

Looking 10 x 2: An exercise in observation

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This exercise is designed to help participants understand what is meant by “no two people see the same.” It introduces the concept of *selective perception*.

Selective perception is the tendency for all people to take more notice of things, events, ideas, and so forth that interest them. In most cases, this is a helpful tendency, as it aids us in making sense of the world. In stressful situations, however, it can cause people to focus on that which is familiar, over that which is not, and can lead people to ignore or dismiss essential facts.

Using *Looking 10 x 2* shows participants that they cannot take what they see for granted, because the person they are working with may not see the same thing. This exercise is designed to be completed before a longer observation exercise in which participants will be asked to describe, without making any inferences or interpretations, what they see in a work of art.

Looking 10 x 2 is a 10 minute warm-up exercise. It pairs well with either a longer observation exercise, or can also be paired with an expressive writing exercise in which participants are asked to answer the following question, “Before this exercise I used to think....now I think...” Writing helps deepen participants’ understanding of the pitfalls of selective perception.

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1. Using the slide presentation that follows, move to slide 4 and tell the participants that you are about to show them an image for 10 seconds and they should remember what they see.
2. Show the painting, “Wheel of Fortune,” by Audrey Flack for EXACTLY 10 seconds.
3. Move to the next slide. Ask the participants to call out the names of objects in the painting. They will probably see the following (based on my experience) : skull, grapes, calendar, lime, mirror, photograph, candle, poker chip, tarot card, lipstick. After they have named around 10 items, tell them they are going to look again for 10 seconds.
4. Move to the next slide which shows the image again. Show the image for EXACTLY 10 seconds.

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4. Move to the next slide and ask the participants to call out what they saw this second time of viewing the image. They will probably see the following: necklace, hourglass, mirror ball, wine glass, hand mirror, pin (or needle or nail), carafe, dice, grape leaves. For some reason, participants often fail to notice, or call out the blue cloth or curtain in front of the skull. Sometimes they see the reflections in the mirror and mirror ball, but sometimes they do not.
5. Talk about the positives and negatives of selective perception. Ask participants if they have ever felt like they were sure someone “knew what they were thinking.” If so, how did they find out they were wrong? Have they ever experienced selective perception in a real world situation? Where they missed something seemingly in front of their eyes? How might selective perception cause problems in the medical field? In subsets of medicine?

Looking 10 x 2

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Looking 10x2

1. Look carefully
2. Remember what you see



Audrey Flack, *Wheel of Fortune*, 1977

What did you see?



Audrey Flack, *Wheel of Fortune*, 1977

What else did you see?

What did your neighbor see?

Do we all see things the same?



Audrey Flack, *Wheel of Fortune*, 1977

Perception
