

The time and time again zone

Our perception defines the way we respond to everything in our life experience. Today's column is about the skewed perception of two young boys who had limited knowledge of time zones and how they work.

A recent trip to the Midwest brought me to the area where Eastern Standard Time changes to Central Standard Time. In a restaurant where I was eating breakfast, a family was sitting at the next table. Two young boys about 7 or 8 years old were having an intense conversation about passing through the time zone. Keep in mind that these boys were at the age when most youngsters just begin to grasp the concept of time. The following transcript of their discussion tells us why we should be careful when we explain the essentials of life to our children. If we cut corners, we could cause conversations like this:

"My dad said we're going to pass through a time zone," said the first boy.

"What's that?" asked the second boy.

"It's a place where we gain an hour when we pass through it," said the first.

"What happens when you gain an hour?" asked the second.

"I think it means that we repeat whatever hour we're in," said the first boy.

"You mean you'll do everything you did in the hour before you went through the zone?" asked the second.

"I guess so," said the first.

"That seems dumb. Why would anybody want to do that?" said the second.

"It's not dumb if you're doing something really cool," said the first.

"Like what?" asked the second.

"Like, I know we're going through the time zone in less than an



You can't beat a system you can't understand

By Sam Bari

hour after we leave here. So I'm going to eat a piece of apple pie. After we pass through the time zone, I'll get to eat it again," said the first.

At that point, the second boy looked skeptical. He wasn't sure why, but somehow this "time zone" idea wasn't making any sense, so he changed the direction of the questioning.

"What's the time zone look like?" he asked. "How do we know when we pass through it?"

"I'm not sure," said the first boy. "It probably looks like that liquid wall in the 'Stargate' movie. You go through it and you're in the next zone," he continued.

"Oh — you mean it's a portal," the second boy said.

"Yeah. Something like that," said the first boy.

"So you're telling me that this liquid portal sits in the middle of the road and everybody drives through it?" asked the second boy.

"Yeah, I guess so," said the first.

"Well what about the people driving the other way? What happens to them?" the second boy asked. "Do they lose an hour?"

"Probably," said the first.

"Well, what happens to that hour?" asked the second boy. "You get to re-live an hour if you go through one way, but you lose an hour when you go through the other way. Do you look an hour older? The hour can't just disappear. Does it erase your memory so you don't

remember what happened?" he added.

"I dunno," said the first boy. "I'll ask my dad."

So he asked his dad, but pay close attention to what he asked.

"Dad, does going through a time zone erase your memory?"

"No, son. It doesn't do anything to your memory," his father answered.

"Well — if you go through the time zone the other way and you lose an hour, do you look an hour older?" the first boy asked.

"No, son. You aren't an hour older," the father answered innocently.

"I can't wait to see this," the second boy said. "Because if what you say is true, you'll eat that piece of pie, drive through the time zone, and eat it again. Then you'll drive through the time zone and the same thing will happen over and over."

"I don't think so," said the first. "Somehow, I don't know exactly why, but it only happens once," he continued.

Obviously, the idea of time zones confused these kids. They were totally baffled about the concept. The Oxford-American Dictionary defines time zones as, "Any of the 24 longitudinal divisions of the earth's surface in which a standard time is kept, the primary division being that bisected by the Greenwich meridian. Each zone is 15 degrees of longitude in width, with local variations, and observes a clock time one hour earlier than the zone immediately to the east."

I'm sure you can imagine how that definition would have been received. I think the time zone experience was the first indication to these young lads that they were living in a system they have no hope of ever understanding. Better that they learn while they're young that you can't beat a system you can't understand

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