

## TOXIC RELATIONSHIPS

**Organization and country:** INDEPCIE (Spain)

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**Name of the activity:** PERCEPTUAL POSITIONS

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**Overview (What I am going to learn?):** To understand how interpersonal relationships are built, to put ourselves in the other person's situation, to understand their point of view and to get an overview of the relationship from different perspectives.

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**Objective (What am I going to learn it for?):**

- To avoid and solve conflicts at work.
- To know what the other person thinks, what he/she understands and why he/she expresses and behaves in a certain way.
- This tool can also be used to devise alternative strategies that can unblock a conflict situation in the workplace.

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**Materials:** None

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**Time:** 20 minutes

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**Target group:** Employees and managers

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### Instructions for facilitators

This is an individual tool, although it can also be used by departments within the organisation, so that everyone understands and is aware of the conflicts or difficulties in communication that can be established with others.

The facilitator will need to guide the participant from three imaginary points on the floor, giving them the full experience of what it feels like from each of these positions. To do this, the facilitator will guide the participant by asking questions that cover the three main representational systems (visual, auditory and kinaesthetic).



We cannot work on one and not on the other, we must go through the whole process in order to reach a global vision of the system or process in which we are immersed.

### Tasks and procedure:

1. The first position is the "I", i.e. seeing the situation from your own point of view, taking into account your interests and motivations. What we see, hear and feel, we see, hear and feel through our own experience, we are part of the situation itself.

We will guide the participant to describe how he/she lives and experiences a situation of conflict or tension (either with another colleague, a superior or in general) in the first person. We will ask questions such as:

- What are you seeing?
- How do you see it?
- How do you see yourself?
- How do you feel?
- What emotions are you developing?
- What is he saying to you?
- How is he talking to you?
- What do you notice in your body? How do you somatize it?
- How does it affect you?
- What do you perceive in others?
- What do you hear or what do you think others say about you?

We will get all the necessary information, and the participant will be aware of how their creation of the experience is affecting their emotional state and, therefore, their reactions and results.

To finish this first step, and to break the pattern for the second position, we will take the participant out of the position (not only physically, but also mentally) by getting them to sing, dance, move, tell a joke or whatever we need to get them to delocalise so we can move on with the exercise.

2. The second position is the "other", the person with whom you are negotiating or debating, considering how he or she interprets the situation and what his or her wishes are. To do this, we have to experience the situation or conflict as if we were the other person or persons. We position ourselves in their thoughts and beliefs, we adopt their senses, their feelings, their emotions. We configure ourselves as that other person, their posture, their expression, their attitude... We "associate" ourselves with that person but we "dissociate" ourselves from ourselves.

To do this, the facilitator will take the participant to that physical space where "the other" is and will ask the same questions as in step 1, but now with the added value of doing it from another perspective, so we will find clues to the conflict from another point of view.

As we did at the end of step 1, we will try to break the physical and emotional connection with a little dance, a song or a joke that takes the participant out of their association with "the other".

3. The third position refers to an "independent observer", someone who may be observing the situation but is not directly involved in the outcome either physically or emotionally. This is a figure who is absolutely neutral and dissociated from the situation/conflict and who looks from the outside at the relationship that is being established between "I" and the "other".

The third position must act as a neutral and equidistant arbiter, overruling assumptions about any of the previous positions.

Questions should now be addressed in the third person:

- What are you seeing?
- How do you see THEM?
- How do you see THEM?
- What emotions are THEY developing?
- What do you notice in THEIR bodies? How do THEY somatize it?
- How does it affect THEM?
- What is your tone of voice? What are your words like?
- What do you think they are thinking about each other?
- What do you think others think about this situation?
- What consequences do you think this situation may have?

4. Once the passage through positions 1, 2 and 3 has been completed, the facilitator will accompany the participant back to position 1 so that he/she can regain the perspective as the protagonist and experience the situation in the first person, but now with all the information gathered after passing through the other positions.

- Now the questions will be:
- What have you learned?
- What information have you gathered that you did not have before?
- What do you think you were doing wrong?
- What do you think you can change?
- What can you do differently now?

5. There could even be a fourth perceptual position which would be "we". This considers what makes sense in the "system" in which people operate. What is in the best interest of the social, business, team system?

From the four perceptual positions - the self, the other person, the observer and the system - experiencing any situation through experimentation will help us to understand much better the usefulness of this technique in any field in which we want to apply it.

### **Conclusion and evaluation:**

In the end, the ultimate question is: "What do you want to happen", because this dynamic is aimed at changing something that is not working in an interpersonal relationship, at developing different strategies by taking in information from different points of view.

All three positions are important. If we consider only our own position, we will err on the side of selfishness, as we will not take into account the interests of the other person. The ability to put ourselves in the other person's shoes gives us empathy, and helps us to reach a common agreement. However, taking into account only the other person's position is not favourable either, as we are putting aside our own interests. Considering only the third position implies being outside the situation, which leads to taking a distant and uninvolved stance.

A good strategy is to use all three positions and be aware of how each one feels. If you are faced with a situation to resolve, go through these positions one by one, taking note of your ideas, feelings, comments and interests.

To conclude, we will brainstorm among participants and attendees to draw conclusions.