



CJAM
Promoting a Civil and Just Community

Integrating Different Perspectives

Perspective Taking Approaches that Foster Respect and
Accountability

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Presented By: Nick Philbeck
Restorative Justice Case Manager
nick@jamcenter.org

Community Justice & Mediation Center (CJAM)
205 S. Walnut St. Ste. 16
Bloomington, IN 47404
(812) 336-8677 | (812) 610-2526 (text)
www.jamcenter.org

INTRODUCTION

From a human rights perspective, one conception of justice values could be:

Corresponding to their entitlements to freedom, material (i.e., food, water, warmth, etc.), security, social recognition, and equality goods, individuals also have obligations to others to acknowledge and act in accordance with others' entitlements to the same set of goods (Ward & Langlands, 2009).

Today's Guiding Questions	
How can we enjoy the goods and rights to which we are entitled while acknowledging and acting in accordance with others' entitlement?	How can we respect others' autonomy while still holding them accountable to their duties as members of societies?

My answer to both questions is that we should engage perspectival skills (perspective taking, perspective seeking, and perspective coordination) in order to develop thorough, accurate, and meaningful perspectival understandings of the various stakeholder perspectives and the interactions of these perspectives, and then adopt and carry out strategies to respect and best meet the interests of all, including developing means through which any lingering or future tensions between perspectives may be addressed and resolved.

This proposed strategy relies on our abilities to properly:

- identify which perspectives we want to understand;
- take action to understand them; and
- make decisions with respect to those perspectives.

Therefore, this workshop will address:

- What perspectives may be considered
- How those perspectives may be understood
- How those understandings may influence behaviors

Be encouraged to consider how perspectival skills may be useful in:

- Evaluating one's own beliefs and behaviors
- Learning about the needs and desires of others
- Simultaneously being responsive to one's own needs and the needs of others
- Developing strategies for addressing conflicts, transgressions, and harms:
 - as a party in conflict
 - as someone who has transgressed or caused harm to another person or entity
 - as someone who feels violated or harmed by a person or entity
 - as a "third party" who is or may become involved in the process toward resolution
- Assessing how effectively strategies, such as those above, meet the needs of all relevant parties

You will also be encouraged to consider how you plan to apply your understandings of perspective taking to your own personal behavior, and to choose to commit to at least one new concrete behavior intended to:

- Further your understanding of another person's or group's perspective
- Respond to the perspectives and needs of another in a healthy way
- Help another person or group of people better understand your own perspective

SITUATIONAL ACTIVITY 1

SITUATION	AS AN "ENEMY" I WOULD	AS A "FRIEND" I WOULD
Someone calls you a name		

Source: (n.d.). Tug of war. In *ASPIRA Self-paced Youth Development Curriculum* (Level 3 – Bohiques). Retrieved from <http://lms.aspira.org/sites/default/files/Tug%20of%20war.pdf>

SITUATIONAL ACTIVITY 2

Rachel and Erica go to the same high school.

After school one day, as Rachel is stepping into the school bus to go home, Erica walks by and says "bitch" toward Rachel. Rachel walks away from the bus and approaches Erica by saying, "What did you just call me?"

Their interaction soon escalates and Rachel hits Erica, then Erica to hits back at Rachel. Friends of each girl also join the scuffle. The physical altercation ends when Assistant Principal Smith steps in and separates the girls. Each girl's parents pick them up from the school and take them home.

What should happen now?

PERSPECTIVAL SKILLS

Perspectival skills (perspectival capacities) are used to develop perspectival understandings and inform personal action. These skills include:

- **Perspective taking** = the act of inferring, anticipating, visualizing, or predicting the perceptions, thoughts, feelings, intentions, or viewpoints of another person
- **Perspective seeking** = the behavioral act of directly or indirectly seeking out clarification or evidence concerning another person or group's thoughts, feelings, and intentions
- **Perspective coordination** = the ability to integrate perspectives into a more complex understanding that informs personal action

Source: C. J. Fuhs (2016).

WHAT PERSPECTIVES MAY BE CONSIDERED

- First-person perspective taking: my point of view
 - My own perspective
 - My view of your perspective
- Second-person perspective taking: your point of view
 - Viewing things from your perspective and understanding how you view my perspective
- Third-person perspective taking: his/her/their (singular person) point of view

The following can be considered from first-, second-, and third-person points of view:

- Group perspective taking: our point of view or their point of view
 - Societal perspective taking: societal, ethical, ecological, or global points of view
- Temporal perspective taking: past, present, and future points of view

Sources: P. C. Walker (2015) and R. L. Selman (2003)

HOW PERSPECTIVES MAY BE UNDERSTOOD

Factors that influence one’s perspectives are the person’s understandings of:

- Outer factors (actions, words, appearances, etc.)
- Inner factors (thoughts, feelings, memories, desires, reasons, intentions, etc.)
- Conflicting thoughts, feelings, and reasons
- Deeper and more abiding character traits such as beliefs, values, virtues, and commitments
- Historical influences and context including a person’s life story and cultural background

Source: P. C. Walker (2015)

Perspective Taking

Steps:

1. Acknowledge (perspectival acknowledgement) = identify the different actors (people or groups, including oneself and one’s own groups) who have a stake in a given situation
2. For each actor:
 - a. Articulate (perspectival articulation) = describe the person or group’s feelings, beliefs, circumstances, and orientations to action (thoughts and decisions about actions)
 - b. Position (perspectival positioning) = understand role conceptions of actors in a given scenario and how someone's role affects how they see the world and how others see them
 - c. Interpret (perspectival interpretation) = explain the reasons why others might think, feel, or behave in the ways they do
3. Incorporate the perspectives into your decision-making process (perspective coordination)

References: Strategic Education Research Partnership (n.d.) and C. J. Fuhs (2016)

Perspective Seeking

- Seeking or clarifying the perspective to aid in the decision-making process (less collaborative)
- Seeking or clarifying the perspective as part of decision-making process (more collaborative)
- Seeking or clarifying the perspective as part of a sophisticated/shared/distributive decision-making process (most collaborative)

Source: C. J. Fuhs (2016)

Intentions (what you’re trying to do)		
	<i>Perspective Taking Intentions</i>	<i>Perspective Seeking Intentions</i>
1	dismiss them	get or verify the facts or information
2	help you figure out how to change people’s minds or get them to do what you want	improve your understanding of other perspectives
3	help you solve/fix a problem	improve your understanding of the situation
4	help you get “buy-in” or get people “on board” with a solution	check your own assumptions
5	help you figure out how to deal with the situation	understand the tension between perspectives
6	help you make a better decision	resolve the tensions between perspectives
7	help you make a fair, equitable, or ethical decision	make a more “integrated” decision

*Higher numbers indicate more developmentally mature intentions.

Motivations (why you're trying to do it)		
	<i>Perspective Taking Motivations</i>	<i>Perspective Seeking Motivations</i>
1	understand how other people feel or think	understand how others think or feel
2	understand people's reasons (or motivations) for their actions	find out how others understand the situation
3	understand what others are concerned about, what is important to them, or their expectations	understand people's reasons (or motivations) for their actions
4	understand the various relationships in the situation	understand what others are concerned about, what is important to them, or their expectations
5	understand your own role, responsibility, contribution, motivations, values, assumptions or biases	understand the various relationships involved in the situation
6	understand how others might view your contribution, motivations, assumptions, or biases	get feedback in order to better understand your own role in the development of the situation.

*Higher numbers indicate more developmentally mature motivations.

Perspective Coordination		
	<i>Tensions</i>	<i>Limits</i>
1	you are aware of some of the tensions between stakeholder perspectives	you appear to primarily rely upon your own perspective
2	you describe some of the tensions between stakeholder perspectives	you demonstrate that you may be beginning to appreciate the limits of your own perspective
3	you provide an in-depth description of tensions between stakeholder perspectives	you demonstrate that you have some appreciation of the limits of your own perspective
4	you describe an approach to resolving tensions between stakeholder perspectives	you demonstrate that you have an appreciation of the limits of your own perspective
5	you describe an in-depth approach to resolving the tensions between stakeholder perspectives	you demonstrate that you have a deep appreciation of the limits of your own perspective

*Tensions = how you consider and resolve tensions between perspectives; Limits = how you consider and manage the limits of your own perspective

*Higher numbers indicate more developmentally mature engagement of perspective coordination.

Source for "Intentions", "Motivations", and "Perspective Coordination": C. J. Fuhs (2016)

QUICK TIPS

- Actively seek others' perspectives (communicate with them about their perspectives, gather and evaluate information from primary sources like written communications, etc.) when possible, rather than taking perspectives by making inferences based only on the information you already have.
- When facing social problems or conflicts, develop clear understandings of what the problems are that need to be solved, why they are problems, and what criteria need to be met in order for the solutions to actually be effective. These tasks could be considered part of a "problem framing" phase. When working with others to address problems, perspective coordination is necessary for all involved to develop a shared frame of the problems, and the perspectives coordinated through this framework can serve to inform actions taken to solve the problems (the "problem solving" phase) and increase the likelihood that the solutions effectively address the concerns.
- A third-person perspective can be a helpful in initial evaluations of a situation and in making behavioral decisions that result from perspective engagement. Still, don't neglect the value of taking first-person and second-person perspectives, especially in middle sections of a social problem-solving process. Moving fluidly between various points of view while retaining information from previously-taken perspectives is a challenging skill to master, but a valuable one.

OUTCOMES

Higher Levels of Perspective Taking in Children Are Related to Improved:

- Well-Being: ability to be physically and mentally healthy and to realize one's full personal potential
- Authentic Voice: ability to use one's voice to express one's thoughts and feelings about important personal and social issues
- Deep Comprehension: ability to critically evaluate stories, texts, and media
- Critical Writing: ability to use writing to explore and analyze
- Democratic Character: ability to work with others to improve a democratic society

Source: P. C. Walker (2015)

Higher Levels of Perspective Taking in Adults Are Related to:

- Reductions in:
 - conflict
 - interpersonal aggression
 - stereotyping
 - in-group favoritism
- higher communication satisfaction
- more effective interpersonal relating and negotiation

Source: C. J. Fuhs (2016)

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