



## VOICING OURSELVES HOME: PERCEPT LANGUAGE

The Language of Revelation, Perceiving, Seers,  
Spiritual Practice, Personal Evolution, and Transformation

*Living is to be always in motion,  
our language, our voicing ourselves  
will assists us in our becoming  
if we use the  
“way of verbing rather than nouning ourselves”*

A major objective in learning the ways of Bear Medicine is to discover how to “voice ourselves” so that we are continually touching the flow of experiences moving through us; awaring ourselves of how Spirits are working with us, amongst us; and awakening ourselves to all the processes involved in bringing us home to our unique selves.

The more I aware myself, the more I understand why “Awareness is my Mother” for awareness is the process through which I grow my self. Awareness language is based on life as change, as motion. Nearly all peoples connected deeply with Earth’s rhythms, have language forms in which “verbs” are the primary mode of speaking. Nouns contain, boundary, and label events, people, experiences.

As I aware myself and “voice myself” through what is called “percept language”, I discover it is a way of languaging that unites what we now call the personal, spiritual, interpersonal, and collective aspects of ourselves as humans.

So, over the years in my teaching, I have found it to be of primary importance to pay attention to how we “language” ourselves. For me, weaving this languaging into our shamanic activities brings into our work, the wisdom and gems that are embedded within various streams of personal and transpersonal psychology.

Using this way of knowing and speaking me is especially important in Circles. I seek to Circle with others in order to grow, deepen, enlarge, and change me. I seek to Circle with others to support and witness other women as they choose to do themselves. I am aware that such Circles can create a Vessel supporting transformations for each women present.

I seek experiences of initiation which prepare me for how I live my transitions in my journeys through this world. Likewise, I Circle to support others seeking initiation into deeper ways of knowing themselves.



Percept language is a tool for navigating with one another as we do ourselves and support each other. By using percept language, I avoid the pitfalls that come from interfering, judging, assuming, and comparing either myself or others in Circle.

By such simple, yet profound, changes in how I speak myself and how I listen to others speaking themselves, we can create a container which truly holds the mysterious, alchemical processes of transformation: personally and collectively.

Thus, the purpose of this document is to introduce to you “Percept Language,” with the understanding that this is a language skill we shall learn and use together.

For some of us this language will sound strange, new, perhaps awkward at first. As with all learning, simply allow this way of speaking to have space and room to grow within you. Eventually you will come to experience this language as a major tool, like our drums, rattles, and journeys.

#### A Bear Woman’s Berlitz Course in Percept Language

I have learned that if I speak myself in at least one different way, I improve my awareness of myself, heighten my sensitivity to my sensations, take ownership of my feelings, thoughts, actions, and perceptions. I am also able to allow others to have their own feelings, thoughts, and perceptions. With this way of speaking, I also focus myself more clearly on my “interior” and am much clearer as to how Spirits work with me in the unique relationship I have and continue to develop with them. I am more often non-judgmental, can more easily be direct and remain more true to my experience, am more open and revealing. Thus I am more able to be me, fully present to myself, present to others as they voice themselves, and find being in Circle with others a most invaluable learning experience.

I shall present a sort of Berlitz to this way of speaking. This will be only a brief guide, complete with examples, comparing two languages —two ways of using English. This Berlitz will contain some common phrases and some guidelines by which to translate from everyday English to the special mode which I am using now to aware myself, to differentiate me, to better manage my own changes, and to respond more fully in my activities with various Spirits, both visible and invisible.

In Circles, this language helps us stay present to ourselves, witness to one another, avoid interpreting others, and honoring that each of us sit in different places in a Circle; each of us can be ‘seeing’ the same candle in the center of the Circle yet each of us have quite different perceptions of the candle and each perception is equally valued and cannot be duplicated nor completely understood by another. Thus a Circle can be a Container holding an incredible variety of experiences and every experience honored. This same honoring applies to all our experiences with other beings within this Universe.

#### Comparison of Modes:

Percept language is experiential language and used to learn more about me and through my awareness to be able to act with more of my own power under my conscious authority, and be true to my relationship with my Spirit helpers, and honor my experiences with all beings.

#### Concept Language

*is everyday language; the language of “Outside of me”; it is English as I learned it; it is familiar; expectable, conventional; it is my common mode of speech; it is often judgmental; circuitous, sometimes devious; circumspect and oblique; obscuring and screening.*

#### Percept Language

*is the language of behavior, of change; the language of “Inside of me”; the language of owning my behavior; the language of perception; the mode of “self speaking”; is non-judgmental; direct; is experiential; revealing and disclosing.*



To move from Concept Language to Percept Language, I drop *it, that, what, this*, and substitute I, or sometimes, me. 98% of the time my meaning is clearer to me.

Concept Language

*"This is really delightful."  
"I don't know what to say"  
It doesn't seem to matter."*

Percept language

*"I delight me with this."  
"I don't know how to say me."  
"I don't seem to matter."*

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Sorting out my feelings, my thoughts, and my beliefs and labeling them accurately is an important part of percept language; this is one way in which I differentiate me and make myself clearer to me.

Concept Language

*"I feel this is the right road."  
"I think I'm angry."  
"I feel that I'm correct"  
"I feel it's going to rain."  
Q: Where do you feel it?  
A: I don't know— it's just an idea  
"I feel it's going to rain."  
Q: Where do you feel it?  
A: In my left knee-I pain me in the left knee  
when the weather changes.*

Percept Language

*"I think this is the right road."  
"I anger me."  
"I think I'm correct"  
"I think it's going to rain."  
  
"I feel it's going to rain."*

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In Concept language I can speak of myself as the passive object of some various "things that happen to me." In Percept language I actively verb me, i.e. I turn my speech into a mirror of my doing me. I am always the subject (whether or not I am also the object) of any of my behavior. I am always doing me and only I can do me.

Concept language

*"I caught a fever."  
"I don't know why I get these headaches."  
"I'm bored"  
"You bore me.*

Percept language

*"I fevered me."  
"I don't know why I ache my head."  
I bore me.  
"I bore me (with the you-in-me)" (cf. later)*

*"You make me angry"*

*"I anger me."*

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In concept language I speak as though events, feelings, dreams, and thought all were visited upon me, while in percept language I acknowledge to the world that I visit all these states upon myself. I take responsibility for me. One way to make sure I am being responsible is to use the form—I have me.

Concept Language

*"A thought just occurred to me."  
"I got turned around."  
"It confuses me"*

Percept Language

*"I had me think"  
"I had me turned around"  
"I confuse me"*



Projections, interpretations, and assumptions regarding others are my mirror of me. There is you—out there whom I have no way of really knowing. There is you-in-me—(inside me)—my only version of you. The you-in-me includes the complex stimulus pattern impinging on my sense receptors, all my experiences of you and others, my perceptions, transferences, projections, hopes, fears, etc., etc. And there is a you-part-of-me (inside me). Often these are characteristics I recognize in myself which I also have be in the you in me, etc. If I have the you-in-me be strong, then the you-part-of-me might be the strong part of me.

Concept Language

*“When you came in I knew you were sad.”*

*“I know you don’t think I am funny.”*

*“When you bumped me, you made me angry*

Percept Language

*“When you came in I had the you-in-me be sad.”*

*“I have the you-in-me think the me-in-you is not funny.”*

*“When you and I touched, I had the you-in-me bump me and I angered myself.”*

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The only way that I can attribute characteristics to the you-in-me is if I have experience with those characteristics within myself. Thus, I can aware myself, if I own those characteristics in my characterizations of the you-in-me. (Parenthetically, I find, when others so own their characteristics in their characterizations of me, I free myself to examine their characterization for whatever I can tell me about me.)

Concept Language

*“When you spoke to her in that arrogant way you really made me angry.”*

*“You’re beautiful.”*

Percept Language

*When you spoke to her, I had the you-in-me be the arrogant part of me, and I angered my-self”*

*“I have the you-in-me be the beautiful part of me.”*

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Finally, in Percept language I recognize myself as the doer, the thinker, the feeler, the talker, the author of my life. I honor others as the author of their living. Being in such a state of Awareness, we witness to and for one another. This requires we pay attention, not project, interpret, judge, or make assumptions about each other.

We listen to ourselves and each other. This type of Awareness is what I call “witnessing” to others. Through “witnessing”, I and others in Circle are allowed to be seen and heard as our unique selves. The transforming power of Circling is partially based on the primary need to be really seen and heard. This need is as great for every being as is the need for food and shelter. The experience of loneliness can often occur when this reality of witnessing is not present.

Through “witnessing” we allow the voices of other beings and Spirit helpers, with whom one of us has some relationship, to have their voices heard. The Power of Circling has the greatest potential for transformation when all Voices have places of honor in the Circle, and every echo allowed to resonate.



### Other Examples

There are some other ways to attend to speaking myself so as to aware me maximally, which are important but really have little or nothing to do with the difference between concept and percept languages.

One of these concerns certain habits of speech, really poor habits of speech. Much of what I say is unnecessary, particularly when I introduce a topic, before asking a question, when I am scared, anxious, or nervous, or when I am attending to the needs of others-in-me rather than expressing or recognizing my own. These habitual ways of talking are simply words, just so much “trash.” If I drop the trash, what I keep is that much clearer and that much more direct.

Some examples of my trash appear below (they are the words with the line drawn through them.)

~~“I would like to tell you something; you probably wont understand this, but I really like you.”~~

~~“I didn’t want to interrupt you but...”~~

~~“I’ve been wondering if you would mind if I asked you what time it is?”~~

~~“There is something I’d like to say.”~~

~~“I wouldn’t want you to feel bad especially since I’m not sure what is happening, but....”~~

(Fritz Perls used to say “Everything before the “but” is bullshit.”)

The second aspect of speaking me clearly which I find worth attending to is the phenomenon Freud called slips-of-the-tongue.

I treat my slips as gifts. Slips are ways I gift myself from my deepest sources. I think of my slips as me saying me without any defensiveness and therefore purely. Often my slips have been my way to shortcut myself to new understandings.

The third of these areas I am trying to attend to in speaking myself is concerned with my asking and answering of questions. I aware myself that I am often quite indirect in my asking questions—or use questions rather than stating myself.

When I ask a question that conceals a statement or a request, I try to make you take the responsibility of interpreting me, rather than being responsible for myself.

For example, I’m worried and upset and I want to talk about a problem with you, but I say,

“Do you think you’d have a minute to talk?” I’m asking you to interpret that this is very important to me—and my questions doesn’t tell you that. One of the reasons I may do this is to get your commitment to me before I risk telling you what I’m feeling.

I have convinced myself that if I were to be a better asker and answerer, better in the sense of more precise, I would be clearer about myself and straighter in my relationships and I would not give myself away as often as I now do.

May how we speak ourselves be a source for awareness and growth.

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