Building Perspective-taking Capacity

If there was ever a time to slow our pace and engage in a little perspective-taking, that time might be right now.

We each have a uniquely valuable perspective in work and life, and it may slightly or significantly differ from others. Each perspective has value and can contribute to a more complete understanding in collectively working towards a common purpose.

This Job Aid is designed to help you understand what perspective-taking is and offer foundational practices to strengthen your perspective-taking skills.

What is Perspective-taking?

Perspective-taking – *the intentional act of seeing, feeling, and experiencing things from another person’s point of view* – is a beneficial skill to expand our thinking by learning how others see or experience a situation.

As we reunite and gather, once again, self-awareness of your own perspectives and inviting others to share their views can help bridge differences and increase team trust, inclusion, equity, creativity, and overall effectiveness.

Self-Awareness

As you consider reuniting with others on your work team, how open are you to engaging in dialogue, disagreement, co-creation, and connection with people whose views may differ? Are you interested in learning more about your general openness to differences? Consider completing the scientifically-validated and anonymous Greater Good Magazine self-assessment: [Bridging Differences Quiz](#)

Step by Step Perspective-taking Practice

The practice of perspective-taking is foundational in how we relate to and build relationships with others.

Following are three practices to deepen your worldview and relationships through perspective-taking.

1. **Hold Your Perspective, Lightly:** Appreciate your own world view and how it was formed. When you recognize how you came to your perspective, you are more likely to open up to other – even vastly different - viewpoints. Then, acknowledge that all you know is not all there is to know. A perspective is just that, one perspective.

2. **Seek to Understand:** Slow your pace and pause to look through the lens of another. Build your awareness of the unique thoughts, feelings, and knowledge shared by others. Understand that immediate and past experiences, beliefs, and culture influence individual perspective, and may not always be said or seen.
3. **Relate In:** Be present, deeply listen, and intentionally consider the context that someone is sharing. Find something you can relate to as a means to expand empathy and understanding for their unique circumstances; even if it is vastly different than how you are seeing the situation.

**Stay Curious a Little Longer**

Expand your thinking and consider more possibilities with a little curiosity. Below are questions to help you invite additional points of view and apply the practices above.

- What is my perspective? What are different perspectives I am hearing?
- What more could be learned, created, and gained from inviting a different perspective in?
- What might be influencing how someone perceives this situation that I can’t see?
- How can I create space for their thoughts and needs to be shared and explored?
- What am I hearing life is like for this individual right now?
- How can I relate to their experience to better understand what they are seeing and feeling?
- What do we agree on that could be an entry point for us to bridge our differences?

**Practice Makes Progress**

We have laid the foundation, now let’s play a little. Consider the many perspectives that will be coming together as we reunite in our workplaces. We each see the world from our own chairs. Below are four chairs that represent differing perspectives about how we will work moving forward.

- Review the viewpoints from each of the chairs. What chair are you currently sitting in?
- **Holding it lightly**, select a chair below that differs from your current viewpoint.
- Pause and seek to understand why someone may have this perspective. Get curious.
- What might you be able to relate in to this differing perspective? Stay curious.
- What have you learned by considering this different perspective? **Stay curious a little longer.**

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