



Perspective

It is really interesting how much our perspective effects the way we see the world and how we make judgements about people and situations. Perspective, by definition is:

➤ **Perspective** – *n.* - **a specific point of view in understanding or judging things or events**

Our perspective can change as we have new experiences in life. Part of growing as a person involves opening your perspective to new ideas and views rather than refusing to change and staying with one viewpoint for years and years on end with a closed mind. When dealing with substance use or mental health issues, changing our perspective in a positive way can be the difference when it comes to success and growth instead of repeated setbacks and relapse. Changing your perspective for the better all starts with considering new viewpoints with an open mind

Perspective Warm Up – In order to get started thinking and discussing how different perspectives can have very different results, consider some **ambiguous images** (also known as reversible figures) which are pictures that change significantly based on two different viewpoints. *Discuss the following ambiguous images:*

Pictures below taken from: <http://www.perceptionsense.com/2011/09/perception-reversible-figure-ground.html>

Start with a well-known easy one to get started: Which do you see – Two faces or a cup?





Which do you see: An old woman or a young woman?



Is this picture below a man playing a musical instrument or a face?



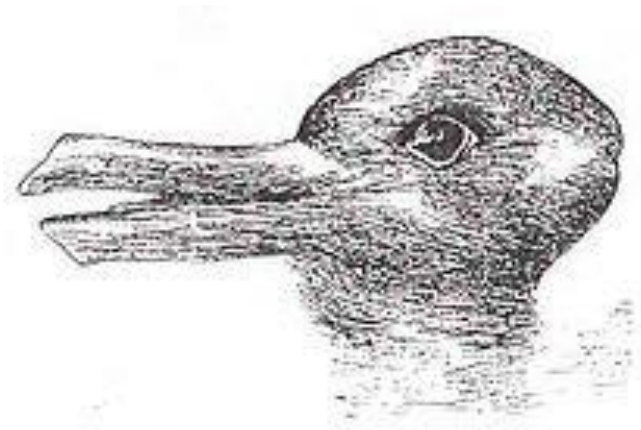


In this picture below, which way is each cheetah actually facing?

C



Is the picture below a bunny or a duck?



Can you see the hidden face in this scene?





Is this a woman looking in the mirror or something much creepier?



Is there an ominous word in this face?





Perspective Group Exercise

Directions: Break into 3 smaller groups. Cut out each story below and each group should read and discuss the story and answer the questions provided. When all the groups are done each group should present and discuss their story with the rest of the larger group. Here are the questions:

1. What events and circumstances triggered the change in perspective in your group's story?
2. Can anyone identify with any of the characters in the story?
3. Life can change a person's perspective – Specifically how was this true in your group's story?

Changing Perspectives: Life Comes Full Circle...

Story 1 – Angel

Angel was attractive and knew it. Angel got a lot of attention from others and Angel loved the excitement of getting involved with other people even if those other people were in relationships with others or if Angel was already in a relationship – it didn't matter. One day however, Angel found someone that was ideal and extremely special. This person was different than all of the others and Angel was ready to settle down in a monogamous relationship for the first time. After some time, this new one to one relationship seemed to be going great for Angel. Angel was happier than ever and the new relationship stayed exciting, loving and rewarding on a long-term basis for the first time in Angel's life. One day after about six months in the relationship, Angel's partner started to slowly become distant and the once fiery and passionate relationship began to cool off. Eventually it came to light that Angel's partner had been seeing other people for the past 3 months in secret. Angel was crushed emotionally and felt intensely hurt and betrayed. Through this hurtful experience Angel gained a new perspective on relationships, loyalty and cheating

Story 2 - Cory

Cory was a terror of a kid. Cory was an expert at driving adults and parents crazy and driving teachers even crazier. Cory broke all of the rules and acted as if everything was a joke. Cory's parents and teachers tried everything to get Cory to cooperate, but it never lasted as Cory couldn't resist a chance to play the clown and to try to cause chaos and turmoil. This went on for years until Cory got older. By the time Cory eventually became an adult some lessons were learned along the way, sometimes the hard way. Cory eventually discovered by adulthood that there was a time to fool around but there was also a time to be serious especially when it comes to work and responsibilities. Eventually Cory became a parent and the unthinkable happened: Cory had a child that was a terror for years on end throughout childhood. Cory had a completely new perspective on life as a result of now being a parent of an out of control kid after once being an out of control kid

Story 3 - Taylor

Taylor was the boss. Taylor was number one in the department at work and ruled with an iron fist. Taylor had tons of money coming in and tons of power resulting from being top dog in a very specialized and important division at work that generated a lot of income. Taylor was a cutthroat supervisor who demanded that others put the job first over family, social life and any other priority. If someone didn't like it then Taylor was not afraid to pull the trigger and fire anyone if needed because there was always someone else ready to step in and take the abuse for the money being offered. This went on for years until economic hard times hit the company that Taylor worked for. Eventually layoffs resulted in Taylor being let go because it was too expensive to keep Taylor around at such a high managerial salary once times were tight for the company. The industry which Taylor once dominated suddenly had scarce employment opportunities, so Taylor was unemployed for quite a while. After several months of unemployment and the bills piling up, Taylor had to take a lower level job to make ends meet. Taylor's new supervisor was ruthless and merciless making Taylor work long hours for less pay than what was once considered acceptable. Taylor was miserable and had a new perspective on life in this new situation



Further Group Discussion

- ***Is anyone in group willing to share a similar story of how your perspective changed due to changing life events and circumstances?***

Some things to keep in mind that can trigger a change in perspective:

- A change in financial status
- Shift in power or status
- Maturity or just the simple passage of time (As you grow and learn, your perspective changes)
- Gaining experience in a specific life area
- Trauma or unexpected hardships
- Change in health
- Legal issues
- Major changes in the lives of family, relationship partner or children

Perspective: Substance Use and Mental Health – A Change in Perspective Can Help

If there are any issues or problems present with substance use or mental health in a person's life it can be challenging to accept it. This can be especially true for young people, but it happens to adults and older people as well. As a group, discuss how some of the following statements can be harmful and can prevent a needed change in perspective when it comes to substance use and mental health. At first, just discuss these statements at face value openly as a group whether or not you believe if it applies to you personally.

"I can stop using (substances) any time that I want too"

"Getting high is just about having fun for me and nothing else"

"My emotions and mental health are completely under control and I don't need any help from anyone"

"I don't have to worry about substance use or mental health, nothing bad is going to happen if I just ignore it"

"I may have gotten caught for substance use issues, but it was just a fluke, I can keep using and I won't get into trouble again, I know it"

"I use what I use now and I know I won't ever use more than that and I know for sure that I will never use anything stronger"

"I am smarter and stronger minded than most, so I know that none of the things that happen to other people in my situation are going to happen to me"

"All of these things that I keep hearing about people in my situation don't apply to me – I'm different"

"I know what I need to do – I don't need to listen to all of these people who say they are trying to help"

When the group is done discussing these statements – Discuss: Is it possible any of these statements apply to you personally now or in the past? Be honest and share your thoughts if you can



Positive Qualities Need for Positive Perspective Change

Keep in mind that changing your perspective in life is a huge part of growing as a person. Imagine if you still had the same perspective in life that you did 5 or 10 years ago. Remember the ambiguous pictures at the beginning of this exercise? If you weren't able to shift your perspective, you wouldn't see everything that was in each picture. So, the same applies to life - As you have gained experience and matured as a person, surely your perspective has changed – hopefully for the better

Positive Qualities Self-Assessment:

- ✓ **Open Mindedness**
- ✓ **Positive Associations**
- ✓ **Humility**
- ✓ **Empathy**
- ✓ **Self-Awareness**

Directions: Try to be honest with yourself and check any item below that you need to work on:

Open Mindedness – *To be able to successfully change your perspective, you need to have an open mind*

- I am willing to admit when I am wrong
- I am open to discussing the possibility that I may need to change without getting defensive
- I am willing to consider viewpoints different than my own

Positive Associations – *Negative people can influence you to have a negative view on life whereas positive people can do the opposite*

- I am actively working on cutting off association with people who have a lot of negative ideas and negative influence in my life
- I have positive role models and supports in my life who can provide positive viewpoints
- I try to fill my head with positive viewpoints by avoiding negative media (internet, TV, music, etc.)

Humility – *It is important to be “teachable” and learn from others*

- I can be quiet and listen when I need too without arguing or trying to convince others why they are wrong about me
- I consider the reality that I am wrong sometimes and then try to get feedback from others when needed
- I can accept criticism without anger

Empathy – *You can learn a lot by putting yourself in other people's shoes*

- Even when I don't agree with someone I try to understand where they are coming from
- Before I make a decision, I stop to think about how that decision may impact others
- I seek first to understand other people's views rather than always seeking first to make sure that they understand mine

Self-Awareness – *You can grow by being honest with yourself about what you need to work on*

- When making difficult decisions instead of being impulsive or taking unneeded risks, I have the awareness to stop myself first and think things through
- I can accept uncomfortable information about myself without trying to make excuses
- I try to apply new information to my own life rather than just thinking that it doesn't mean anything to me

What are you going to try to take away from this exercise?