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Understanding Perspective, Context & Self Awareness

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UNDERSTANDING PERSPECTIVE, CONTEXT & SELF AWARENESS

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“Great communication depends on two simple skills – context, which attunes a leader to the same frequency as his or her audience, and delivery, which allows a leader to phrase messages in a language the audience can understand.” – John Maxwell

Perspective is defined as a particular attitude toward or way of regarding something, a point of view. Having perspective isn't good or bad, it simply “is”; that is, until that perspective limits results or interferes with reaching a goal and/or objective. Understanding that we all have different perspectives in any given situation is imperative in leading, managing and working with people. Perspective may be the very key as to why you and/or those you work with are not achieving their desired results. In addition, being willing to expand your perspective and to create an environment where all perspectives are considered before a decision is made is a brilliant step in cultivating innovation, tapping on talent and empowering those you work with.

Slightly different than perspective is **context**; context is defined as the circumstances that form the setting for an event, statement or idea and in terms of which it can be fully understood and assessed. In other words, context is the lens through which we view the world, ourselves and others. We form these lenses based on circumstances from our past and often we can pick up clues to our contexts from our use of language. Some common examples of “context” include, “life is hard”, “money is tight”, “she’s impossible”. Similar to perspective, context can limit our abilities to achieve our goals, however, once distinguished, context can be shifted, expanded and overcome.

Being conscious of our perspective and context is the state of being, “self aware”. **Self awareness** is the capacity for introspection and the ability to recognize oneself an individual

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Learning Elements:

- Perspective: Your point of view.
- Context: Your relationship to circumstances that forms the lens through which you view the world
- Self Awareness: Your capacity for introspection
- Language provides clues to context
- Practice *being present*
- Blocking self awareness is normal
- Self awareness improves our ability to reach goals and objectives

and separate from the environment and other individuals. Awareness of oneself including one's traits, feelings and behaviours leads to increased emotional intelligence a necessary ingredient to successful team building and cultivating successful workplace relationships necessary to achieve mutual goals.

When we become aware of ourselves (present) and how we are (be) in the world and then in turn, conscious of how our relationship to our circumstances is influencing our actions we are then able to make profound changes in our behavior. The dictionary defines presence as: the state or fact of existing, occurring or being present and defines present as: in a particular place or existing or occurring in a place or thing. To have presence and or to be present is being here (existing) at this exact moment in time. Being present is the key to developing self awareness. The key to developing self awareness is to grow comfortable and knowledgeable with your automatic ways of being, your thoughts, feelings and body sensations. Being aware of your thoughts then allows you to view those thoughts objectively and therefore form choices on how to act on those thoughts. It is here that we can interrupt old habits and/or patterns. From interruption we can make choices that produce results beyond our past results and break barriers to success.

Enhanced self awareness increases our ability to integrate and accurately evaluate multiple sources of information, and to make interpretations that help us to achieve agreed-upon results. Self awareness takes courage since it involves identifying our typical and fixed ways of perceiving ourselves and the world, the differences between fact and interpretation, the disparity between our thoughts, feelings and actions.

In order to take new action and reach goals and/or objectives not reached before there must be a commitment to shift your viewpoint and find new possibilities for action. It is important to frequently "self check" during this process to ensure that you are open, flexible and confident. Despite the benefits of increased self awareness, it is common to also block this process.

Some common blocks to self awareness include:

1. Fear.
2. Resistance.
3. Embarrassment, shyness
4. Defensiveness;
5. Lying;
6. Arguing;
7. Language – “I don’t know”, “I don’t care”
8. Discomfort examining feelings;
9. Busy, overwhelmed;
10. Controlling behavior, preserving ego.

The antidote to blocking self awareness is simply to notice the behavior, get curious about it, relate to it as normal, relax, get present and try again. Cultivating the skill of self awareness takes practice but once achieved, you will then be able to discover and/or create new thoughts, beliefs, perceptions, emotions and moods that will then strengthen your ability to take action and achieve what is important to you.

“It takes courage... to endure the sharp pains of self discovery rather than choose to take the dull pain of unconsciousness that would last the rest of our lives.” - Marianne Williamson

IMPLEMENTING WHAT YOU LEARNED:

1. See if you can identify some of the lenses through which you view the world. *Tip: Think of sayings that you use often.*
2. What are your individual blocks to self awareness? Make a list of 3-5 blocks.

3. Practice self awareness: Find a quiet place to be with n o distractions. Get present to you, how do you feel? What are you present to? Thoughts? Feelings, Body Sensations?