



15 Disempowering Perspectives Activity

Perspective is a point of view, a way of looking or interpreting a particular set of events. Your perspective, not your circumstances, determines your experiences in life. The good news is you can choose to change your perspective at any time. You gain control of your life by mindfully and intentionally choosing an empowering perspective. As a coach you can facilitate others to become more aware and choose their perspectives by sharing the following activity and sharing your own experiences.

The following are the most common disempowering perspectives people have. These thoughts contribute to negative and limited outcomes in our lives, contribute to challenging communication, undermine relationships and limit seeing opportunities and finding creative solutions to problems we face in our lives.

Check ✓ *the perspectives you recognize you commonly have when facing changes in your life, difficult circumstances, dealing with other people, when stressed or dealing with everyday situations. Don't be surprised if there are several, it's not uncommon.*

Put a **star** ★ next to the two most influential perspectives that you bump into that you would like to change and reframe, which would positively impact your life.

★ ✓

- 1. **Negative Filter:** You focus only on the negative in a situation and ignore the good. By doing so, the negative seems larger or worse than it really is.
- 2. **Black-or-White Thinking:** You view everything in the extremes—all good or bad. Nothing is in the gray zone. Often perfectionism contributes to this type of thinking.
- 3. **Universalization:** Thinking characterized by “always” and “never” and often based on limited or unverified information. You make a conclusion or false interpretation based on a single situation or a limited piece of evidence. If something bad happens once, you predict it will happen over and over again.
- 4. **Assumptions:** Coming to conclusions about another person’s actions or intentions without any real evidence. This is sometimes called “mind reading,” as if you can somehow know what another person is actually thinking or feeling without them actually saying so.
- 5. **Catastrophizing:** Expecting disaster to strike in your life. A common symptom is ‘what if’ thinking and an underlying catalyst is a lack of trust in yourself and capacity to adapt to change.
- 6. **Personalization:** A tendency to assume that everything happening around you is somehow about you.
- 7. **Shoulds:** Believing that you and others in your life need to follow a list of rules you have created. This tendency is tied to judging and finding fault in yourself and others.
- 8. **Labeling:** This generalized way of thinking that characterizes or stereotypes yourself or other people based on limited information or even a single experience or quality. It fails to recognize that people are complex and have multiple dimensions. This can lead to prejudice and bias toward others



- 9. **Blaming:** A way of thinking that makes other people responsible for your problems or your discomfort.
- 10. **Victim Thinking:** Feeling as if you lack any power, control or choice over what happens to you or around you and whether or not you are happy or effective in life.
- 11. **Being Right:** The need to always be right or correct, and to prove this to others. This way of thinking does not allow for considering other points of view and often causes distance in relationships with others.
- 12. **Not Being Wrong:** This way of thinking is fear based and the need to prove one's worth by proving that you are correct, defending your opinion or avoiding getting in trouble for being wrong.
- 13. **Fear of Failure:** This attitude views mistakes and failure as a threat or hazard that should be avoided at all costs rather than as a learning opportunity. This often closes one off to other ways of thinking and doesn't allow for flexibility in thinking.
- 14. **Emotional Reasoning:** Believing that any thought you have must be true, including feelings or perceptions about yourself based on distorted or false thoughts or beliefs.
- 15. **Fallacy of Change:** This is about assuming that you can convince or cajole other people and expect them to change to suit you. This expectation that your happiness depends on others needing to change places your happiness in another person's hands rather than in your own.

These styles of thinking are a compilation and gleaned from and adapted from the work of several authors, including Matthew McKay, Martha Davis, Patrick Fanning (McKay, Davis and Fanning 2007) , Kaihan Krippendorff, Paul Elmore, among others

"...most of us have no idea of the assumptions and beliefs we use to create our perceptions. We think we are open-minded and curious when, in fact, we all suffer from "paradigm blindness". This is the perennial problem with human perception that can only be solved through awareness."

Margaret Wheatley

"Mindfulness is simply being aware of what is happening right now without wishing it were different; enjoying the pleasant without holding on when it changes (which it will); being with the unpleasant without fearing it will always be this way (which it won't)."

James Baraz