

# Trading Places Worksheet



Once upon a time, long ago in India, a group of old blind men heard that a strange animal, called an elephant, had been brought to the town, but none of them were aware of its shape and form. Out of curiosity, they said: "Even though we cannot see this beastly, we must still inspect it and know it by touch, of which we are capable". So, they went into the village to sought it out, and when they found it they groped about it so that they could get a sense of what this elephant was actually like. The old man, whose hand landed on the trunk, said, "This being is like a thick snake". Another whose hand reached the elephants ear, stated that this animal felt and seemed like some kind of fan. Yet another, whose hand was upon its leg, said, the elephant is a pillar like a very solid as if it is a tree-trunk. The blind man who placed his hand upon its side said the elephant, "is a wall". Another who had hold of its tail, described it as being a rope. And the last whilst feeling one of the tusks, stated emphatically that the elephant is hard, and silky smooth and like a spear. As each shared his perspective – the others disagreed and even in their blindness ended up coming to blows!

Just when things were getting really serious, as they flayed about – trying to land blows on each other, and insults of liar were being thrown about in abandon, a sighted man walked into the fray and ( the parable) and describes the entire elephant from all of its various perspectives. The blind men then learn that they were all partially correct and partially wrong. The lesson being that whilst our own subjective experience is true, it may not be the totality of truth.

Thus we see in this parable, if we only discuss an issue from one perspective, we will not understand the whole situation, and we end up addressing the problem with limited knowledge or a restricted amount of data. It is therefore important to develop the skill and the openness of mind to look at topics from multiple perspectives so that we are able to see the whole picture. This and only this better enables us to find the root cause of the problem and discover a solution that takes the needs and feelings of everyone involved into consideration.

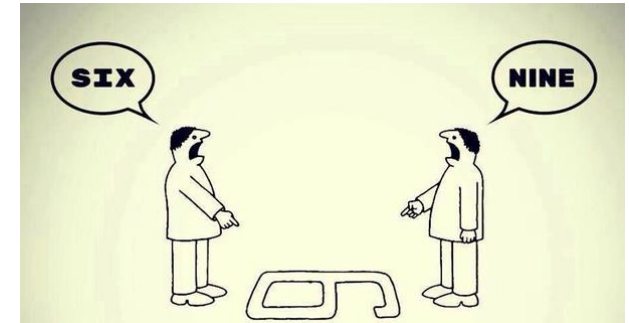
Imagine if we could choose to look at every issue from a wholistic perspective, taking the needs and well-being of others into consideration. It would transform the way we make decisions, our attitudes toward others, and our behaviours, and in so doing, create a more compassionate, equitable, and sustainable world for all.

And for ourselves as individuals, oft times we hold so strongly onto our perspective that our reality is the full truth and that other's are misguided or downright wrong. The skill of being able to look at other's perspectives and keep ourselves open to other possibilities beyond our own limited world view and experience is a critical one, particularly for those who lead others.

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In our journey to success we must develop, possess and apply masterful people skills. The key to successful relationships lies solely in our ability to take the perspective of another. Perspective taking is an all important skill of being able to look at things from a point of view other than our own. Perspective taking brings in the mindfulness of compassion and empathy to our relationships. When these two qualities are present in our interactions mutual respect, success and movement forward is enabled.

It's an important and yet difficult skill to be able to see things from other peoples perspectives. Especially when there is no right or wrong opinion, which is very often the case when we are dealing with world views, values and mindsets.



Developing the skill of mining for different perspectives, helps the acknowledgement of the individual and creates a sense of understanding, especially if you can articulate their points back to them through paraphrasing or summarising, clearly. A good example is marriage, or falling out with a friend. **EG** If you get into an argument with your significant other, the goal then becomes **NOT** to win the disagreement, but to understand the concern that they have, seek with them to co-creatively find middle ground that will assist you both to work through the issues, whilst concurrently acknowledging and showing respect.

Dismissing an opinion without due discussion will generally be viewed as arrogance and the fact that there is inattention nor perhaps even acceptance of, the needs of others. This can often create in the other person feelings of being treated as someone small and this will generate resentment. Importantly - this is also true with children, even if you consider their views juvenile, or even worse that you are the adult and they are beholden to you. Accepting their point, but also helping them understand yours is a great way of helping them learn, and develop relational skills that will serve them as they grow into adults.

Seeing others perspectives can sometimes actually change you for the better. If you begin to understand that you are not totally all-knowing in your beliefs, you might come out of it a better person, more open and more tolerant. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century where nothing is nailed down and even if we look back 5 years – it seems like we were on a different planet – we can acknowledge – nothing is fixed nor ever will be. This mindset shift alone will help to equip you with knowledge and the openness of mind to deal with any future situations you find yourself in.

You may also learn things about people or ideas that you would otherwise never have noticed. This can give you a more complete view of the world, how you behave in it, your impact and what your learning edge is. You learn things about yourself that you otherwise may have missed. At the same time as considering where your blind spots might be, and where new places of insight can come from to serve you in your journey. In order to move to the audio file for developing multiple perspectives..