

Three Perspectives

*We cling to our own point of view,
as if everything depended on it.
Yet our opinions have no permanence,
like Autumn and Winter,
they gradually pass away.*

Chuang Tzu

How well do you respect other people's maps of the world? How much do you trust that other people have positive intentions? In what ways do you honour the fact that people have all the resources they need? It is so easy to fall into the trap of helping too much, or trying to 'fix' people.

One of the most useful NLP tools to master is being able to step into different 'Perceptual Positions'. That means to step out of your own shoes and see things from another perspective. Just by visiting 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Positions, you can gain such valuable insights that it becomes possible to heal the most difficult situations. However, each of these positions presents different challenges..



1st Position: Although most people live in 1st position, seeing the world through their own eyes, ears, feelings, beliefs, values, needs, goals and boundaries, often this space becomes polluted by absorbing other people's values, needs and goals. Following someone else's plan for career, relationships or success rarely turns out to be a recipe for happiness. Plus the influence of advertising, TV and movies can deceive you into chasing fantasies of fulfillment, which lead you far from your true inner desires.

People who overdo 1st position selfishly spend all their time and energy in pursuit of their own self centered objectives. This behaviour repels other people so much that they then go out of their way to avoid being so egocentric. Some even deny having a 1st position perspective. But without having healthy access to how you think and feel, who are you?

2nd Position offers a compassionate alternative. Imagine you could step into someone else's shoes to see the world through their eyes, ears, feelings, beliefs, values, needs, and goals. This has the potential for creating great understanding. But it's easy to deceive yourself into believing that you really do think and feel what another person may be experiencing, when, in fact, you've only projected your map of the world, your beliefs, values and feelings onto them.

If you can get yourself out of the way, visiting a true 2nd Position provides amazing insights. Often it's a shock to realize someone else's point of view, and what their positive intentions and feelings might be. Being totally present



with someone requires this skill. Whether you are with a client, a friend or your partner, paying attention to how they are feeling keeps you more in the here and now.

A true 2nd position is a position of love, compassion and understanding which creates joining. Think of a mother caring for her baby, two lovers tuning into each other, a horse whisperer winning the trust of a horse.

However, some people appear to spend all their time worrying about other people's feelings and trying to please everyone. On the surface, they can seem to be stuck in permanent second position. But digging deeper often reveals that this is actually a strategy for trying to get their own needs met. People will turn themselves into doormats in hopes of getting something they want. Not only do they lose themselves in this process, but they're also doomed to failure. Such sacrificial 'giving to take' will never satisfy the recipient of their favours. And when they don't get the reward they seek, the disappointment can be extreme.

3rd Position ideally provides objectivity from a cool, detached observer position. Here there are no feelings, beliefs, values or objectives. From here it's possible to step back and get perspective, disengage from hot emotions, analyze options or possibilities, and get clear insights about a whole situation. Distance and detachment mean less stress. With less involvement, there's more room for negotiation and finding solutions.

Some people spend so much of their time in this position that they forget how to feel anything anymore. Like Mr. Spock in Star Trek, they have no emotions, only logic and rationality. Life becomes a bit grey and passionless. Such reserved, aloof, impersonal behaviour radiates cold indifference. Relationships suffer. But could this just be a strategy to hide what is most feared? Is it actually a form of running away? When past experiences proved too hot to handle, 3rd position may have provided the safest retreat. But the cost of losing connection and vitality may be too high.

Where do you spend most of your time and feel most comfortable? How easy is it for you to move from one position to another? How cleanly do you access each position? True balance comes from being able to switch positions in the moment.. As you are thinking, talking, listening, and doing, you stay more fully present. The three positions help to heighten your awareness and sensitivity.

Perspective - Use it or Lose it.

Richard Bach



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