



Points of View

Help children develop empathy and solve bullying issues along the way. Richard Churches, Roger Terry and Emma Partridge show you how...

Have you ever had an experience where you felt you were seeing the world through someone else's eyes? Or had the feeling of being a detached observer? Learning to see the world through different perceptual positions can help children to understand others better and choose more appropriate behaviours. Often teachers will focus solely on the consequences of actions, or lack of consideration for others, without helping children to explore what it feels like to be in someone else's shoes. At the heart of emotional literacy is the ability to have self-awareness and awareness of others.

There are some simple tools from NLP (Neuro-linguistic programming) that are easy to learn and can really help. NLP is a form of personal development and is sometimes described as 'the technology of emotional intelligence'. The Perceptual Positions method demonstrated in this article was developed from studies of effective communicators and therapists. Fritz Perls (the founder of Gestalt Therapy) used a similar approach to help people understand their relationships. Virginia Satir (the family therapist) used to run 'parts parties'. In these, people were asked to 'stand in the shoes' of everyone involved until they gained enough information to understand what was going on.

Fresh perspectives

There are three mental positions: Self, Other and Observer (like the three windows in Playschool - through which you can get different views of the world). In first position, the Self perspective, we see the world completely through our own eyes - associated with our own experience, feelings, thoughts and values. In second, the Other perspective, we see the world through the eyes of someone else, through their values and their perspective. In third, the Observer position, we look at the situation as an external observer, unconnected to the situation emotionally.

Perceptual Positions

- **SELF** - seeing things entirely from your own perspective
- **OTHER** - looking at the situation through the other person's eyes
- **OBSERVER** - looking at the situation as a third person

See the difference

THE BENEFITS OF USING PERCEPTUAL POSITIONS WITH CHILDREN...

We have found using perceptual positions to be particularly useful following fights between children; instances where a child has argued with a teacher and felt that they have been picked on; and to sort out bullying and friendship issues. Here are some of the benefits we've experienced...

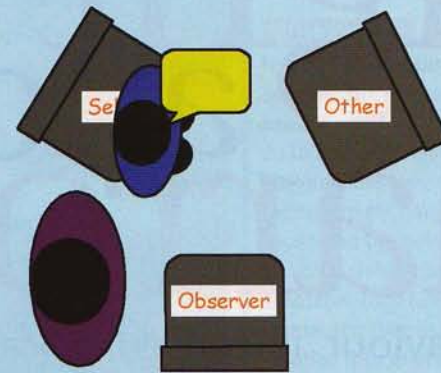
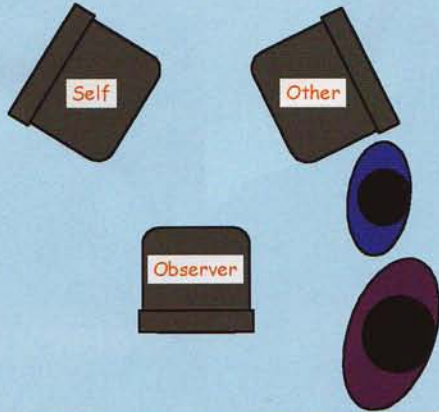
- It's particularly useful for children who haven't developed a strong ability to see outside of their own selves and experiences
- A child who has bullied learns to understand the effects of their behaviour by experiencing what it feels like to be in the victim's shoes
- It gives opportunities for a child to see their behaviour from someone else's viewpoint
- Children develop an understanding of other's

emotions and thoughts by 'walking in someone else's moccasins'

- Using perceptual positions gives a child the chance to see a situation, or person, from a new perspective different to their own
- It helps a child build up a 3D movie of an event they previously may have only viewed from one camera angle
- Children are encouraged to take responsibility for their own actions. Rather than being told how they have made someone else feel, they know how they made someone else feel
- After the experience children often have insights that they never would have got had they just been talked to, or told off. In the long term it helps calm them down and make them more able to start to sort things out. The process also gives you, as a teacher, a 'way in' to start to solve the problem.

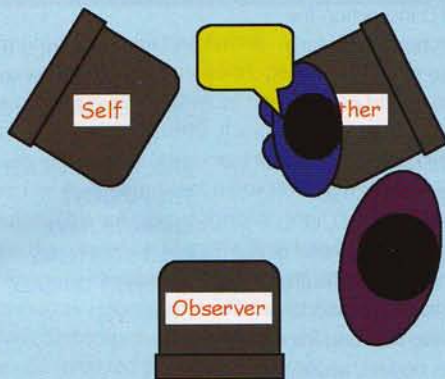
Try it for yourself

1 This technique can be used following disagreements or fights between pupils and it can also help bullies to develop empathy for other children. Start by arranging three chairs in a triangle, or three pieces of paper (on the floor) in a similar pattern. Label these Self (first position), Other (second position) and Observer (third position). Get the child to talk about the situation.



2 Then get them to sit in 'first position' (Self). Tell them to look across at second position (Other) and imagine the person there. Tell them to talk to the imagined other person about the situation from their Self perspective.

3 Move them to second position. As they sit, or stand, ask them to imagine becoming the other person, so they 'step into their shoes'. Tell them to adopt the body language and posture of the other person. Now ask them to give the point of view of the other person looking across to where they were before in first position.



4 Next move them to the third position. Ask them to imagine themselves as a third person who has heard and seen both parts of the conversation. Ask them to look over to first position (Self) and give themselves some advice.

5 Finally, get them to go back into first position and ask them to say what's changed and what they have learnt.

Getting it right

HOW TO SUCCEED WITH PERCEPTUAL POSITIONS...

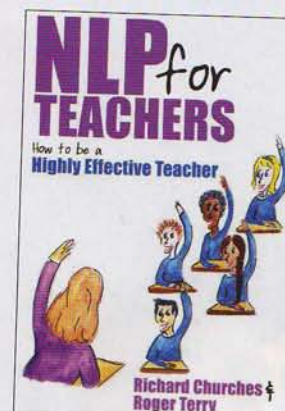
- Introduce the exercise as a game/ a bit of acting
- Stand out of eye line of the child to make it easier for them to use their imagination
- Just using the first two positions can be enough to create new understandings and help you deal with the situation
- If a child feels uncomfortable acting the process out, run the exercise with pieces of paper on a table, looking at each one in turn rather than actually moving from one position to the next.
- If you get a sense that the child you are doing this with isn't getting it and just thinks it's odd, try something else!
- Use language like 'let's imagine, let's pretend' to frame the activity
- To help set up Perceptual Positions, use the analogy of the Big Brother house. The third position can be the 'cameraman' or 'audience'. Using the expression 'a fly on the wall' can also help
- Avoid using the technique when a child is upset. Wait until they are calm
- Avoid putting words into their mouths. Let them explore the feelings and thoughts of the other person/people in their own time and own way. If they get stuck you could use the phrase 'and what else do you notice?', to help them keep talking and feeling what it's like. If they are quiet, let them take their time, just give them that extra five seconds of silence to reflect and imagine
- If you see them getting too upset in any of the positions, get them to literally step out of the position and change the subject for a minute, until they are calm
- Use the process with yourself to help explore relationships that are not going well
- Use perceptual positions to help you prepare for a difficult meeting, or when you are not sure what to say

BECOME A BETTER TEACHER

NLP for Teachers: How to be a highly effective teacher by Richard and Roger is available from Crown House Publishing (www.crownhouse.co.uk), ISBN 978-184590063-2, Price £19.99

"NLP for Teachers: How to be a highly effective teacher is a rare book – unique and original ideas presented in so many different stimulating ways. You have idea sets, toolboxes, research zones, top tips, cartoons – a cornucopia of stimuli. Churches and Terry have produced something that not only will make you a better teacher, it will make many of us a better person if we soak in and act on the many clear suggestions. NLP for Teachers is at once a deeply practical and deeply theoretical book."

Michael Fullan - Professor Emeritus, OISE/University of Toronto



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