



Narrative CPD Activity – Discovering the inside perspective

Activity Guide

This guide describes all the steps the facilitator needs to take to deliver the activity

AIMS

To understand the limitations of our individual experiences of children who have social emotional and mental health needs.

To recognise that each person has their own ‘inside perspective’ which drives their understanding and judgment

To recognise that this perspective often has strong emotional content.

To understand that this emotional content is directly connected to the emotional state of the child, illuminating the child’s hidden needs.

To understand how fragmentation occurs and ways to prevent it

SKILLS DEVELOPED

Gathering perspectives in a search for meaning.

Sharing perspectives safely with others to fully understand the best course of action.

Reframing the inside perspective by replacing ‘judgment statements’ with statements of observations, feelings, and needs.

OTHER OUTCOMES

Route to development of more effective management processes

BEFORE YOU START

This activity can be scaled to fit the available time. A session length of 60-90 minutes should be sufficient. If the discussion broadens constructively and each activity takes longer, the programme can be split over two sessions.

These open-ended activities needs to be led by someone with confident group training skills. However, the process is facilitated group learning. The facilitator is not expected to have ‘all the right answers’ or indeed any answers...

It sets the right tone, placing you with the other participants as learners, to let this guide, rather than you, ‘own’ the process.

For instance, “Now, we’re asked to consider this question...”

Participants will need to be reassured that it is safe to share their inside perspective including its feeling content.



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Overview

The activity delivers

1. a group learning experience using the material provided,
2. the application of the skills learned to one or two appropriate children selected in advance or by the group,
3. an optional discussion about how the school could gather and share information in a more effective way to support children with additional needs

Steps

- Explore the group's response to the *Introduction*.
- Provide the handout and allow 3-5 minutes for the group to read it
- Ask participants to turn again to Mandy's narratives in the introduction.
- Ask participants to turn to the three-in-one narrative in the introduction
- Apply this to real-life cases (group activity)
- Closing optional activity

Process

In advance of the activity participants should be asked to read the *Introduction* which comes with this package, and to bring this with them to the meeting.

At the beginning of the meeting share the aims, skills developed, and other outcomes with the group.

The activities are described in outline – the facilitator deciding on how resources and direction will be provided.

Explore the group's response to the *Introduction*.

- How does the text resonate with participants?
- Can participants think of examples from their own experience of staff fragmentation?
- Invite participants to share these experiences (make this a time-limited activity)

10 minutes



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Provide the handout and allow 3-5 minutes for the group to read it

- Any comments?
- Do we all recognise these types of expression?
- If we treat behaviour as communication then should we not respond to each of these four ways to express anger in the same way?
- What then is the received difference between the types of expression?

If necessary, point out that one major difference is in our emotional response to each type.

Discuss this insight.

10 minutes

Ask participants to turn again to Mandy's narratives in the introduction.

- What opportunities do we as teachers have to express our inner conflicts and emotions about some of our children?
- Would it help to be able to safely channel our emotional responses into the dialogue?

Expect a mixed response without trying to 'settle the question' or come to a group conclusion.

Point out that this method relates to all kinds of information not just the sensitive kind.

5 minutes

Ask participants to turn to the three-in-one narrative in the introduction

Discuss the nature, sensitivity, and sources for the information gathered about the boy.

- Who might have an inside perspective about a child like Younis?

The group should find its way to 'anyone involved in Younis's life – in and out of school'.

Discuss the practicalities of consulting 'everyone'.

- Ignoring the practical issues for a moment what other barriers exist to obtaining the inside perspectives we need?

'Someone may not feel it is safe to do so'

'trust and a safe place are essential'

'time and resources'



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Ask the group to think about how trust can be developed with

- a. Members of the family or carer network
- b. Staff in the school and those tasked with managing the issues

[Someone may raise the issue of trust between school staff and external professionals]

10 minutes

Applying this to real-life cases (group activity)

Take 3 or 4 children (selected in advance or by the group) who are known to have chronic conduct issues.

Ask the group to create a list of the people who are affected by, or have an influence on, each child. Include family members, siblings, staff who directly or indirectly work with the child. This should be displayed to the whole group.

If the family network is unknown, then add 'unknown family members' to the list.

Before continuing remind the group about the reasons why an inside perspective has been missed. These could be displayed to the group or they can refer to the **Introduction**.

Next to each name, indicate whether they have shared their inside perspectives and if not the main reason(s) why. These can be abbreviated as

No words *Not safe* *No opportunity* *No confidence*

Discuss this key question:

- Looking at these lists, how well do we really know these children?

15 minutes

Closing optional activity

- What pastoral management processes exist currently which could enable us to get a richer and deeper understanding of the students who most challenge us?

One way to make this a quick and low-stress activity is to ask each participant to say in one short sentence how the school could achieve a better understanding of their most difficult children.

If the group has time and is the right mix of staff, extend the discussion and structure it as seems appropriate.

The objective is not to completely reform your school policies (!) but to consider what might need to happen to enrich the narrative around each child.



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It might be that you decide a complete review of policy is needed! On the other hand, there may be ways in which current processes could be developed. There may be specific training needs. Family group meetings are an effective and easily resourced way to gather many perspectives. Staff off-the-record 1:1 meetings may be a useful strategy.

Record the outcome of this discussion and share it with senior managers.

10 minutes

For more non-coercive insight and skills based on relational science, browse our resources www.narrative.org.uk

Don't forget to feedback how the activity went – you can do so by adding comments to the resource article on the website.