



TAKE IT DEEPER: Writing to Build Bridges 1 of 2

Sometimes it is hard to notice when our perceptions of others are inaccurate. We might feel like we are doing a good job empathizing and seeing from their perspectives, but then we might still end up in a conflict or misunderstanding. This may be because we are doing more perspective-taking than perspective-receiving.

As a brief exercise to explore the differences in perspective, think of a conflict or even a positive situation you had recently with with a colleague, student, family member, or friend. Pick someone you would feel comfortable approaching to talk to about this situation now.

1. Write about the situation from YOUR perspective. Include as much detail as you can, about how you felt, and the thoughts you had. If it was a conflict, you can describe the things you were worried about, how you wanted it to resolve, etc. You can describe how the conflict concluded (if it did).

2. Next, write about this same situation from the other person's perspective. Try to “put yourself in their shoes” as much as you can. Imagine how they were feeling, the thoughts they may have had, their concerns, and how they may have wanted the situation to turn out.



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3. Finally, ask this person to write a brief paragraph for you about this same situation, describing how it felt for them, the thoughts they had, their concerns, and their understanding of how it was resolved.

A large, empty gray rectangular area intended for the student to write their paragraph.

When you have these three accounts, come back and review them.

- Highlight in one color how they are similar.
- Highlight in another color how they are different.

- How "good" were you at putting yourself in this other person's shoes?
- What new pieces of information did you learn by asking the person directly about their perspective? What pieces did you miss by projecting your assumptions or perspective-taking?

You can try this practice with students as well. To keep it light, but still demonstrate the differences between perspectives, you can invite students to think of a positive interaction.