

Habits of Mind: The Questions Intelligent Thinkers Ask that Help Them Solve Problems and Make Decisions

Habit #1: EVIDENCE

Looking for EVIDENCE: Intelligent thinkers look for the facts to help them make conclusions. And when people give them their opinions, intelligent thinkers ask for their supporting evidence before accepting the opinion. They ask questions like:

- How do I know what's true and false?
- What evidence counts?
- How sure can I be?
- What makes it credible?
- How do I know this?
- Is this convincing evidence?
- What more information do I need to understand this problem better or make this decision?
- How can I prove my point?
- Where is the proof?

Habit #2: POINT OF VIEW

Seeing different POINTS OF VIEW: Intelligent thinkers don't just believe everything they hear. Before they decide how they feel about a situation, they make sure they hear all the different perspectives. When they read information, they identify the source and figure out his/her background & possible bias or favoritism. They attentively listen to peoples' stories and try to be "in their shoes" so they understand the problem better. They ask questions like:

- How else might this look like if I stepped into other shoes?
- Can I look at it from a different direction?
- What if I had a different history or expectation?
- Whose point of view is this?
- Whose point of view is being left out?
- How is my own experience limited here?
- Whose experience or story can help me understand this?
- What do I think?

Habit #3: CONNECTIONS

Making CONNECTIONS: Intelligent thinkers recognize patterns in "old and new information" to help them make deeper discoveries. They also learn from their past. They ask questions like:

- Is there a pattern?
- Have we seen something like this before?
- What are the possible consequences?
- Does this remind me of anything I have seen or studied? In books, in the news, in my life?
- How can these connections help me understand this information or this problem in an intelligent?
- How is this connected to other things?

Habit #4: ALTERNATIVES

Imagining ALTERNATIVES: Intelligent thinkers always try to approach problems with new strategies. They are flexible and they don't limit themselves to the "same old ideas." They use their imagination to see new possibilities and are always open to new ideas.

They ask questions like:

- Could it have been otherwise?
- Supposing that?
- What if...?
- What new strategies can I try?
- What would I do if I were in their place?
- What other solutions are possible?
- What the consequences to these solutions?
- Who can help?
- How else can I look at this?

Habit #5: Significance

Considering SIGNIFICANCE: When intelligent thinkers are presented with information, they consider whether it is a "big deal," and for who is it is "big deal." They ask questions like:

- Does it matter?
- Who cares?
- What is the long term effect of this?
- What is the root of the problem?
- Why?
- Who is affected by this?
- Is there something that is more important that I should be considering?
- How will this affect my life?
- If I step back and look at all of this, what is a new theory I can make?
- How is this an important issue?