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COMM 2110

**Reflective Essay 1**

Imagine walking through the grocery store with a few of your friends. As you are standing in line to check out, the couple next to you is in a heated argument. They are being loud and making a scene. What you are seeing is your perception of the situation. Perception is how we see and understand the world around us. What you may think is a simple argument, someone else may think is a serious problem. This is just how we all perceive what is happening around us. Perception checking is a method used to make sure that you aren't incorrectly perceiving things around you.

There is a little bit of background that goes into my perception checks. I work at Dairy Queen as the Assistant Manager. Two of the four people that I primarily work with are my best friends. This means not only do we work together every day, but we are always doing stuff after work too. One of the other two might as well be my best friend other than we don't do stuff outside of work. And the other one, I used to be in a relationship with. So thats a sticky situation in itself. I chose to do both of my checks on these people that I work with. Because being around them so much, there are things that happen that I don’t always understand. Hopefully by using the Perception Checking steps I’ve learned in class, I will be able to better understand what is going on around me.

The first one I did was on one of my best friends Ben. Me and Ben have been friends since 8th grade, way before we even worked together. As we have worked together though, I have moved up in the management, and things have gotten a little weird between us at times. He will get in these moods, in a matter of minutes, where he goes from being totally normal, to being really quiet and keeping to himself. Every time this has happened over the last 2 years, I have immediately began to wonder to myself “What did I do to make him mad?”.

Well, this happened recently. Ben was working our drive thru during the lunch rush one day, he was totally fine one minute, and the next minute he was noticeably different. Right before this had happened I had told him he needed to make sure to put napkins in peoples bags, which is such a simple thing. But I thought maybe I had offended him by saying it. So I saw this as my chance to exercise my Perception Checking skills.

I went up to Ben and I asked him, “Hey, what’s up, I noticed you went from being normal, to acting different.” At this time he was giving me quite the look probably thinking to himself “Just leave me alone.”

But I continued to say, “Did I say something to upset you, or did a customer do something to upset you? I just want to know if your are mad at me.” At this time I the awkwardness between us was pretty great. When he goes into these moods, everybody usually just leaves him alone. However on top of me saying something to him, I was saying something that didn't really sound like me, so he looked startled.

He said, still kinda quiet, “Nahh, you didn’t do anything, a customer was just acting like an idiot.” He continued to explain to me how they were getting mad that we couldn’t put a smoothie in their Kids Meal, which is a very common problem. At this point, the awkwardness had dropped a little bit, but was still kinda there.

I was very relieved to hear this and said to him, “Ok, Im sorry that happened. But I’m glad it wasn’t what I said that offended you.” After I said this, he just gave me another funny look, and continued on working.

For being my first real life Perception Check, I thought it went pretty well. The biggest problem though, was it wasn’t how I normally communicated with him. So it felt awkward not only to me, but him also. Usually when we have a problem, we go in feet first, but this was definitely different. I followed the steps and presented two plausible explanations. For my next one I wanted to figure out how to be more natural about it. I needed to find a better way to initiate the conversation and make it feel less rehearsed.

The second one I did, was on a girl I work with. Her name is Jona, and she is the one that I have dated in the past. Because of this, it made preforming the perception check a little more difficult. Its necessary to know, she is currently dating a kid named Grayson, and they fight a lot.

On a typical day, Jona will come into work, clock in, say Hi, get a drink, and start working. Well earlier this week, that didn't happen. She came in, clocked in, kept to herself and started working. I immediately noticed something was wrong and started imagining what was wrong.

I went up to her and said “Hey Jona, why didn’t you grab your drink like you do every day?”. Like Ben, she gave me a funny look.

I continued to say “Is something happening at home, or did Grayson do something again?”

She said “Its just more Grayson stuff. We fought again this morning.”

I said “Oh ok, I’m sorry. If you need to talk I’m always here.” After this, I felt a lot better about what was going on, because I had heard it from her.

This perception check was a lot different because my past with Jona. Me and her used to talk about stuff like this, but I had always gone about it differently. So when I tried it this way, it again didn’t seem natural. This is the perfect example of why Perception Checking is necessary though, only because I knew her well, did I know that family problems or boy problems could be considered. Someone who didn’t know her as well may have thought something completely different. On this one though, I liked the way I brought it up better than when I had brought it up with Ben. I again just need to learn how to be more natural about the process as a whole.

Everyone see’s things in a different way. Past experiences, point of view, personal views all affect how we perceive things. Perception checking is an excellent way to make sure you are seeing things as they really are vs. how you are seeing them. Once one is experienced at doing it, i’m sure a lot of misunderstandings will be avoided.