

# Activity 4.9 Taking the Perspective of Another

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## Description

This activity helps participants use information, such as the values, personality traits, life experiences, and knowledge of another to view a situation from the perspective of this other person and to understand how these facets influence the choices others make in a given situation.

## Learning Goals

- Develop the skill of viewing situations or topics from the perspective of others.
- Practice trying to understand how another's values, traits, life experiences, and knowledge drive their choices.

## Instructions (45 minutes)

<p><b>Set Up</b></p>	<p><b>Prepare for the Activity</b></p> <p>Create your own, or pick two characters from a popular novel, movie, TV show, painting or photograph. You can also select two historical figures. Make sure you pick characters or figures who are very different from each other. If possible, provide a summary list of their values, traits, life experiences, knowledge, etc. as a handout.</p> <p>Create your own scenario that is relevant to your group, use the scenario shown below, or select another scenario from the <a href="#">What IF...Scenarios</a> or <a href="#">What IF...Moral Dilemmas</a> collections and share on the board or screen.</p>	
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<sup>1</sup> **Citation for this activity:** Ritu Thomas (2023). Taking the Perspective of Another. In Hartman and Byrd (Eds), The Interactivity Foundation Collaborative Discussion Toolkit. Retrieved from <https://www.collaborativediscussionproject.com/activities/module-4>

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	<p>Organize participants into pairs or small groups (4-6 ppl).</p> <p>Begin by introducing the learning goals of this activity.</p>	
<b>Step One</b>	<p><b>Round 1 - Decide on Choices for a Fun Topic</b></p> <p>Present a situation to the group where a decision needs to be made or some kind of action taken.</p> <p>Choose a fun topic, like where to go for vacation, what to buy as a present, or what to order on the menu.</p> <p>In small groups or pairs, and using the information provided or what they know or can deduce about the two characters, invite participants to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss and decide what decision or choice each character would make in this situation</li> <li>• Explain their rationale - what values, thoughts, feelings, experiences, and/or knowledge drive this choice?</li> </ul> <p>Once each group or pair is finished, invite them to write the decision they came up with for each character on a whiteboard, shared screen, or other surface visible to the whole group.</p>	<b>10 min</b>
<b>Step Two</b>	<p><b>Round 2 - Decide on Choices for a Serious Topic</b></p> <p>This time ask groups to decide how each character would respond to the scenario you prepared or the following scenario:</p> <p>The city council is voting on a proposal to convert a plot of downtown parkland into an affordable housing development. The city has a severe shortage of affordable housing stock. This parkland is the only undeveloped land under the city's control. The proponents on the city council see this conversion as a major way to make the city a more inclusive community, as it will counter the forces of gentrification that have been pricing many low-income residents out of the city. Opponents point to the need for greenspace for the physical and mental health of all city residents. And they highlight the fact that the existing parkland is the only green space that is readily accessible to existing low-income neighborhoods.</p> <p>How would the characters respond to this scenario? Why?</p>	<b>15 min</b>
<b>Step Three (optional)</b>	<p><b>Share Personal Choices</b></p> <p>If time permits (and participants are open to sharing on a more personal level), ask them to now share with each other how they would respond to this scenario. Invite them to ask clarifying questions and explore together how their values, experiences, and knowledge inform each of their decisions.</p> <p>Once again, record responses on a shared surface.</p>	<b>10 min</b>

	<p><b>Facilitator Tip:</b> If the group is in agreement, ask them to imagine the person who would make a different decision. Imagine how they came to this decision using generous thinking (i.e. imagine the most generous case for making this decision).</p>	
<b>Step Four</b>	<p><b>Debrief as a Full Group</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What similarities do you see between all the decisions listed for each character? Did many groups/pairs come up with similar decisions? If so, why do you think this is?</li> <li>• What differences do you see? Did many groups/pairs come up with different decisions? If so, why do you think this is?</li> <li>• Which of the decisions jump out as the most surprising or unique?</li> </ul>	<b>10 min</b>

## Reflection Journal

- How difficult was it to imagine the situation from the viewpoints of two very different characters or each other?
- What was your thought process? Did you focus more on their values, personality traits, life experiences or knowledge, when considering which factors would influence the decision they chose in the given situation?
- Did you gain any new insight or methods from the discussion that are useful in taking another's perspective?

## Practice Journal

This week, use what you learned in this activity and/or the Message Box exercise mentioned in the Dive Deeper resource article below, to practice taking the perspective of a person whom you find it difficult to interact or collaborate with at your work, school, and/or community. Describe your experience and what impact, if any, taking their perspective had on your interaction with that person.

## Dive Deeper: Additional Resources

- [The Message Box Exercise](#): Tarr, Tanya. "How This Four-Minute Exercise Can Create A Winning Perspective In Negotiation." *Forbes*, Forbes Media LLC, 3 Aug. 2017, [www.forbes.com/sites/tanyatarr/2017/08/03/how-this-4-minute-exercise-can-create-a-winning-perspective-in-negotiation/?sh=22e490474e94](http://www.forbes.com/sites/tanyatarr/2017/08/03/how-this-4-minute-exercise-can-create-a-winning-perspective-in-negotiation/?sh=22e490474e94). Accessed 8 Sep. 2023.
- [Perspective Taking](#): Johnson, David W. "The Importance of Taking the Perspective of Others." *Psychology Today*, Sussex Publishers, LLC, 5 June 2019, [www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/constructive-controversy/201906/the-importance-taking-the-perspective-others](http://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/constructive-controversy/201906/the-importance-taking-the-perspective-others). Accessed 8 Sep. 2023.

## Activity Cluster

[4.3 Understanding Perspectives on a Continuum](#)

[1.5 The Role of Values in Collaborative Discussion](#)

4.9 Taking the Perspective of Another