

“First-Year Writing Seminar: The Podcast,” Season 1

Episode Transcript: Greta Hundtofte on “Taking Seriously the Perspectives of Others”

Host: Welcome back to the September episode of The Opinionated Peoples. We start by asking you as the listeners to continue your kind and generous donations to our show to keep it up and running. Thank you. During this month’s episode, we will have a guest speaker, Greta Hundtofte, who sent in her essay a couple of weeks ago. She now reads her story from Missouri.

intro music

Greta: The other day I came upon an interesting article from the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) breaking down personal and social responsibility traits into 5 separate categories. While reading these 5 dimensions, I realized that the 4th one: taking seriously the perspective of others was the most important because it supports the other dimensions--you can’t have them without it.

For example, I will start with striving for excellence. This dimension, the 1st one, puts emphasis on a strong work ethic including the traits of responsibility and persistence. The reason the 4th dimension makes 1st dimension what the 1st dimension is, is through the inquisitiveness and truth-seeking traits. When I was in middle school, I started figuring out that I could understand school material better by asking questions. For example, in my science class I would always make sure that I knew the material by double-checking with the teacher by asking millions of questions. Asking these inquisitive questions made me a harder working student because I just wanted to know the information being taught in class. My use of the traits like truth-seeking from the 4th dimension created the work ethic described in the 1st one.

Now, after seeing that connection of dimensions I looked at the others. Lo and behold, dimension 2: cultivating personal and academic integrity turned out to be connected to dimension 4 through the trait of respect for others. The 2nd dimension mentions that recognizing the value of multiple points of view is important for the respect for others trait seen in both dimensions. This is the entirety of dimension 4, recognizing others’ perspective and respecting it, regardless of what one thinks. I have always been one to put myself in others’ shoes to learn and understand more about their situation and to respect them as a person. For instance, when I get frustrated at someone whose mood is constantly down in the dumps and overall crummy, I take a look at how I would feel if I had gone through what that person had been through. I looked at it two ways, me going through it with my experiences and me going through it with their experiences. When a friend of mine had an issue with the way I said something to her, she was super upset and gave me the cold shoulder. At first, I thought it was really dramatic of her to be so upset over a small amount of words. However, when I really thought about how I would feel if I was under a bunch of school stress and the constant issues at home with her parent’s divorce, I realized that this was her way of expressing her frustration at ALL of her situations, not just the small problem we had. This way helps me understand why she was feeling the way she was feeling and how to help her or just understand how she felt. Now, because I looked at it from multiple points of view, I can treat that person with respect and fairness to their situation. That example shows the 2nd dimension cannot exist

without the perspective of dimension 4 because of the common trait of respect for others being implemented in the overall theme of personal integrity.

At this point, I was convinced there had to be more connections between the 4th dimension and the others. I was right. I looked at the 3rd: contributing to a larger community. A common trait between the 3rd and 4th is social awareness, as well as knowledge of context. While knowledge of context isn't really included in dimension 4, I believe that the truth-seeking trait from dimension 4 is a part of the knowledge of context trait, which establishes the 3rd dimension trait altogether. Without this perspective in the 4th dimension, dimension 3 would lack the scope of a broader community reach that comes from social and cultural awareness. For example, I am a generic middle-class white girl. While I will probably never truly understand the experiences of the communities that I don't belong to, I have and will continue to educate myself on problems of my peers that belong to different communities. To elaborate on that idea, I am well financed because I was born into a house that was able to support themselves. I don't know many people that live in poverty or have experienced homelessness before, but I can inform myself about their situation and become aware of their struggles in order to contribute to their community. This shows dimension 4 being implemented into dimension 3 because I am using truth-seeking to gain context and awareness to contribute to a larger community. Without looking with the perspective of the 4th dimension of personal and social responsibility, one would not know how to contribute to a broader community if they only knew their own.

Lastly, I took a look at dimension 5: developing competence in ethical and moral reasoning. As it turns out, it is the most closely tied dimension in this list to dimension 4. These dimensions share four whole traits: respect, truth-seeking, empathy, and self-efficiency. Empathy creates the ability to reach out to others with compassion and social intelligence (more traits from dimension 5). Truth-seeking creates honesty by being dedicated to the truth. Self-efficiency creates confidence through self-confidence that comes with self-efficiency. Finally, respect creates responsibility by respecting one another by staying true to oneself and keeping one's word. When I am confronted with a problem, I utilize perspective to come up with a solution. By looking at all sides of something, I use these traits to find the moral and ethical sides to each possible solution, therefore choosing the most effective one, demonstrating competence in ethical and moral reasoning. Take the time I was developing an opinion on a popular political agenda of abortion for instance. While my initial thoughts were that I don't like killing babies, I looked into the perspective of other women who might need or want an abortion for various reasons like their own safety and their ability or inability to actually raise a child. Therefore, I came to the conclusion that the moral and ethical thing to do was to support abortion based on the experiences of others, not necessarily myself. This shows my use of dimension 4's perspective to reach a conclusion competent in moral and ethical reasoning. Without that use of perspective, the correct conclusion might not have been reached.

cue outro music, soft gradually growing louder

Overall, dimension 4 of the AAC&U's list of dimensions of personal and social responsibility is the most important because it creates and shares traits that are vital to the other dimensions. It created the 1st dimension's ideas of hard work through inquisitiveness, the 2nd dimension's topic of personal and

academic integrity with the trait of respect for others, the 3rd's ideas of contributing to a larger community with knowledge of context and finally the 5th's idea of ethical and moral reasoning through empathy, self-efficiency, truth-seeking and respect. Without these important traits of perspective, the other dimensions would not be able to be applied. Dimension 4's perspective is the key to personal and social responsibility.

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