

Synopsis of 'Perspectives' Training Programme

Context

We live in an era where everything has become magnified and amplified – rolling news and social media – contributes to what often feels like our being overwhelmed and our increasing inability to tell the difference between fact and fiction, reality and illusion, truth and untruth.

We seem to be constantly connected and switched on, living our lives through our phones, barely able to put them down or away let alone turn them off. Modernity has brought with it many social ills. It's barely a coincidence that the rise in anger, anxiety, stress, depression and suicide has also coincided with the rise in social media and in particular the growth of the smart phone.

In their book, *The Coddling of the American Mind*, Greg Lukianoff and Jonathon Haidt write, *'It's great the way we can connect and communicate with people instantly and for free, but this hyperconnection may be damaging the mental health of young people.'*

In the book *'What Should We be Worried about?'*, Neurologist and Cognitive Neuroscientist, Marcel Kinsbourne writes, *'The impoverished response elicited by a posting of good or bad news or Twitter – OMG, CUTE! How cool!, etc. – squanders the opportunity for interpersonal warmth, an embrace, admiring a ring, a diploma, a baby, and the attending reminiscences, the anticipations and sharing of feelings in depth, that happen when two people face each other, lock eye contact, and experience the reality of each other.'*

In his book, *Team Human*, Douglas Rushkoff tells us that *'Going online went from an active choice to a constant state of being. The net was strapped to our bodies in the form of smartphone and wearables that can ping or vibrate us to attention with notifications and updates, headlines, and sports scores, social media messages and random comments....The more we are interrupted, the more distracted we become, and the less we avail ourselves of the real-world markers we use to ground ourselves....Instead of designing technologies that promote autonomy and help us make informed decisions, the persuasion engineers in charge of our biggest digital companies are hard at work creating interfaces that thwart our cognition and push us into an impulsive state where thoughtful choices-or thoughts itself-are nearly impossible.'*

A result of all this connection? We now seem to live in a climate where everyone seems less patient and less willing to listen leading to an angrier, less kind, less compassionate, less forgiving, more competitive, more critical and ultimately more judgemental period than at any time we have known. We see this play out in social media more visibly than anywhere else does.

We are being 'forced' into making decisions to opt for 'one side or the other', right versus left, working class vs the elite, democracy versus authoritarianism, socialism versus capitalism, compassion versus blame, and so on and so on.

Pankaj Mishra describes the modern era as an *'irruption of the irrational where 'progressive versus reactionary, open versus closed, liberalism versus fascism, rational versus irrational'* and where only *'what counts is what can be counted'*¹

Social Media, an arena we frequent daily, arguably hourly, but where more often than not, an arena where facts are not checked, assumptions rule, opinions dominate, everyone is an expert, and where our conclusions are ruled by gut feeling or an emotional response to the assertions of others, and has unduly influenced our ability to make sense of the world around us.

We are losing perspective and we need to reclaim this. In the book, *This will Make You Smarter*, Linda Stone writes *'Everything we know about our strongly held beliefs and in some cases even what we consider to be 'factual', creates the lens through which we see and experience the world and can contribute to a critical, reactive orientation. This can serve us well. It can also compromise our ability to observe and think in an expansive generative way. When we cling rigidly to our constructs, we can be blinded to what's right in front of us.'*

Constantly connected, consuming so much information and whether by choice or not, being forced to make endless decisions leaves little or no time to think and to reflect and ultimately reduces our ability to have perspective on events, people, situations, our surroundings, beliefs and so on.

¹ 'Welcome to the Age of Anger', Pankaj Mishra, The Guardian, 8 December 2016

The 'Perspectives' Training Programme

'Perspectives' is a training programme that helps individuals to achieve a greater sense of perspective so that they can develop their approach to dealing with a range of issues, not only in their daily lives but in their everyday practice which in turn can be used to support and positively influence the approach of those they're working with.

The problem with how we perceive issues emanating from people, situations, events or our surroundings, is that the focus is usually on our ability to manage our responses and emotions rather than increase our ability to have perspective.

'Perspectives' helps us adjust our thinking in order to understand what we perceive and thus familiarise ourselves with the reality of the situation, surroundings or event we are in, or the people or things we face. As a result, practice evolves, and the issues we face we deal with in a much more productive manner, i.e., we are able to reduce or minimise them before they become something that we then have to manage or control, which is often dependant on other factors, some of them out of our control.

The Training will be governed by the following principles:

- reflection on and examination of our perceptions and narrative;
- tailoring and managing our expectation;
- acknowledging our role and responsibilities in discourse;
- 'it is what it is'; and
- 'letting go.'

Aim

The aim of '*Perspectives*' is to instil in participants a greater sense of perspective so that they are better equipped to manage and respond to the challenges of the modern era and in doing so support their ability to 're-imagine' outcomes

Objectives

We will achieve the above by:

1. recruiting and selecting targeted audiences willing to commit to and immerse themselves in an intensive process of exploration, reflection and re-imagining ways of thinking;
2. engaging participants in a continuum-focused journey that promotes progressionary learning;
3. enhancing participants capacity to better manage impact of challenges, reduce 'the threat' posed, and 're-set' their approach in order to live and practice a more stress-free life;
4. helping participants to 're-think' their mind-set in order to reduce and de-escalate challenges;
5. enhance the ability of participants to perceive, understand and deal with what is reality and what is not;
6. creating space and time for reflection;
7. engaging participants in a process of self-assessment so as to identify goals, milestones and outcomes;
8. increasing resilience, self-awareness, self-belief, confidence and self-esteem;
9. using a wide variety of non-formal methodologies to fulfil programme objectives;
10. ensuring outcomes-focused delivery.

Outcomes

'Perspectives' will achieve the following outcome for participants – an enhanced ability to:

- (i) understand better their individual context and how it informs their being;
- (ii) know what they can control/cannot control;
- (iii) manage and 'tailor' expectations;
- (iv) 'reality-check' perceived size and scale of individual issues;
- (v) understand how we inadvertently contribute to our own issues;
- (vi) understand what our narrative is and how it holds us back;
- (vii) ask the right questions so as to get the answers needed;
- (viii) understand how we are the sum of our experience(s);
- (ix) have 'honest conversations';
- (x) clarify internal thinking;
- (xi) 'let go' in order to move on;
- (xii) alter mind-set without compromising values and principles;

- (xiii) assess the relevance and importance of values and beliefs in relation to identity;
- (xiv) name, frame and explain 'the future self';
- (xv) develop 'mottos and mantras' to live by so as to improve outlook;
- (xvi) shift positions without 'losing face';
- (xvii) reflect safely and more securely;
- (xviii) plan for the future and take decisions so as to increase personal and professional capacity to deal with a wide range of issues.

Learning

Participants will have a better understanding of the 'Perspectives' concept, its methods and the competences it uses to aid and abet responses to challenges and issues. They will understand how these can be used to engage, navigate and negotiate new approaches in a more constructive, realistic, pragmatic and productive manner through a range of tailored methodologies that not only enhances personal and professional capacity, but promotes a mind-set that is primarily about understanding the reality of any situation they are engaged in, but how they can work through it and achieve a different but preferred outcome.

Participants will leave with a much greater perspective on surroundings, situations, events and people, and will be much better equipped to deal with every-day or large-scale challenges and issues that would normally raise their levels of stress, anxiety, worry or concern.

They will leave much better informed, possess many more tools and techniques, will perceive themselves and the situations they are in differently, will become more realistic, reflective, pragmatic and thoughtful, and will undergo a shift in their thinking as to how to deal with challenges and issues.

In addition, they will also become much more self-aware, relaxed, at ease, assured, confident and open to new realities and possibilities. They will also have a greater sense of their identity, motivation, values and beliefs, and a greater understanding of how they are the sum of their parts, their journey, their experience. They will understand how this has informed their outlook yet will uncover how they can redefine that outlook and view events, people, situations and surroundings through the prism of truth and reality and no longer bound by memory and imagination.

Their ability to engage with their peers, colleagues, clients and users in a much more meaningful way will increase and in turn, their practice. They will become stronger, more fulfilled, more rounded, more knowledgeable, compassionate, empathetic and positive in their approach with enhanced levels of motivation and renewed commitment to achieving the best outcomes in their work, for themselves, and for those they work with.

They will have much clearer ideas about their learning and how this can be used in the post-programme phase. They will also have developed new sets of relationships with a variety of practitioners across a number of European countries in which they can build partnerships, be it on related subject matter or following up on either of their respective interests.

Finally, participants will leave with a greater sense of perspective, a new or renewed approach to life, methodologies and tools they can apply in their everyday setting, new ideas and inspiration from interacting with their colleagues, enhanced confidence and self-belief in their own ability, and a commitment to design and develop post-programme activity.