

Assumptions-Perceptions-Reality Triad

Our assumptions work together to create our perceptions, and our perceptions create our reality. Let's take a closer look at how this process works.

Suppose I have an assumption that, "Everybody in the world is out to get me." That assumption will set my perception filter to look for evidence that supports my assumption. Any time anyone acts towards me in a way that can be interpreted as negative, I add that to my collection of evidence that "everybody is out to get me." Because my perception filter is set to look for evidence that people are out to get me, I'm going to look for that evidence even when people *aren't* out to get me.

Suppose someone isn't out to get me but is instead trying to do something nice for me. Since my perception filter is set for "people are out to get me," how am I going to interpret this person's nice actions? Since my assumption is that everyone is out to get me, this person can't really be doing anything nice just to be nice. I'm going to conclude instead that this person is only being nice in order to get something from me or to take advantage of me. My perceptions will cause me to believe that the reason this person is being nice is to set me up so that I'll be caught off-guard.

With my perception filter set in this way, everybody looks like they're out to get me, and I've found evidence to confirm my assumption, because to me, even people who aren't out to get me look like people who are out to get me.

How do these assumptions and perceptions work together to create my reality? In the example above, imagine I'm someone trying to do something nice for you. I'm doing it because I think you're a good person and I'd like to be your friend. But since your perception filter is set to only look for evidence that confirms your assumption that "everyone is out to get me," you're going to treat my attempts at being nice as attempts to take advantage of you.

How long would I continue to try to be nice to you if you continue to treat me as if I'm out to get you? Eventually I'm going to get tired of being treated like I'm out to get you, and I'll give up and go away. The longer you continue to act on this particular assumption and perception, the more of the nicer people you're going to drive away. Eventually the only people left willing to interact with you will be people who *are* out to get you. Your assumptions and your perceptions have worked together to create a reality in which everybody remaining in your life really is out to get you.

One way this could occur is if I assume that others should be responsible for my happiness. If I make such assumptions, then I've given up responsibility for my own emotional states. If I do that, then my moods will always be at the mercy of someone else's whims, since I've placed my own emotional freedom in their hands.

If I instead choose to assume that only I can be responsible for my own emotional well-being, I set my perception filter to reflect that assumption. I can then look for evidence to support that assumption. By looking for evidence that supports my assumption that "I must be responsible for my own emotional

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well-being,” I create a reality in which I can choose to be happy and content no matter how others respond or react to me.

Think about some assumptions you may be making about your emotions and moods. How have these assumptions altered your perceptions? How have these perceptions created your present reality? How might you change your assumptions to get different perceptions so that you can create a different reality?

This worksheet is designed to help you examine the beliefs and assumptions you hold about your emotions and moods. As you complete it, begin by identifying any assumptions you may be making. For example, you might believe that feeling anxious means something bad is about to happen, that sadness means you are weak, or that anger is always harmful. Write these assumptions down honestly and without judgment.

Next, reflect on how these assumptions have influenced the way you perceive yourself, other people, and the world around you. Consider whether your assumptions have caused you to interpret situations in a particular way. For instance, assuming that anxiety is dangerous may lead you to avoid challenges, while believing that sadness is a sign of failure may cause you to withdraw from others.

Then explore how these perceptions have contributed to your current reality. Think about the choices you have made, the relationships you have developed, and the opportunities you may have pursued or avoided because of these beliefs. Emotions do not create reality by themselves, but the meanings we attach to them often influence our behaviors, which in turn shape our experiences.

Finally, consider alternative assumptions that may be more balanced and helpful. For example, you might replace “Anxiety means I can’t cope” with “Anxiety is a normal response to uncertainty, and I can still move forward in spite of the anxiety I’m feeling right now.”

Now ask yourself how adopting these new assumptions might change your perceptions and behaviors. By challenging unhelpful beliefs about your emotions, you can develop new ways of seeing yourself and your circumstances, creating opportunities for healthier choices and more positive outcomes.

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Name: _____ Date: _____

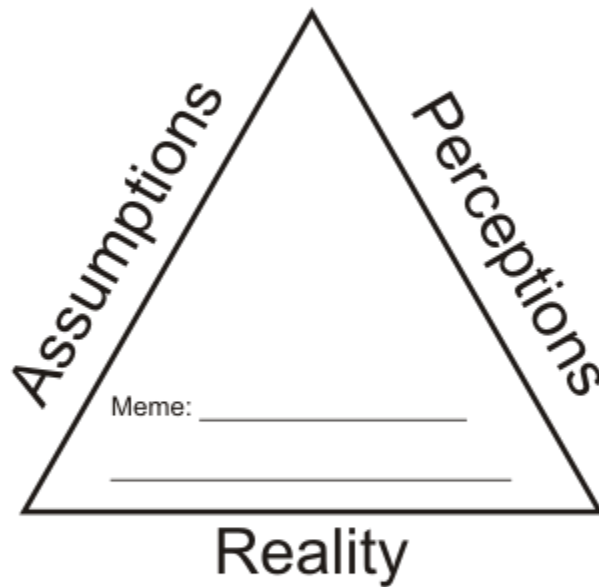
Our *assumptions* about life influence our *perceptions*. Taken as a whole, all our *perceptions* add up to our own version of *reality*. For example, if your *assumption* is that the world is flat, how would that influence your daily *perceptions* and your daily *reality*? What if your *assumption* is that the world is round?

In the center of the triangle below, write the meme you wish to change. Your *assumptions* about the meme are the 'what.' The *perceptions* about those assumptions are the 'why.' The *reality* created from those perceptions is the 'how.'

What assumptions need to change in order to change your meme? Write those in the space marked 'what' below.

What perceptions generated by those assumptions need to change in order to change your meme? Write those in the space marked 'why' below.

How would your reality change if your meme changed? List these changes in the space marked 'how' below.



What: _____

Why: _____

How: _____
