

Perception vs. Reality

What is perception?



Sometimes the way we perceive the actions or statements of those around us may or may not reflect what is actually intended. This is generally due to our previous life experiences and/or what we believe.

Read the following short paragraphs and answer the questions.

1. Bob's daughter is on the basketball team, but she doesn't get to play much. His daughter works hard and never complains, but Bob believes this is yet another injustice in his life and his daughter is not getting a fair shake. Bob becomes annoyed and irritated. He angrily confronts the coach, embarrassing his daughter.

2. John's daughter is on the basketball team, but she doesn't get to play much. His daughter works hard and never complains. John believes that the coach wants to win and most likely plays the girls that will help him reach that goal. John feels proud of his daughter's commitment to the team despite not getting to play very much. John offers to help his daughter improve her basketball skills.

Is there any difference in the events as they were described?

How did Bob see the situation?

How did John see the situation?

What is the critical factor in the different ways each person reacted?

Why might each person perceive the situation differently?



WHAT WOULD YOU DO? Read through the following scenarios and then answer the questions that follow.

1. Your boss is talking to another employee as you walk into work. You have reason to believe they are talking about you. This makes you feel uncomfortable and upset.

2. A close friend gets to go on a senior trip, all expenses paid. You are jealous that this friend does not have to pay a dime – his or her parents are paying for everything. You consider not going because you have to pay for part of your trip and do not think it is fair.

3. At work, you developed a new way to organize the filing system that makes it easier for the office staff to find documents. You think your supervisor is going to take all the credit.

4. You are a nurse. The patient you are working with is ungrateful and rude, is always finding fault in everything you do, and is making your life miserable.

How might different people react to these situations?

What might their reactions be based on?

If a friend found him or herself in one of these situations, what advice would you offer?

What are some strategies you might use when faced with a situation similar to the ones in this activity?



Is there always a right or wrong way to respond?

Are there certain things you should always try to do? If so, what are they?

Think about how you perceive yourself and how others perceive you.

Do you think both are the same? Explain.

What are some things you can you do to change others' perception of you?

