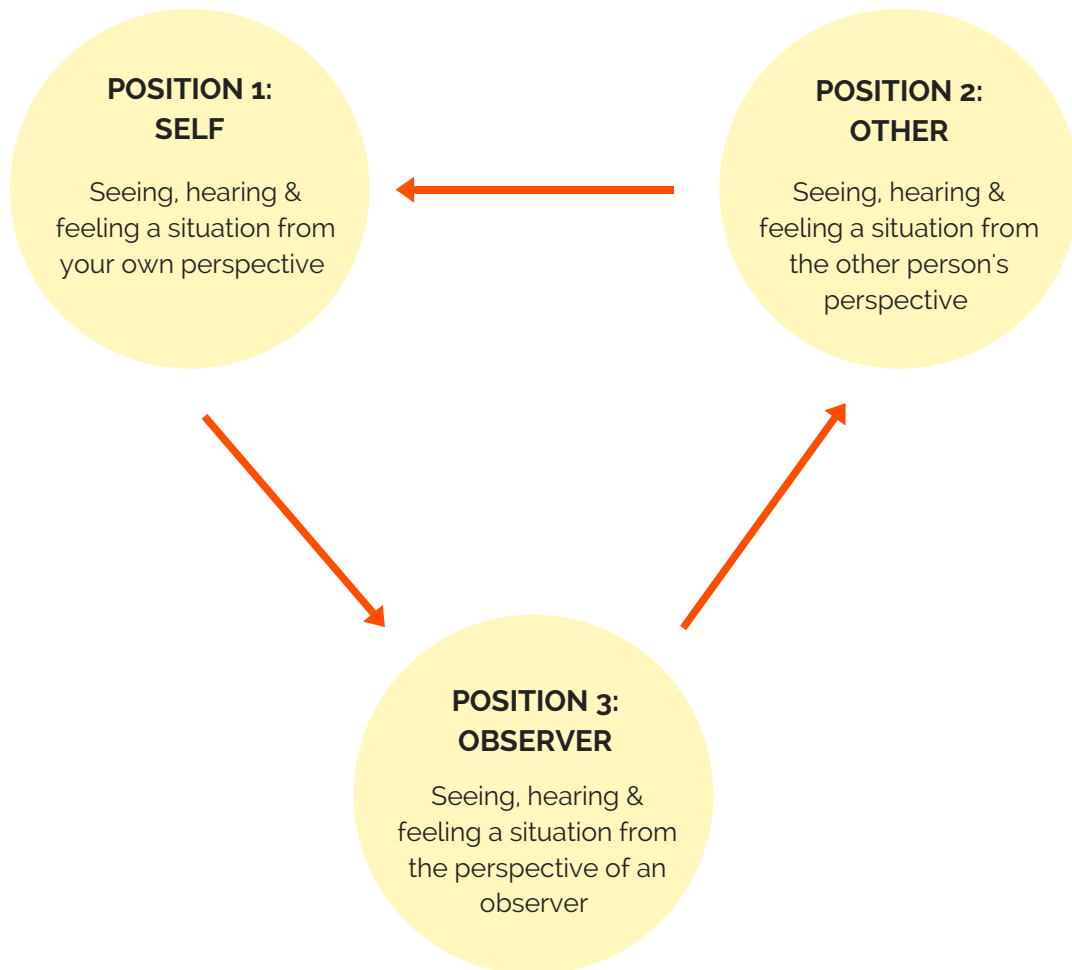


## THE THREE PERCEPTUAL POSITIONS



**Perceptual Positions is an NLP-based technique and can be very useful in shifting a person's perceptual filters on an experience. It offers three separate sensory descriptions of an event from the positions of self, other and an observer.**

Perceptual positions can be used to help an individual to step back from their limited perspective to get distance from their emotional interpretation of any given situation. You can use this technique as a life coach to better understand and empathise with your clients as it will help you gain valuable insights into another individual's experience of the world.

We've all had an experience that annoyed or frustrated us long after the event occurred. Attached to this negative experience are feelings in your body and perhaps some internally generated images and sounds connected to what happened. The same process occurs for extremely positive experiences too - the feelings, internal images and sounds of holidays, special events can hold a state in a person long after the event. When you are fully in an experience like this, it's called 'first position'.

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Have you ever found yourself walking, talking and using body posture and gestures similar to that of someone else? Almost as if you became just like this person? Have you ever learned a new skill by acting as if you were a person whom you know that embodies the skill you are practising? In your mind's eye, you became this other person. Young children learn in the same way - by mimicking those around them. Actors also step into the shoes of another individual when playing a role. When you assume another person's perspective like this, it's called 'second position'.

Do you ever mentally step back from an interaction and get the sense that you can see and hear yourself and those that you are interacting with? Almost as if you were watching events unfold on a cinema screen and you were a character on the screen? When you step back and are able to observe yourself as a person outside of you, this is called 'third position'.

This is very effective NLP technique for improving relationships – at home, socially or even at work. It allows you to understand a person's viewpoint – from their 'perspective' – which then allows you to use this insight to improve/adapt the way in which you communicate with them.

### **You can use the Perceptual Positions Technique to:**

- Improve your understanding of others
- Think more creatively and flexibly
- Give yourself an opportunity to stand back and consider issues objectively
- Better understand the impact of your verbal and non-verbal behaviour on others – and the impact of their behaviour on you.
- Review an interaction you've had with another person – or prepare for an important conversation

**Take some time to complete the following exercise to better understand 'Perceptual Positions'. Consider a situation involving someone else that has caused you frustration or a problem in your life.**

**1. First Position:** Firstly, consider this situation from your own perspective. Imagine that you are experiencing the situation through your own eyes as if you're looking at this other person. What do you see? What do you hear? Is this your own voice, your own self talk? What is this other person saying to you? How are you behaving and reacting? How are you feeling?

This will give you information about the situation from your own perspective. Once you've gathered all the insights from Position 1, step out of that Position.

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**2. Second Position:** You become this other person. Step into this other person's shoes and experience the situation completely from their perspective. What do they feel? Describe this situation as if you were the other person. Having gathered all the information from the other person's perspective, now step out of that Position.

**3. Third Position:** This is where you gather information from the situation from an observer's stance. Imagine that you're a neutral, third party that is looking down looking down at the situation. Gather information and describe what the situation's like as the neutral third party Observer. What does it look like when you consider things from this perspective?

**4. Reflect:** Now consider what you've learned in second and third position and take these new learnings back to Position 1 and Position 2. What has changed in light of your new learnings?

NOTES: