

## **MODULE 4**

**Class Title:** What is Perceptions?

**Aim of the lesson:** To see what factors affect our perception of ourselves and the world

**Category:** Personal Development

**Lesson Format:** Power point presentation with discussion

(Greeting to students) *Assalamu 'alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh*

*(Ta'awwudh) A'oodhu billahi min Ash Shaytaanir Rajeem*

*(Tasmiyah) Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem*

*(Du'a) Rabbish rahli sadri wa yassirli amri wahlul 'uqdatum millisani yafqahu qawli* [Surah Ta-Ha 20: Verses 25-28]

Slides 1 to 5:

Today we have an introductory” warm up” kind of class for those who are new and also for those who are not so new. So tell me what does” Perception” generally mean? I know we all have different perceptions about various things, places and people but what does this term literally means?

Student: Your ideas, your view or perspective

Teacher: Good. Anyone else?

Student: It's how you see things

Teacher: Exactly. Perception is “how we see things”. What do you need for seeing things?

Student: eyes

Slides 6 to 11:

Teacher: ok now look at these slides.

(slide 6 shown)

Student: It's an illusion. I see moving dots...

Teacher: Really? Are they moving? But if you fix your glance at the image, does it seem in motion even then?

Student: It's an illusion

Teacher: What is an illusion? A false perception. Something that your eyes see but its not there which means that our eyes play tricks on us sometimes. They dodge us and make us see something which may not be there.

Look at this slide

(slide 7 shown)

Teacher: How many of you think it's moving? Raise your hands.

(some students raise hands)

Teacher: ok and how many of you think it's not moving?

(others' raise hands)

Teacher: Well again we come to agree that it's yet another illusion. Our eyes are playing tricks on us. When we focus on one wheel it seems motion less otherwise the wheels seem to be turning.

Teacher: what is this?

(slide 9 shown)

Students: camels

Teacher: You know there is scarcity of water in deserts and what kind of illusion does a traveler in desert usually see?

Student: A mirage

Teacher: What is a mirage? It is an optical illusion. Under a baking sun, a weary traveler trudges across a seemingly never-ending expanse of desert. Looking up, he suddenly spots something in the distance; a sparkling lake. He rubs his eyes. Its still there. Picking up the pace in glee, he strides ahead...only for the water to melt into thin air...that's the illusion called mirage.

So that means sometimes we may perceive something to be there but it may not be there.

( Slide10-11 shown)

This is called the "illusion of space" in which if we move the arrows and lines a bit, the place seems more spacious. This illusion is used in Arts and Architecture. You must have seen that some places which are small in dimension such as shops or small boutiques etc, they put huge mirrors on walls to create a spacious look.

Slides 12 to 14:

We agreed earlier that our eyes can dodge us sometimes and we also concluded that perception may be different for different people. Some of you perceived the dots to be moving and others did not.

Now what are the factors that have an effect on our perception?

Sometimes the surrounding changes and the same thing looks different. You look at something during daytime, you are totally fine with it but the same thing at night, spooks you out.

A chameleon, if its sitting on a green branch, it changes its color to green and if it's a dried out brown twig it may adopt a brownish tinge so what changed the chameleon? The surroundings!

Another example is of our shadow. How does our figure look in a shadow? Longer and somewhat distorted but is that how we really are? No ! What is effecting our perception of our physical self?

Students: the surrounding (day or night time)

Slide 15:

Teacher: Look at this example. Can somebody please read what this is written?

Student: The cat

Teacher: But the middle letter in both words is written such that it can be read as an "A" or "H" so what made you think that in "The", middle letter was "h" while in "cat" it was "a"?

Student: The surrounding letters helped in making that connection.

Slide 16:

Sometimes the same thing looks different when compared with others. For example, Karachi is a BIG metropolitan city but compare it with the entire area of Pakistan? Now its not so BIG anymore because Pakistan itself is much much bigger. Now compare Pakistan with other countries of the World. In fact put a dot or a circle on a globe where Pakistan is located and suddenly that perception shifts because on a world map, Pakistan is pretty tiny. So you see how perception keeps changing in comparison with other things.

Slides 17 to 19:

Similarly, Earth as a planet seems gigantic to us right? Now see this slide where it is compared to other planets such as Jupiter, Saturn and Uranus. Our Earth gets smaller and smaller and other planets seem pretty HUGE. However, now when we compare ALL these planets with Sun, ALL of them reduce in size so what changed our perception. Comparison!

Shall we compare ourselves now? Use your imagination and put a dot in a globe mentally, ok? Where in Earth are we? In Asia. Where in Asia? In Pakistan? Where in Pakistan? In Karachi. Where in Karachi? In Defence Society. Is the dot getting smaller?

Student: There is not a dot anymore

Teacher: (laughing) True but wait its going to get even smaller. Ok so where are we in Defence? Phase 2. Where in phase 2? At a class called Perceptions where there are quite a few girls and if you put a dot for that for yourself, can you see yourself on the globe? Your presence and mine is miniscule in comparison isn't it? But I think that I am something! God must be looking at us from up there and laughing!

We compare on a regular basis as parents as well as children, and that continues to change our perception of things and events. For example, generally what parents do is that, I will give you my example. My son got 83 marks in English and I was pretty content. In fact out of generosity I even told him he can order pizza that night BUT this was until I found out that his class mate who goes to the same tuition got full eight marks more than him. BOOM! Now that blew me off my handle. No pizza. *You sure are slacking and gotta put your act together.*

This isn't the case with elders only but children do the same. When they are small say...perhaps up till the age of ten...their moms are the **best**. They are the centre of your universe. You are always hugging and being lovey dovey BUT as you step into your teens and you compare your mom with your friend's mom, suddenly she is a Cruella Deville! "My mom! she doesn't let me go everywhere like my friend's mom or lets me wear what I want" . "My friends mom doesn't do any drama if she comes in late at night, why can't my mom be as cool as so and so's mum".

So what has happened is that poor mom is the same but I have changed my perception of my mom by comparing her with others.

Slides 20 and 26:

We look at things based on many factors. Some things that effect our perception are age, where we live, what we do, our education, social circle and our religious beliefs.

Teacher: How does age effect our perception?

Student: As you grow older, you become wiser

Teacher: Yes...hopefully (laughs). Can anyone give me a specific example as to how your perception changes with age? Ok let me give you the example of a child's perception of "Star".. You must have seen little kids reciting "twinkle Twinkle little star " with such passion and vigor because for them star is something out there bright and shiny like a diamond in the sky but as that child steps into maturity, the shiny star is one which twinkles on his O levels /A levels papers!! You know how as students, you struggle for star A's...

However, for an as astronomer, that star is a burning ball of fire so the star is the same but perceptions keeps changing.

Well. I will share a personal experience with you regarding how age changes perception. Its kind of embarrassing actually and you better not quote it outside class. (teacher laughs).

I had this fantasy of going to Disney land and shaking hands with Mickey Mouse ever since I was seven perhaps. I am sure every child at that age loves the idea of meeting up with their favorite characters whether it is Sleeping beauty or Puss in Boots etc.

However I didn't get to go at the appropriate age due to certain reasons and it was with three kids tagging behind me that I very recently went to Euro Disney and my husband would keep pointing Mickey Mouse to me knowing how I so badly wanted to meet a "mouse". But you know what? I was more interested in their costumes, décor and makeup etc. and it wasn't me (thank god) but my four year old daughter who was jumping up and down with excitement like a yoyo when Mickey and Snow white passed us in the parade.

So tell me what changed my perception? Mickey still has that ridiculous smile and Sleeping Beauty was beautiful but who had changed? ME! I had grown out of it.

Look at slide number 26. For a child, a puppy is huge but for the mom, its just a puppy.

Slide 27:

We look at things based on not only what THEY ARE but who WE ARE. Notice how doleful that cat looks while the child is mesmerized by his new pet. He is probably saying, " My cute fishy , my dear pet" while the cat is probably thinking," when and how do I get to eat your cute fishy..yummmmy"

Slide 28-31:

Perception is also our point of view which gets affected not only by age but also by who we hang out with, where we live, our education and our beliefs. That is why there is so much variety of opinions because every individual is unique and has their own way of looking at things.

Teacher: In slide 29, how many of you think it's a duck?

(students raise hands)

Teacher: And how many think it's a rabbit?

(others raise hands)

Teacher: All of you may have reasons to believe that its either a duck or a rabbit because each one of us looks at things differently.

Similarly in the next slide, we see the million dollar question, "Who came first, chicken or the egg?"

Student: The chicken came first

Another student: no the egg came first from which the chick hatched.

Teacher: (laughingly says) we will try to conclude that some other time but for the moment are we agreed that people have different perceptions because of various factors and that perception is ever changing and not a constant.

Same is the idea conveyed through slide 31

Teacher: Is the glass half full or empty?

(class breaks up into a heated discussion in which some considered the glass empty while other gave reasons for its fullness)

Slide 32-33:

Teacher: We can look at things with the help of some tools and see more clearly. Can you think of some tools?

Students: Binoculars, microscope, telescope etc

Teacher: Masha Allah

(teacher writes a word in tiny font on the white board)

Who can see what I have written? Anyone at the back?? No one?

(then teacher uses a magnifying glass and asks the same question)

Students: The word is “Quran”

Teacher: Is it magnified or more clear at least?

Students: Yes

Slide 34:

Perception can be changed and we have, through various examples, concluded this by now.

For example, if you look out of the window and it’s raining, some of you might think “ *Oho* now the streets will have accumulated water for days and our maid won’t come and I will end up helping mom in house chores etc etc..” while others may start drooling at the thought of fried *pakor*as and *samos*as that usually accompany a rare rainy day in Karachi.

Slide 35:

Change the way you look at things and the things you look at will change.

Imagine yourself in a very happy mood strolling in your garden, everything looks beautiful to you, Grass looks greener, flowers fresher and even the stinky bricked cage where six of your

hens are kept doesn't smell so stinky today. But during exams when your mom makes it her life's ambition to scold you every two minutes and to top it all she doesn't let you use Facebook. I mean seriously its been a good twelve hours since you updated your status, go in the same garden, will you still feel the same?

Students: No

Teacher: So who changed? The way you look at things changed that thing. Look at the next slide. What do you see?

(slide 36 shown)

Student: A horse

Another student: No it's a frog

Teacher: What changed your perception? The way you held the picture transformed a graceful horse into a slippery slimy frog.

(slide 37 shown)

Student: Its written, "teach"

Another student: No its "learn"

Teacher: Again how you look at it changed it.

(slide 38 shown)

Student: An Eskimo

Another student: A Red Indian

(slide 39 shown)

Student: Its an old lady

Another student : It's a young lady wearing furs

( slide 40 shown)

Teacher: Now this one is famous, I am sure most of you have come across this illusion before

Student: Its two faces

Another student: no it's a goblet/ vase

Teacher: It could be both. There is no right or wrong. It's just how you look at it

(slide 41 shown)

Student: there are four sticks

Another student: no three or three and half

Teacher: So up till now we have looked at various things and had reasons to believe why it's a horse and not a frog or whether the glass is half full or half empty, it's a goblet or two faces etc etc. Our perception was changing and we often differed from others in our point of view which is just fine because we don't have to be clones of each other. However, we need to understand and be very clear what is the aim of this program called Perceptions where you spend a good amount of time each week when you could be snoozing off at home? Why are you coming here? Why am I coming here?

Slide 42:

We are coming here because the only reality is the Quran and it doesn't give us faulty perception. Here, at Perceptions, all of us get to be in touch with reality and have an opportunity to shed our faulty perceptions about various things, people or issues and straighten them out in the light of Quran and *Sunnah*.

Slide 43:

What is *Sunnah*? *Sunnah/Hadith* is the magnifying glass which makes the commandments and guidelines of Quran more clear to us. The Holy Prophet (pbuh) lived the Quran and his example is an eternal source of guidance for all of us so we cannot separate Quran from *Sunnah* or vice versa.

We know that its obligatory for us to offer *salah* but how to pray was taught to us by the Holy Prophet (pbuh). He didn't just verbally tell his companions but practically showed it. The same is true for all the commandments of Quran that are enjoined to us.

That is why this program is important because it can change our lives if we try to erase our fuzzy perception about our *deen* and replace it with a correct and better understanding of Quran and *Sunnah*. Quran is a reality and has the power to change who you are and how you look at things so please give yourself a chance.

(The teacher sums up her lecture by explaining figuratively on the whiteboard)

In the path of life, our perception keeps changing. Its different when we are three years old, changes when we step into teenage, matures in adulthood and so on and so forth. As Muslims, we believe that this journey will have an end in the form of death and we will reach our destination whether it is *Jannah* or not, it depends on which path we took in life.

It is Allah's (swt) mercy that He has not left us stranded in this journey of life.



He has given us a rope to hold onto in times of distress and confusion so we may be guided. That rope is the Qur'an and we are told to hold fast to it. It is the navigator and we need to firmly put our trust in it to guide us towards the right path. If you have confusion, refer to Qur'an, it will eliminate it. If you veer off the track, it will guide you back, if you have some questions, you will find answers in it *inshaAllah*. This will happen only if you consider it a manual for your life and not **just** a book for getting *barakah* (blessings).

You know sometimes, you are in a fix and you ask a friend for advice and what they say to you gets to your heart! It just clicks!

Allah (swt) says Quran is *mau'iza*. It is that advice which gets to you each and every time. it clicks each and every time!

But then why is it we don't feel that way? Quran knocks on the door of our heart each and every time we recite it but it doesn't do that wonder for us that a sincere friend's advice does, why? Because we need to change our perception of Quran from a book of *barakah* to a book of miracles. Let it work its miracle on you; open the doors of your heart the next time this advice knocks and let the *noor* (light) seep in.

Slides 44 to 72:

(Story of Seven wonders)

So you see how that girl had a different perception of the Seven Wonders of the World? She looked at things in a way her teacher hadn't. Isn't it wondrous to be able to look, feel, touch, taste and love? How bland would life be without the miracle of taste buds? How animalistic we would be without the capacity to love?

Let Quran change your perception for better. Allow it to be your companion in this World so it can show its support and friendship on the Day when no blood ties, no kinship and no influence will be of any use. You have to have this belief and with that belief you will come next week and not just listen to what the teachers say but let it change your perception for better, make time for Quran; absorb it and it will show its miracle to you *inshaAllah*.

*Jazakumullahu khair*

Du'a for end of a gathering) *Subhana Rabbika Rabbul Izzati 'amma yasifun wa salamun 'alal mursaleen, walhamdulillahi Rabbil 'alameen*

(Parting salutation to students) *Assalam alaikum wa rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh*