

WORK SHEET – EXERCISE 9D

The tale of the six blind men and the elephant

Here's a traditional Indian tale for thinking together about our mistakes, our blind spots and the truth.

Once upon a time there were six blind men that lived in a little village in India.

One day, they heard the villagers and the children say: *"Hey! Come here, there's an elephant in the village today."* The blind men had no idea what an elephant could be.

They discussed and decided: *"Even if we can't see it, we can go there and we can just use our other senses to discover what it is."* So they all went to the elephant and each one of them came to feel and touch it.

The first one came towards the elephant. And, when he pushed against its large and robust side, he said: *"An elephant is like a wall, warm and a bit rough."*

The second one felt a tusk and shouted *"Oh! I feel something round and smooth that's long and sharp... There's no doubt that this extraordinary elephant looks like a spear!"*

The third one went towards the elephant and by chance grabbed the trunk that was swinging left and right and cried out straight away: *"I think this elephant is some kind of serpent!"*

The fourth blind man started touching its knee and leg with his impatient hand. *"It is fairly obvious that this animal looks like a tree, I'm feeling its trunk!"*

The fifth man was tall; he had grabbed onto the elephant's ear and said: *"Even the blindest of the blind will recognize that this marvellous elephant resembles a fan!"*

The sixth touched the animal and grabbed its swinging tail and thought he recognized something familiar: *"I feel that the elephant is something like a rope."*

So they started to discuss long and passionately about what an elephant was. Every one of them insisted that they were right and that the others were wrong. They ended up fighting, when a wise man passing by overheard them arguing. *"What are you arguing about?"*, he asked.

"We can't agree on what an elephant resembles!"

And every one of them said what they thought it was. The wise man, with his little smile, explained: *"All of you are correct. Everyone's vision is different from the others' because every one of you touched a different part of the elephant. The elephant has all those things that you mentioned."*

"Ohhhhhhhhhhh!", they shouted. And immediately the discussion stopped.

And they were happy to have said the truth, because every one of them told a part of the truth.

Here are some questions that can be part of a discussion or debate with the group.

1. What do you take from this story?
2. Are you sometimes curious like one of these blind men?
3. What happens in your body when you are curious? Who else feels that in their bodies?
4. Do you ever feel like you're right for sure?
5. What do you learn from this story?