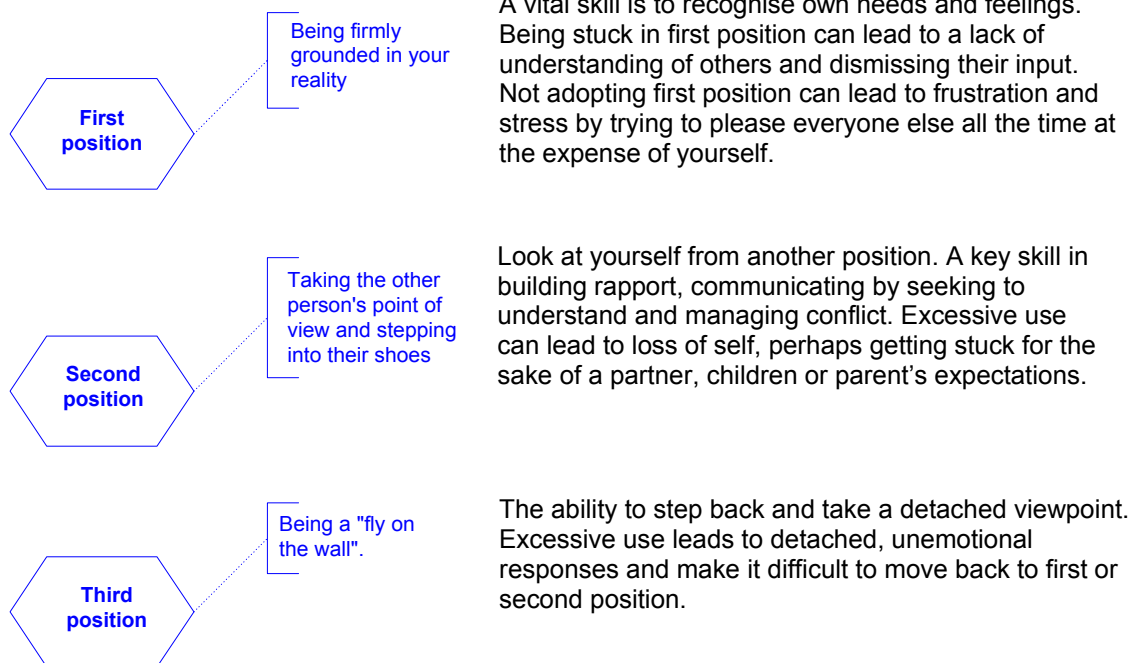


PERCEPTUAL POSITIONING

Application

Perceptual positioning is a powerful NLP concept which, when applied in the following way, enables the participant to gain insight into their own and others' behaviour. It helps the participant to learn from a relationship of difficulty with someone. It can give them the opportunity to empathise with the colleague they have an issue with. It can help them to reframe the problems into a wider perspective.



When to use this technique

Perceptual Positioning is a very useful leadership development tool that can be used in one to one sessions with participants.

The technique can be used in action learning but is best avoided in the group's early development, until they feel ready for the challenge.

Use this technique when a person presents an issue that is about their relationship with another colleague or in situations where the person is stuck. Looking at it from different positions, options become available. When the issue arises, ask these questions about the person:

- Do they use strong language to describe the other person?
- Do they appear to be angry or to have strong feelings?

- Do they present a very one-sided story with little insight into the other party's feelings?

If so you may want to experiment with and use this technique.

How does this work?

Locate the First, Second and Third positions on the floor before you start by drawing feet on sheets of paper and placing them spaced out alongside each other. Label each set of feet. The participant is literally going to stand on the feet as they work through the exercise. There are three sets of footprints:

1. SELF in the First position - write the participant's name on the footprints.
2. The OTHER person in the Second position - write the "problem" person's name on the footprints.
3. An OBSERVER in the Third position – write the name of the observer on the footprints.

Note: An observer should be someone who is detached from this issue, perhaps someone that the participant goes to for grounding or for perspectives.

Talk the participant through this exercise, as described in the box below, giving time for each step.

1. Think about that situation with the other person where there is a difficulty and where you would like to understand more.
2. Step into the First position. How you are feeling? What you are thinking as you look at the other person? What are the words running through your head, your feelings? Other set members use open questions techniques to explore the SELF-perception of the situation.
3. Step into the Second position, into the other person's shoes, into their body language, into their thoughts and feelings. Become them. Set members ask this "other person" questions, exploring their feelings in this situation, their perceptions of the problem.
4. Step back into First position. (Ensure that the participant can 'break' out of the role play.) Ask them to reflect on something about themselves, e.g. what they had for breakfast.
5. Step into Third position. As a detached observer express your thoughts. Open questions are asked by other set members, e.g. 'What do you feel is going on between those two people?'
6. Return to First position. Step back into self. Experience what it is like to be you now, with all that new experience. How is this different? Do you have any new understanding or learning? How will you be different?
7. Return to Second position. What do you feel? How is it going to be different if you do that differently?
8. Return to First position. What more have you learned?

Tips

All three positions are important. The best communicators move easily between the three, in a way that promotes assertive and adult behaviour.

During feedback from the process, it might be helpful for the group to share observations on the language used, mannerisms adopted in certain positions and emotions felt during process.

With new insight and understanding of the issue, the participant is then able to set an action plan.

References

Also adapted from @ Jen Anderson Consultancy & Training Manual: Managing Difficult Behaviour: It takes two to tango 2: The Meta-mirror.