

The Kindness Curriculum Educators notes

Perspective

Perspective has a Latin root meaning "look through" or "perceive," and many of the dictionary meanings of perspective have something to do with looking. Perspective taking is the ability to look beyond an individual point of view to consider how someone else may think or feel about something. It requires consideration of another person's thoughts and feelings to see things from their perspective.

Having perspective is essential for the interpretation of "why" and "how" situations happen and the capacity to respond appropriately. When one can grasp another's perspective, they are more likely to be empathetic; anticipate other's behaviour or thinking; handle conflicts peacefully; be less judgmental; value differences; and act in ways that are helpful, supportive and kind. Mastering perspective and sense making is a habit that all people need in life—from handling friendship conflicts today to mastering boardroom debates tomorrow.

Kindness is a fundamental human need and perspective provides a lens for human action. There are over 7.5 billion people in the world today and everyone thinks differently as every individual is unique. Perspective and perspective taking has been defined as: "the ability to understand how a situation appears to another person and how that person is reacting cognitively and emotionally to the situation" (Gehlbach, 2004). Perspective taking is a multidimensional ability that includes consideration not only of someone's visual assessment of reality (their viewpoint), but also their perceptual assessment (their understanding). It is the capacity to put oneself in the place of someone else while recognising their point of view and experience and is often described as 'walking in another's shoes'. Perspective taking is connected to the characteristic of empathy and understanding the different thoughts and feelings of other people. The capacity to offer empathy to others is crucial for development on both a personal and professional level and maintaining constructive relationships.

Teaching children how to take others' perspectives is a needed aspect of schooling and socialisation. Perspective taking and empathy attributes support children and students social and emotional learning and will encourage the building of successful friendships and problem-solving in a positive manner. Opportunities to consider and understand the reasoning and rationale behind decisions, events, and surroundings of their everyday world contributes to perspective taking and supports the development of safe learning environments (Galinsky, 2010). Perspective taking and understanding 'points of view' are skills that can be acquired and providing students time and conditions to engage and collaborate with each is key.



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Perspective taking is an essential skill in almost all aspects of life and the workplace. It is an essential part of interacting with others locally and globally, it promotes cooperation and mutual understanding. In work environments perspective taking supports teamwork, collaboration, creative and innovative engagements. The ability to consider others points or views in work life creates positive conditions for workplaces:

- Promotes greater autonomy and ability to adapt to change
- Encourages active listening and the pursuit of deep understanding
- Reduces power imbalances as understanding of others provides an equaliser
- Builds emotional regulation and empathy creating more successful interactions
- Creates an interpersonal connectedness contributing to thriving and successful spaces where people feel heard and validated
- Supports thoughtful respectful relationships
- Capacity to read verbal and non-verbal communication
- Builds inclusivity and celebrates diversity
- Encourages critical thinking processes and values development

Perspective taking and 'point of view' encourage people to work collaboratively, communicate and critically reflect.

References

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