

Three Dimensions of Change leading into Feelings as Messengers Exercise

There are at least three dimensions involved in lasting change and arguably a fourth “spiritual dimension” that works in and through them. Those dimensions are thoughts, behaviors and feelings. All three with support from the spirit are essential for lasting change to occur.

Think about a time when you tried something new. Describe that experience. In what way do you notice thoughts, behavior and feelings with spiritual support involved in this example?

Exercise:

Think about a time when you tried something new - describe your experience with another person. Why did you do this? What was it like? Is it something you continued to do?

Share with a partner for 2 minutes each.

Ask two or three volunteers to share with the large group.

Introduction to Three Dimensions of Change - Theory Overview

In the VISIONS framework for deepening relationships across and through cultural differences - there are three dimensions named as important for lasting change to occur. As you thought about this experience in which you tried something new what information, what concepts, what prompt of the Spirit, what statistics may have led you to try that new thing? What action did you take? Did you move from one place to another? How about the feeling that you experienced? How did that impact what you did?

All three of these are involved in making a change, and all three are involved if lasting change is going to occur. One is not more important than the other, AND you might notice that you prioritize these three as you think about the process that has led to lasting change for yourself.

When you look at these three dimensions do you find yourself more drawn to one or the other? Maybe there is one that you tend to start with? A favorite?

One of the things I have learned over time as I have used the VISIONS model is that the feelings dimension is often undervalued, culturally discounted as less important, AND if ignored can keep me from being in an authentic relationship with myself, others and God.

I can tell myself “I could never learn spanish” because statistically people my age don’t learn new languages as easily as people younger. I could let that loss of age and sadness around that be the limiter. AND I could think: It’s not impossible. It will deepen my relationship with colleagues and communities who speak spanish. AND I’ll get the joy of seeing and experiencing a deeper connection to faith and culture among spanish speaking communities if I take the steps to learn spanish. It’s different from being told, “You need to learn this for a class.” I’m also aware of some mis-information both cognitive and emotional that I heard growing up as a kid in Miami that I want to unlearn. “Spanish people are taking over.” “Spanish people are coming here to steal and hurt me.” “I should be afraid of them.”

Once I practice “Self focus” and examine some of the obstacles to my changing in thinking, behaving and feeling, I can choose new options.

One of the assumptions of the VISIONS framework is that I am 100% responsible for asking for what I need. I can always be told no. And I can always ask and make new choices. This pulls me away from a victim role and empowers me to own my response - ability! This leads me from the anger that comes from having my boundaries violated to the power of knowing my dignity as a human being of sacred worth.

Feelings as Messengers Theory 10mins

- Everyone has feelings. They are neither good or bad, right or wrong. They just are a part of being human. AND I’d like to invite you to think about **what messages you remember hearing about feelings growing up?**
- Introduce the Feeling Wheel. Have you ever seen something like this Feeling Wheel? It is designed to be a “self focus” tool. We are going to talk about how that works. Does anyone see a word on here that they say all the time? What is a word you hear a lot at work/school/church?

Let’s take some time exploring the feeling wheel together, particularly the six core feelings at the center. All the other feelings usually find their way back to these six feelings and those six feelings have important messages to tell us about what we need. Let’s take a look at Sad. What is the stimulus for Sad? (See chart below). What is the message that Sad has for you? What do you need when you are Sad? Notice on the feeling wheel what is opposite of Sad. Do you see Joyful there? Here is how this works, when I am Sad and get what I need, then that action will lead me in the direction of Joyful.

We can do this exercise for Scared and Mad as well. The point is this. Feelings are a normal part of being human. They carry important messages for us to pay attention to.

Feeling	Stimulus	Message	Response
Powerful	"I accomplished that"	I'm awesome.	Keep on!
Joyful	Gratitude, awe, wonder.	I'm happy, excited.	Keep on!
Peaceful	I am connected in healthy relationship.	I'm centered.	Keep on!
Mad	Real or perceived violation.	My boundaries have been crossed.	I need to set limits, re-establish boundaries.
Sad	Real or perceived loss.	I'm experiencing or anticipating loss.	I need comfort, space, support to grieve.
Scared	Real or perceived danger.	I'm threatened or in peril.	I need protection, support, reassurance.

- Now that we have taken a closer look at the six core feelings and their definitions, we are going to do an exercise together that will involve us all getting up and standing in the middle of the room to await instructions. I want to invite you to do this exercise in silence, paying attention to what you are noticing about yourself and what you are noticing about others.

Feelings Walk 15 mins

I'd like you to look around the room and notice where you see signs with the Six Core Feelings. **I want you to remember when you were at HOME growing up.**

Now, I'd like to invite you to move to the feeling that you feel most comfortable expressing when you are at HOME.

Notice where you are and where others are.

Now, I'd like to invite you to move to the feeling that you feel least comfortable expressing when you are at HOME.

Notice where you are and where others are.

Now, when you are feeling this least comfortable feeling at HOME, is there a feeling that you show instead of that? Maybe a safer feeling? What feeling will you show instead of this least comfortable feeling when you are at HOME?

Notice where you are and where others are.

Now I want you to think about when you are at WORK.

I'd like to invite you to move to the feeling that you feel most comfortable expressing when you are at WORK.

Notice where you are and where others are.

Now, I'd like to invite you to move to the feeling that you feel least comfortable expressing when you are at WORK.

Notice where you are and where others are.

Now, when you are feeling this least comfortable feeling at WORK, is there a feeling that you show instead of that? Maybe a safer feeling? What feeling will you show instead of this least comfortable feeling when you are at WORK?

Notice where you are and where others are.

Now I want you to think about when you are WITH SOMEONE OF A DIFFERENT RACE OR ETHNICITY.

I'd like to invite you to move to the feeling that you feel most comfortable expressing when you are **WITH SOMEONE OF A DIFFERENT RACE OR ETHNICITY.**

Notice where you are and where others are.

Now, I'd like to invite you to move to the feeling that you feel least comfortable expressing when you are **WITH SOMEONE OF A DIFFERENT RACE OR ETHNICITY.**

Notice where you are and where others are.

Now, when you are feeling this least comfortable feeling **WITH SOMEONE OF A DIFFERENT RACE OR ETHNICITY**, is there a feeling that you show instead of that? Maybe a safer feeling? What feeling will you show instead of this least comfortable feeling when you are **WITH SOMEONE OF A DIFFERENT RACE OR ETHNICITY**?

Notice where you are and where others are.

OK, let's return to the group circle.

Debrief Feelings as Messengers Activity

- What did you learn about yourself/the group?
- Did you notice any trends?
- What value does this have for you at home, work and with people of different race/ethnicity?
- Why do you suppose that you might substitute feelings?
- What is the cost of avoiding, discounting or substituting feelings for you personally and for your work relationships?
- What are some strategies for strengthening your emotional intelligence and being present to what you are feeling?

SOME EXAMPLES THAT MAY COME UP IN DISCUSSION:

- Substitutions - replacing one feeling with another feeling. Ex: I have been socialized to think that it's not appropriate to show anger as a woman. Often when I'm mad, I'll look peaceful to others. Sometimes when I feel overwhelmed by anger I end up crying, because growing up it was more appropriate to show sadness than anger. I feel one thing but show something different.
- Covers - ignoring, minimizing or discounting the impact of feelings. Ex: I'm not joyful or sad. I don't feel anything. I'm fine.
- Combinations - experiencing multiple feelings at the same time. Ex: At the start of a new semester I often feel a combination of joyful and scared

VISIONS, Inc. Quote:

Ninety percent of authentic engagement is SUPPRESSED beneath the surface within the AFFECTIVE dimension of change. CHANGE can ONLY happen when we are EMOTIONALLY engaged and ready. If a person is OVERWHELMED by their own FEARS, SADNESS or ANGER the process of change will be very challenging.

