

## Look down from space

It was a surreal night to say the least. The four of us, two former astronauts, an Air Force Major General and I sat on the front porch sipping single malt scotch and Jeremiah Weed while a huge air force jet was making touch-and-go's a hundred yards away.

When in the company of astronauts, the conversation, undoubtedly, turns to space travel. It is an experience so few people in the world have ever had or will ever have the opportunity to try, so the curiosity of the two non-astronauts at the table was bubbling. It was the two-star general who asked the question that we both needed to know the answer to: "did going to space change you?"

The first astronaut answered. "It didn't change me," he said, "but it reinforced many of the values I already held." The second astronaut had been on more missions and spent more time in space than her colleague. "Yes," she said, "it profoundly changed me. If you didn't go up a pacifist, odds are pretty good you came back as one."

This is a common theme among those who have ever had the opportunity to look back at our planet from so far away. Looking down at our little blue world, free from all the noise and hubbub, they can't help but think: why can't we all just get along.

This perspective is not unique to astronauts. We all have the ability to understand more when we step back to look at a situation with a wide-angle lens. Especially at times when we can see no alternative than to respond with anger, wage "war" with our competition or even just feel like we can't see the light at the end of the tunnel. In these moments, we need to stop and pretend we are looking at the situation from space.

I remember not getting accepted to an organization I really wanted to join. I was convinced on my second try I would make it. But I didn't. I felt like I wasn't worthy. Then I stopped. I pulled back. Would it really have an impact on my life being a part of their organization versus not - sure, some. I would have had the opportunity to do some pretty cool stuff...but it probably won't limit anything I can do in the future. Then I pulled back even further - I certainly wouldn't lie on my death bed and think my life would have been so much better if I had made it

in. In the grand scheme of my life and career, did it really matter? The answer...not surprisingly...was no. The best part is, there was another opportunity that I saw only when I was looking down from a high altitude that, when close-in and obsessed with the first thing, I couldn't see.

Pulling back, physically and philosophically, is an amazing practice. We see things we can never see when in the middle of it. We see solutions, we see opportunities, we become more realistic and pragmatic and less reactive and reactionary and, best of all, we find calm.

It's a shame we can't all go to space to come back with that new perspective...but we can pretend.