



Intellectual capacity: Seeing the other point of view will exercise your mind

Throughout your early school years, much of your education has been focused on learning specific facts.

You have had to learn and understand different formulas, rules, theorems. You have had to show that you have learned and can apply certain skills. In short, you have been looking for *the right answer* to every question or problem.

But we know that there *very seldom* is only one right answer or solution to anything. Depending on how you look at the situation, you might see two, three, or a dozen different—but equally acceptable—possibilities.

Looking for alternatives is the beginning of creative thinking. We are all capable of it. All it takes is a bit of conscious, directed practice.

The “other point of view”

Begin by practicing the “other point of view.” For example, most of us really believe that the world is round. What if it were really flat? How might this change affect travel? How might political ties change?

Subjects which allow us to practice the “other point of view” most freely are probably literature and history. Here, we can give free rein to our imagination.

Take any story in literature. Who do most people say is the hero of the piece? You suggest that he is really the villain.

Now look for proof.

Obviously, what you are going to have to do is to reinterpret the facts—not change them—to show how they can be viewed in a different way. The ‘hero’ for example, is shown helping a young child. Show how this helping might be seen as a bad act in certain circumstances.

In history, try to put yourself in other people’s shoes. Look at any historical event from different participants’ perspectives.

If you are studying the Vietnam war, try to understand what a Vietnamese farmer might have gone through. How would a fifteen-year-old orphan feel? View the conflict through the eyes of the Vietcong, or as military and political leaders of China, the U.S.S.R., and the U.S.A. might see it.

Creative thinking in class

An interesting way to develop this “other point of view” is to ask your teacher to allow the class to take a topic and each student or small group of students to take a different viewpoint.

Develop the topic from the viewpoint you have chosen. Present your case to the rest of the class.

Now, take the other point of view presented by another member and try to show him—using your stand—why his point of view is not as good or as useful as yours.

These deliberate attempts to see another’s point of view will free your creative thought. Before long, you will begin to view the world from an entirely new, an entirely broader, an entirely more exciting perspective.

*“There is more to be feared from closed minds than from closed doors.”
—Frank Tyger*