

EXERCISE Spinning Dancer

Purpose Give students an appreciation for how mindset works, how subtle yet powerful it can be, and how it can create conflict.

Recommended for Trail 2 What is Mindset?

Time Required 10-20 minutes

Key Concepts

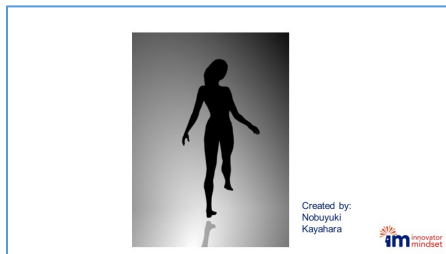
We are often unaware of our mindset and the impact it has.

We may fail to realize that there is any alternative perspective to the one we hold.

We often have a sense of certainty about things that are not certain.

Our sense of certainty frequently leads to conflict.

Changing our mindset can be challenging and requires conscious effort.



Instructions

1) Show the first slide in the sequence. Explain that this image went viral on the internet several years ago and has become so widely-known that it has its own Wikipedia entry.

2) Ask for a show of hands from those in the room and ask:

How many of you see her spinning clockwise?

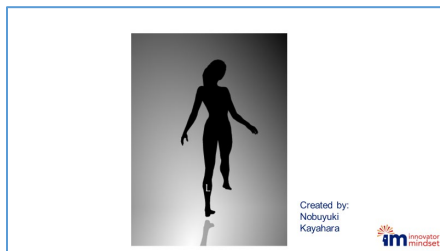
How many of you see her spinning counter clockwise (anti-clockwise)?

How many of you see her spinning change from one direction to the other?

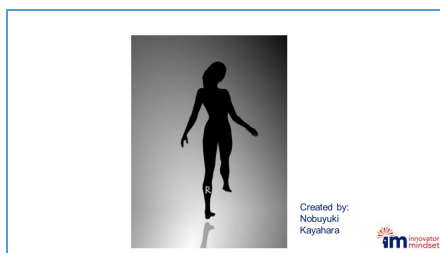
You will probably get a substantial number of hands on all three questions. Those who do not see her change direction probably cannot imagine how she could.

All these observations are incorrect. The reality is she can be seen to turn in either direction, at any time. Yet she never changes. What changes is how our brain interprets this image. That interpretation is made unconsciously at first. but with a little effort and practice, we can learn to control what we see. That is exactly how mindset works.

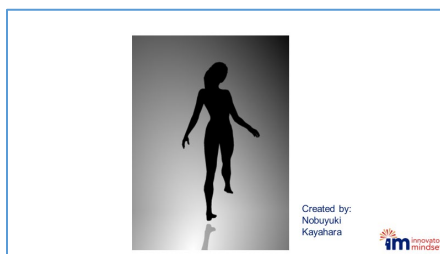
- 3) Explain that because this is a silhouette, there is no way to determine when she is facing toward you, and when she has her back to you. The image is really just a shape shift. Yet our brain automatically interprets there to be rotation, and in one direction or the other. We see her alternately facing us and facing away. Most of us have no conscious awareness that there is any choice to be made. We just see her some particular way and assume that that is the only correct way to see what is happening.



- 4) Show the next slide, which someone has added a slight line to, one that forces you to see one leg in front of the other and therefore a specific direction of rotation.



- 5) Then show the next slide, which someone has added a different line to, one that forces you to see her rotating in the other direction.



- 6) Advance to the next slide, which shows the original version. By now, more students will begin to see rotation in either direction, but many will still have trouble making the mental change they need to make to visualize either direction at will. You can help them by suggesting they try the following technique (something you may want to practice yourself):

Focus your gaze on her outstretched leg as it sweeps away from you. If you see her rotating clockwise, this will be as it sweeps to the left. If you see her rotating counter clockwise, this will be as it sweeps to the right. As that leg reaches its point of furthest extension, imagine that it bounces back toward you instead of continuing around. It may take a few attempts, but this helps most people control the change in direction. (And for

those who spontaneously see her change direction, this is probably where they see that change happen.)

You may still have students who are convinced that she is changing direction. So, you may want to have everyone watch her and raise their hand, or call out, when they see her reverse direction. They will quickly realize that that moment is not the same for everyone (because it's not her that's changing; it's the interpretation inside their head).

DISCUSSION

This is exactly how our mindset works. It is how we see the world working, and we often have no awareness of any alternatives. What we observe may seem so obvious that we are incredulous that anyone can see it in any other way. This false sense of certainty can lead to arguments and conflict.

When the dancer's perceived direction of rotation changes, so do many other things, including which leg she is standing on, which way her head tilts and which arm she has raised. Mindset is like that too, it has ripple effects in many different directions.

Ask students:

Can you think of other examples of how we may see things differently from other people based on our mindset? (It's rampant in politics, religion and social media—often coupled with harsh judgements.)

How might you overcome this tendency? (Be more humble and less certain of what you observe. Seek out the perspectives of others—especially when they are different from yours.)

What are the implications of this for how you lead? (Conflicts may be due to mindset rather than the realities of the situation. Helping people recognize the role of mindset can reduce conflict.)

When you decide that someone or some group is wrong and you are right, which pattern are you following? (Status Quo Cycle – You're doing detect and correct.) When/where do we pass such judgements?