

3CM (Conceptual Content Cognitive Map)

Instructions

This exercise is intended to capture your mental model of a given topic—to see how you think about a given issue. The process takes about 15 to 20 minutes, possibly longer. There are no right or wrong answers.

I want you to think for a moment about your own perspective on _____.
Now imagine that you're going to explain your perspective to someone who is unfamiliar with this topic. What are all the things you would want to be sure to mention?

STEP 1: Write each thing on a separate card. (place the cards in front of you)

STEP 2: Now, look through these cards and see if you can arrange them into groups based on how you feel they go together. You can use as many or as few cards as you want and you can add cards at any point.

STEP 3: After you have sorted the cards, please come up with labels for each group. Write this label on the blank, colored cards.

STEP 4: Next, arrange the groups in a way that reflects how they relate to each other. (Prompt to explain arrangement if they don't offer one; e.g. are some groups more closely related to each other?)

Conclusion:

- You may want to use a camera to take a picture of the results.
- You may want to put the same color sticker to indicate commonalities among the cards.
For example, you might use the stickers to label all of the cards in a group. You might then want to rearrange the cards in a different way to reflect other ways in which the cards relate to each other. (You could then use stickers again, and you could repeat this process as often as helpful.)

3CM uses and benefits (Leeann's notes from talking to a colleague)

A colleague of mine really appreciated the utility of the 3CM to be able to show gaps and differences. I think this might be influenced by my explaining to her how I used it with my partner Peter, where I was using 3CM to see how well I understood and could explain one of his research topics. Explaining my 3CM to Peter prompted him to fill in some key pieces that I was missing such that I was then able (temporarily at least) to do a better job of explaining the topic. I was telling her about this in the context of how students could use 3CM to help instructors (or fellow students) see where they're at and to get help filling in the gaps and correcting misunderstandings.

She used 3CM for trying to figure out what a proposal was trying to say.

Usually, people can't even tell and might suspect that she didn't even read it.

With 3CM, they are also able to tell the difference between:

1. She didn't get it
2. She disagrees

So, they can tell whether or not she got what they were trying to say.

In this case, they were even going to rewrite the proposal based on how she organized her 3CM. The version she read had too much jargon and wasn't clear in other ways as well.

She used 3CM to find out how others are seeing things and how they're experiencing things.

A suggestion we had for her for this was to do the 3CMs in a way that got at how they would guess that other key people are seeing things or would respond to something. For example, how do they think her job and her concerns would cause her to look at the situation?

We pointed out that because with things written on cards it becomes "out there" then it becomes separated more from the person. So, it's just about "this" (i.e., the cards/what's written on the cards) and not about the person who wrote out the cards. It gives people distance from what's out on the table. There is the person and then there are the ideas on the table, and those are more clearly two different things. Helps people be less defensive or less in performance mode. So, you can not like the ideas or how they are arranged, but that's separate from not liking the person.

She says she can tell from people's body language, for example, how they lean in more, that they're feeling "I've been heard." They know that she has heard them when she's using 3CM.

Typically, when she understands and gets what someone is saying, she then tends to get really creative. Often people aren't ready for that. If they know that they've been heard and that what they've said has been acknowledged, then they're ready for that kind of thing. But, if they don't get that sense, then they're not ready. She's realized it's about acknowledging that they are smart rather than trying to show them how smart she is with her ideas.

If she is internally resistant, 3CM helps her reduce her own resistance to being open. So, if it's something she's reading, then she'll find herself arguing with it while she's reading. But, she can't be trying to figure out what's salient and arguing at the same time. So, she realized that when she's arguing with it while she's reading then she's not trying to understand it. 3CM helps her to be more open because she can't do both at once and 3CM causes her to try to understand rather than to argue.

She used 3CM to list out things that someone really needed to get done this year. She then went through the cards with the person and asked him if he agreed that these were the things that really had to get done this year. He said I only have one thing to add to that list.

She uses the back sides of her 3CM cards to keep track of thoughts or resolutions or potential solutions for the thing written on the front side of the card. (She doesn't do this systematically for every card. The back sides of the cards are just used as needed.)