

ESSENTIAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

The World Through Your Perception



*Includes How
Perception Checks
Help Relationships!*

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The World Through Your Perception

**This Book is Completely
Written & Illustrated
By Patty Ann**

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Perception in Communication

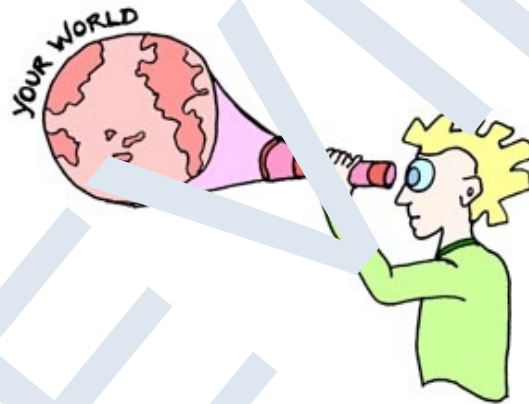
"You don't understand me!"

"Look at it my way...."

"You're not the boss of me!"

Sound Familiar? Statements like these reflect communication's most challenging aspects. Sometimes although we constantly talk at each other, we really don't understand one another. Failing to share each others' viewpoint is common and leads to misunderstandings.

Misunderstandings are often caused by 2 different perceptions over the same situation. Let's take a look at this important piece of the communication process.



What is a Perception?

- Your perception is how you view or interpret the world.
- It is a frame of reference by which you judge situations and other people.
- Perceptions are deep-rooted because you often learn them from your parents.
- Since we are all raised in different families, we all carry different perceptions.
- As you grow older your perceptions continue to be molded by life's experiences.
- The good news is everyone can change their perceptions if they wish.

Example of a Perception Gone Wrong:

Karen made a new friend, Amy. Karen brought Amy to her house on several occasions. One day Karen asked her Mother what she thought of Amy. Karen's Mother remarked that Amy seemed nice, but was rather quiet, possibly even shy. Karen then told her mother that Amy was quiet because she thought [Karen's mother] didn't like her. Apparently during the first few meetings Karen's mother had been preoccupied with a work crisis and was not able to be more sociable. Thus, Amy interpreted Karen's Mother's behavior as unfriendly, which in turn caused Amy to close herself off.

The Influence of Perceptions

Ever hear of stereotyping? This is a process by which we categorize others by what we perceive them to be. Stereotyping others is based on a fraction of what the truth really is. For instance, think about these groups and how you might instantly associate certain characteristics to them:

Movie Stars: Famous	True Lovers: Always men
Street People: Homeless	Teenagers: Challenging
Secretaries: Always female	Professors: Intellectual
Rock Musicians: Producers	Older People: Retired
Artists: Poor & Caring	Doctors: Rich



Now, you know not all secretaries are girls; not all street people are unmotivated; nor all older people are retired. Being aware of how your perceptions can shape your interpretation of a situation, person, or event can put you on the track towards better communication.

The Influence of Perceptions ~ Exercise

We live in a world of labeling people for who they appear to be. List below some other stereotypes. In the perception box, write out your idea(s) of the type of person in the stereotype category. Then share and compare perceptions with your classmates.

Stereotype	Your Perception

"Perception Checks" Clarify Misunderstandings

Nobody can read another person's mind, but you do have the ability to learn more about what another person is thinking. The skill of 'perception checking' provides a way to share your interpretations and enable a common understanding. Perception checks have 3 parts:

1. A description of the behavior you notice
2. Several possible interpretations of the behavior
3. A request for clarification, or an explanation, about how you should interpret the behavior.

Example:

1. "I noticed that you have been really quiet lately." (behavior description)
2. "Are you feeling sick, or are you upset?" (2 interpretations)
3. "What's going on?" (a request for an explanation)

Example:

1. "I just heard that the promotion you applied for was given to Kim." (behavior action)
2. Did my skills not qualify me for this job? (interpretation)
3. Can you tell me what's going on?" (a request for clarification)

Example:

1. "Whenever I ask you a question about this project, I never seem to get an answer." (behavior description)
2. "Am I misinterpreting your responses, or don't you have all the information we need to proceed?" (2 interpretations)
3. "Please tell me because I don't want to keep bothering you."
(a request for an explanation)

Practice Doing Perception Checks

Use the following examples of how to do a perception check. Fill in this chart below with the behavior examples set up. Provide one possible interpretation of the behavior described, without understanding the reason for the behavior. This exercise is to make you aware that we often interpret behaviors without knowing all the reasons for them.

Behavior Description	One Possible Interpretation
1 Your friend leaves your party without saying anything.	Example Interpretation: My friend might have another commitment she had to attend.
2 You overheard a friend telling someone that you were going on vacation, but it was not true.	
3 Your dog started scratching itself and did not stop for a long time.	
4 Your coach told your team only 6 out of 10 would be allowed to go to an event.	
5 Your teacher who is always cheerful looks distracted and upset.	
6 Your horse care person did not clean up the horse manure in the stall while you were away.	
7 Your sibling left a pile of clothes in your bedroom.	

Perception checks' serve a very important function during the communication process. It allows you to become aware of another person's viewpoint, which helps you to understand the reason for their actions. Practicing 'perception checks' routinely will make you more aware of what other people say (the content) and the meanings intended behind what they say (the relational aspect).

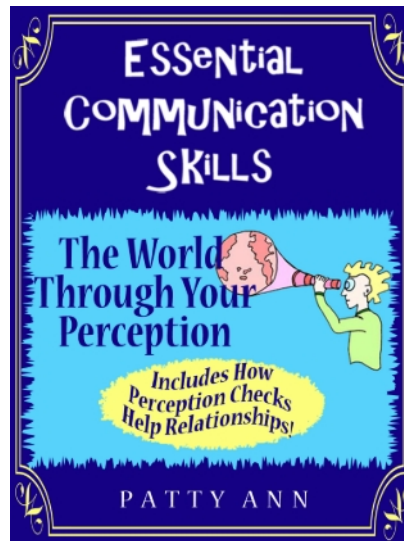
Perception Tips . . .

- Put yourself in another person's shoes. See the world from their window view.
- Use 'perception checks' to understand a social situation.
- Avoid classifying and stereotyping others.
- Understand that everyone's perceptions were formed and learned by their family upbringing. No 2 people are alike.
- Remember, you can change your perception at any time!



Put yourself in another person's shoes to sneak a peak at their world!

Thank You for Enjoying



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