UNDERSTANDING OTHERS

With the

Perceptual Positions

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ANOTHER TOOL TO YOUR COLLECTION

NLP (Neuro-Linguistic Programming) offers a range of powerful tools for improving communication and understanding within teams. **Perceptual Positions** is one of these tools, and it provides leaders with a unique perspective for resolving conflict. This approach encourages leaders to **view conflict from multiple viewpoints**, including their own, the viewpoint of the other party involved, and that of a neutral third party. By doing so, they can gain a better understanding of the situation and work towards a more effective solution.

This tool can be particularly helpful if you are dealing with conflict within your team. By exploring the perspectives of all parties involved, leaders can identify the **underlying causes of the conflict** and work towards a resolution that is satisfactory for everyone. This approach can also **help to build trust and foster open communication** within the team, as each member feels heard and understood.

In addition to managing conflict, the Perceptual Positions model can also be useful for leaders in a range of other situations. It can be helpful for decision-making, problem-solving, and improving overall team performance. By adopting multiple perspectives, leaders can make more informed decisions and gain a deeper understanding of their team's strengths and weaknesses.

Overall, this tool is valuable for any leader who wants to **improve communication and build a stronger, more effective team**. By adopting this approach, leaders can gain new insights and achieve better outcomes, leading to a more successful and productive team.

Anger: A Self-inflicted Punishment
for others' "mistakes"

As we gain maturity, we realize that some circumstances don't really deserve an emotionally charged reaction on our end. That our biased interpretation on the spot can trigger frustration or anger, but retrospectively we conclude that it wasn't worth it. The perceptual positions technique has a proven efficiency for resolving conflict. It enables us to step back from our limited perspective, distance ourselves from the way we perceive our interaction and improve the way in which we respond.

> *"A good manager doesn't try to eliminate conflict; he tries to keep it from wasting the energies of his people."*
>
> Robert Townsend

For every situation or complicated interaction, you can ask your team member to consider three distinct positions:

1. **Their own position:** through which they think, feel and experience their circumstances,

2. **The other's position**: This position is that of empathy because here they should step into the other person's shoes and experience the interaction completely from their perspective. As an example, think back to the times when you raised your voice against someone or said something hurtful. Try to see yourself exclusively through the eyes of the other person, how would you perceive the person you've been to them?

3. **The neutral observer's position**: Do you ever take a step back from the situations you go through, the conversations you have, and simply observe them as though it was two strangers interacting on a TV screen ? This last position is neutral, detached from the emotional weight of the situation, and allows to take a step back from what is going on.

The perceptual positions technique therefore allows us to strengthen our understanding of others, to have the opportunity to take a step back, manage the impact of our verbal / non-verbal communication on others (and vice versa), or to prepare for an important discussion.

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How to use

If you find yourself in an interaction with someone that triggers you, here's how to use the perceptual positions technique to capitalize on a better understanding of the situation and move on from what bothers you. It mainly consists in answering the following questions:

Position 1:

Consider the situation from your own perspective

- What do you think and feel about this situation / relationship? Why do you find it difficult?
- What does this person tell you that you find problematic? Is it rather their behavior? Why is it getting to you?
- What do you understand about this situation? What are your reactions to this situation? Do you find them justified?

Position 2:

Consider the situation from the other's perspective

- What would you think or feel?
- How would you perceive the reactions of the other person (you) that you find justified? How would you react if someone behaved the same way with you?
- How do you see yourself in this relationship? Does the other person (you) appear to behave congruently?

Position 3:

Consider the situation from a neutral observer's perspective

- Consider both sides of the relationship. What type of relationship do you see here? What does this situation look like from the outside? What seems dysfunctional? What is working well for them?
- If you observed in a completely objective fashion your reactions, your behaviors, the way you talk and the things you say, what would you think of yourself? How would you feel about yourself from an observer's perspective?

At the end of this process, consider the insights you've learnt from Positions 2 and 3, and integrate them into your own position. What has changed in light of these new teachings?
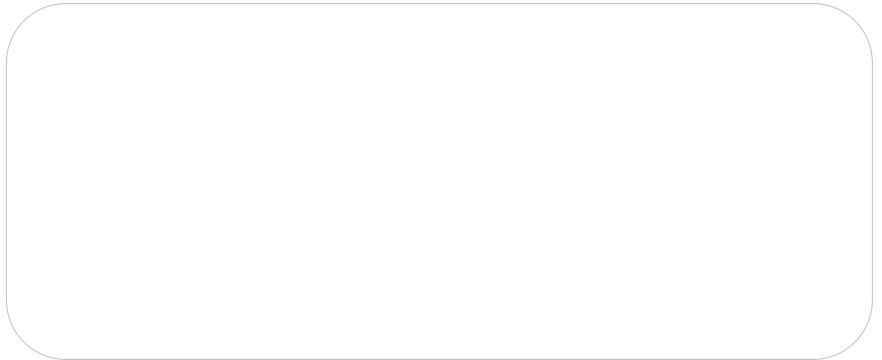
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Your turn

You can print out this last page to practice this technique by filling in the following template, or ask each team member who's experiencing an ongoing conflict to do so.
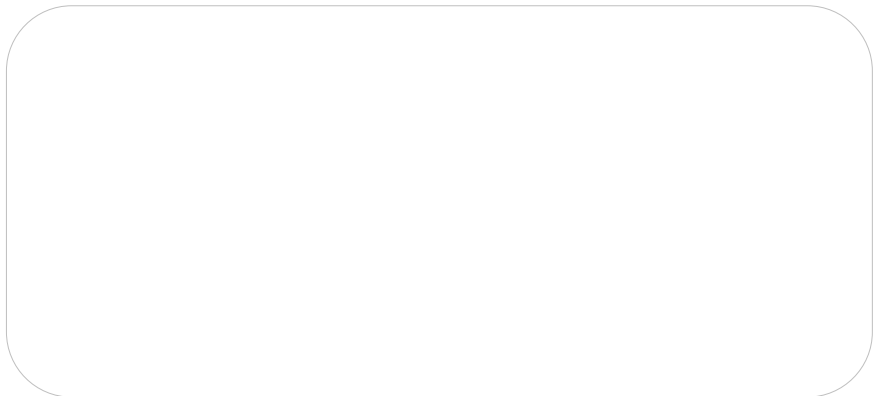
Position 1: Consider the situation from your own perspective	

Position 2: Consider the situation from the other's perspective	

Position 3: Consider the situation from a neutral observer's perspective	