

Dr. Ignaz Semmelweis delivered babies at Vienna’s General Hospital in the mid-1800s. He also had responsibilities doing research on cadavers when he wasn’t delivering babies. One in ten women died giving birth in his ward, while a second maternity ward staffed by mid-wives had a much lower mortality rate. He couldn’t figure out why. Then Semmelweis left Vienna for a four-month visit to another hospital. When he returned he discovered the mortality rate had improved dramatically while he was gone. Suddenly Semmelweis had to ask himself a tough question. What part did he play in this terrible problem? When he realized that the primary difference between his work and the work of the mid-wives was that he spent extra time working on cadavers, and they did not, Semmelweis developed his theories about the existence of germs. He determined that tiny diseased particles were being carried from the cadavers to the healthy patients on his own hands! This discovery led to the practice of doctors scrubbing their hands to get rid of germs. But think of how Semmelweis felt when he realized his own contribution to the death rate. The true answer to the problem was found only when he asked the most important question: “What part of this problem is caused by me?”

Deception is common, but self-deception is seldom recognized. Have you ever been upset with a situation involving a friend, and then discover YOU caused the problem without realizing it? Everyone likes to be “Right” rather than “Wrong”. The problem is that we place such a premium on being “right” that we lose the humility to consider the possibility of being “wrong!” So, we blame, we finger point, and we excuse ourselves, when instead, we should look in the mirror and ask the question: “What part of this situation is mine?” You can minimize these little dramas in all your relationships if you’re willing to ask, “What part of this situation is caused by me?”

The questions on page 2 are designed to help you consider your role in misunderstandings, conflicts, and troubled relationships.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

Student will understand personal denial and identify examples from his/her life.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Distribute the handout to students after viewing the video.

DISCUSSION:

The questions on page 2 are designed to help us think of situations in which we played a part in a misunderstanding or conflict, and to honestly admit our role in whatever happened.

Answering our own questions honestly works best when we write them down. The first step is ask each question out loud, and then listen to the internal answer that naturally comes. Secondly, begin writing so as to record those thoughts that come from within. Writing down our thoughts activates the right hemisphere of the brain and reveals more truth, and less self-denial. We have some really good answers locked inside of us, just waiting for a really good question to be asked. So ask it!!

Self-Deception Worksheet

Use these questions to think of specific situations in which you were part of the problem.

1

In what way did I offend someone, add confusion, or mis-communicate in a recent situation?

Private Answer

2

What benefits will I experience by answering questions like this for myself?

Shared Answer