# Systematic Reflection

**Overview:**

In general, when we are dealing with other people, we mix up our perceptions, our thoughts, our feelings, our needs and our suggestions for improvement. This often creates ambiguity, allows room for interpretation and promotes tensions and conflicts. In contrast, a more conscious approach related to the aforementioned subjects, as if from a distance, enables us to reflect on incidents together effectively and to make even more unpleasant topics discussable and to find solutions.

Please, note: this method only works without accompaniment if the team works well together without much tension. If tensions exist, call in external help!

**Applying the method**:

Learning to reflect systematically requires some practice. It is possible to learn this in a group, especially if you support each other to follow the rules from the beginning. However, there are also offers for seminars etc. for this. The method is also known in a similar form under the name Nonviolent Communication according to Marshall Rosenberg.

It is important to take enough undisturbed time for systematic reflection and to create a suitable setting. It is very helpful, especially at the beginning, to have a "moderator" to help. This person can come from your own team. To practice, it is also helpful to write cards with the steps listed below, lay them out on the floor in a circle, and then go from card to card together, one after the other.

You can use this method either to systematically reflect on an issue or when one of the participants feels the need to address an issue that is important to him/her. It can be used in the case of emerging tensions between two people, or in the case of tensions and ambiguities in the team.

**Procedure for tensions in pairs**

At the beginning, both people in the conversation choose two or three very specific situations from the recent past that were formative for them or typical for the relationship with the other person. Next, one of them starts to describe one of the situations. The other person is only allowed to listen, not to respond or comment, and is attemps to completely feel his or her way into the other person's world of thought and feeling. This needs good guidance. Then the other person describes a situation, again the listener is not allowed to respond or comment. Afterwards, both take turns to describe their second situation, and if possible, their third situation.

Step 1: Description of the incidents/observations
Important: Concentrate on a specific situation, but do not put too much into it. Do not interpret, it is important to rationally and clearly describe the situation, what you have perceived yourself. There is no room for assumptions and no room for feelings at this stage!

Step 2: How does this effect me? What do I feel about it?

Important: you describe your own feelings clearly. Here, too, there is no room for assumptions and interpretations about the other person.

Step 3: My needs

Important: here, too, you stay completely with yourself, there are no assumptions and interpretation of others. What were my needs in the situation described? What was important to me at the time?

Step 4: What I concretely propose, what I would like to agree on.

My concrete suggestion of what would be good in such a situation. How to avoid getting into such a situation again.

Then the other party goes through steps 1-4 in the same way from their point of view, focusing entirely on their situation, their feelings, their needs and their proposal.

In a final step, when all situations have been worked through, concrete agreements are made, written down and agreed upon regarding how they will be followed up on.

**Procedure for systematic reflection in a group**

Step 1: Determine the exact topic and agree on a skilled facilitator. Topic can be a specific issue that led to misunderstanding and tension in the group

Step 2: Joint description of the incident/observations.

Important: Do not interpret. It is important to describe rationally and clearly what one has perceived. There is no room for assumptions and feelings! But as many as possible should describe their experiences from their point of view.

Step 3: What do we want to achieve with this topic? What are our goals? What do our mission statement and other agreements say about this?

Step 4: What specifically were the deviations that were not helpful?

Step 5: What suggestions do we have for improvement?

Step 6: What agreements do we make, how are they documented and followed up on? Who supports implementation and compliance and how?