is called **retention** or memory. Memory is notorious for being selective. Your memory of what you were exposed to selects how much of that experience you really know. However, you can improve your skills for storing, sorting, and categorizing information so that your brain retains more of it. Watch for next month’s article for some exercises and ideas to help with memory skills.

In summary, everything you know or suspect to be true is based on the limited amount of information that has come through these four filters. The more you are exposed to, the more you can potentially learn and know. The more you pay attention to, the more you can understand. The more you shift to varying points of view, the more thoroughly you can understand it. The more you can recall and retain, the more you will be able to use when you need it. Hopefully these concepts will assist you as you prepare for your next training adventure!