

Points of View / Perspectives

Adapted from Spreading Roots by Christina Davis and Outward Bound Discovery

Description: A versatile, simple, and quick activity that sheds light onto the presence and validity of various perspectives. Requires little to no movement on participant's part and can be done in just about any environment.

Objective: Individuals and the group acknowledge the presence and validity of various opinions and perspectives among them; they acknowledge each perception is valuable, and that this diversity is an opportunity and strength.

Props: Can be done propless or with simple objects found near by.

History: I learned this years ago while working for Outward Bound's Discovery program in Florida, where I worked canoeing courses with students that were adjudicated or considered at-risk. We used items such as a personal water bottle or bucket with stickers. It was an incredibly useful activity with powerful applications for course and life. I've adapted and slightly expanded the version I learned.

Instructions: This can be done by having individuals describe an object (initially) and/or an idea (secondly).

Start by using a concrete object and circle the group up around it. Make sure each person/part of the group can see from a different perspective/angle. Ask the group to describe the object from "where they are". Considerations for an object: a phone, a tree/plant, a shoe, or something found right where you are. After trying this with a concrete object, consider using an idea or concept. Considerations for an idea/concept: team, success, failure, support, trust, nature, etc. State the idea and ask the group to describe it to each other.

Face-to-Face and Virtual Applications: Easy to set up and run in person or the process described can be done virtually. Various ideas for virtual facilitation: show a picture on the screen of an object; send pictures taken of the same object from different angles to each person (some could be the same). If it's possible to send these pictures via message on your virtual platform, that's great. The same can be done with an idea, word, or concept such as nature, team, cooking, working etc. Other ideas?

Facilitators Notes: This is a very versatile activity which can be planned or used as the opportunity/need arises: proactively to help establish positive group culture (forming stage) or responsively to help bring awareness to group dynamics (storming stage). It may be necessary to prompt the group to be detailed with descriptions in order to pull out more varied perspectives.

I like using the language of “describe it from where you are” because it relates to their physical perspective and also their lenses and experience that they’re showing up with. After some time, someone will likely move to another spot to see what other people are seeing. Generally this will lead to everyone doing the same. Virtually, individuals may ask others to show what they have / are seeing.

Consider writing 303 on the back of this write up and use for the variation described below. This can be a great participant / student led activity, especially if you have it written up and can then just provide “bugs in the ear” support as they facilitate.

Variations:

- Place a piece of paper with the numbers 303 on it and place it in the center of the group. The font/style of the numbers can affect the perspectives. This can be drawn in the dirt or made with sticks/pens as well. Opportunity for creativity here!
- Have the group sit / stand facing out in a shoulder to shoulder circle. Ask them to describe what they see. Then have them turn in and share out loud.
- Do this with partners or groups of three. Consider repeating with different partners/groups. Then share out in a large group.

Potential Discussion Questions:

- What makes a perspective valid? What might cause you to consider your perspective the correct one?
- What may cause you to validate/trust or invalidate other perspectives?
- When your perspectives are listened to / validated or not, how does this affect your contributions to the group?
- How have you personally / the group done with this today? What could change?
- What ideas do you have that would lead to people’s perspectives being listened to and considered?
- Describe a situation in life where you may need to consider other perspectives.

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