

A STORY OF WRONG PERCEPTIONS

By Valerie Cox

A woman was waiting at an airport one night, with several long hours before her flight. She hunted for a book in the airport shops, bought a bag of cookies and found a place to drop. She was engrossed in her book but happened to see, that the man sitting beside her, as bold as could be grabbed a cookie or two from the bag in between, which she tried to ignore to avoid a scene.

So, she munched the cookies and watched the clock, as the gutsy cookie thief diminished her stock. She was getting more irritated as the minutes ticked by, thinking, "If I wasn't so nice, I would blacken his eye." With each cookie she took, he took one too; when only one was left, she wondered what he would do. With a smile on his face and a nervous laugh, he took the last cookie and broke it in half. He offered her half, as he ate the other, she snatched it from him and thought ... oooh, brother. This guy has some nerve, and he's also rude, he didn't even show any gratitude!

She had never known when she had been so galled and sighed with relief when her flight was called. She gathered her belongings and headed to the gate, refusing to look back at the thieving ingrate. She boarded the plane, and sank in her seat, then she sought her book, which was almost complete. As she reached in her baggage, she gasped with surprise, there was her bag of cookies, in front of her eyes. If mine are here, she moaned in despair, the others were his, and he tried to share. Too late to apologize, she realized with grief, that she was the rude one, the ingrate, the thief.

Source: A 3rd Serving of Chicken Soup for the Soul: 101 More Stories to Open the Heart and Rekindle the Spirit, by Jack Canfield (Author), Mark Victor Hansen (Author), Paperback – April 1, 1996

Observations / Suggestions

This activity of perceptions highlights the visual perceptions of people. It can be linked to the source of our different attitudes and beliefs, and that these factors influence the way in which we interact with other people. With this activity, we want to develop flexibility, in relation to the perceptions of others, how the participants relate to others, and to develop skills that enable participants to work in teams. This includes seeing differences of opinions as positive, and something that can be respected and appreciated, which helps to further develop empathy for others, self-awareness, and establish interpersonal relationships.

Discuss with the participants what their immediate reactions are to the story, and how they can link this to their own lives. Remember to use open-ended questions, such as:

- What happens in the story?
- Why did the person in the story react as he/she did?
- What surprised you? Why?
- How would you have reacted?
- How would you have felt?
- What do you think this story wants to tell us?
- How can you transfer this knowledge to your own life?