

HABITS OF MIND

The *Habits of Mind* were identified from research into human effectiveness by Art Costa and others. These habits or learning behaviours focus on how to think as opposed to what to think. Research about effective thinking and intelligent behaviour indicates that there are some identifiable characteristics in all effective thinkers. It is not necessarily only scientists, artists, mathematicians or the wealthy who demonstrate such behaviours. These characteristics have been identified in successful mechanics, teachers, entrepreneurs, salespeople and parents - people in all walks of life.

Increasingly it has become important to teach students that the goal of their education is intelligent behaviour, that the responsibility for thinking is theirs, that it is desirable to have more than one solution, that it is commendable when they take time to plan and reflect on an answer rather than respond impulsively, that it is desirable to change an answer with additional information and, even, that it is O.K. not to have an answer!

These learning behaviours are the essence of the *Habits of Mind*.

What are the *Habits of Mind* ?

Habits of Mind are those learning behaviours which good thinkers automatically turn to when faced with a problem or a new situation.

16 *Habits of Mind* have been identified. Of these 16, teachers at Roselea have chosen to focus specifically on the following 7 habits

Listening with Understanding and Empathy: Highly effective people have the ability to listen to another person, empathise with and understand that person's point of view.

Managing Impulsivity: Effective problem solvers think before they act. They make a plan, set a goal, and strive to understand directions before beginning approaching a problem.

Persisting: Successful people stick at a task until it is completed.

Striving for Accuracy and Precision: People who value accuracy and precision, take time to carefully plan and check their work.

Thinking Interdependently: Effective problem solvers realise that problem solving is so complex that often no one person can do it alone. No-one has access to all the data needed to make critical decisions; no one person can consider as many alternatives as several people can.

Questioning and Problem Solving: Effective problem solvers know how to ask questions to fill in the gaps between what they know and what they don't know.

Responsible Risk Taking: Flexible people are able to put themselves in situations where they do not know what the outcome will be. They accept confusion, uncertainty and the risk of failure as part of the process of taking responsible risks.

Applying Knowledge to New Situations: People who learn from experience are able to apply this background knowledge to help them confidently approach new situations.

Successful and experienced learners possess certain characteristics in their thinking, including being aware of their own thinking at any time; seeking clarity and accuracy in what they do and searching for new ways of viewing situations

HOW PARENTS CAN ASSIST THEIR CHILDREN TO DEVELOP HABITS OF MIND

Since parents, grandparents and caregivers are children's first teachers, it is critical that students encounter these language patterns at home as well as school. Following are some helpful suggestions.

HOW TO REALLY LISTEN TO YOUR CHILDREN

Habits of Mind are modelled by parents and caregivers at home. Following are some simple tips that can serve as a reminder:

1. Start listening early when your children utter their first sounds. Never stop listening. Communicating with your children is a little like staying in shape for a particular sport. You would never expect to be able to play a good game of tennis without a lot of practice. Listening and conversing with your kids works the same way.
2. Be patient. Don't try to pull words out of your children's mouths. Allow them to finish their sentences.
3. Face your child when you speak and when you are listening. Make eye contact.
4. Be a passive presence. Sit on the side of the bed for a chat. Watch a video together. Read something aloud. Linger at the foot of your child's bed as you tuck him or her in for the night. Most children will ramble on just to keep you there.
5. Angry? Wait before you open your mouth to speak.
6. When you go on a brief outing, take one child along for the ride. Private conversations increase your chances of hearing wonderful revelations.
7. Ask the right questions. Starting with the word 'why' will always put someone on the defensive, especially a child.
8. Let your child in on something that happened to you. Request an opinion.
9. Think back to what happened in your child's life yesterday and follow up: "How did it go on the playground?" "What did your teacher say about your project?"
10. Establish a time in your busy life when your child knows you will be available to him. Working mums and dads may want to consider an after-school telephone break, for instance.
11. If you fail to understand why they're upset, think back to the last time you were in tears about something and another adult said, "Oh, I really wouldn't worry about it." You have a right to your emotions, and so do your children.
12. Put down your newspaper. Turn off the TV. Stop doing your chores for a moment. Put aside all other thoughts and concentrate on the speaker.
13. Choose when it is wise to overlook mispronunciations or grammatical mistakes. Listen, instead, for the point of the story.
14. Consider printing off *Habits of Mind* posters as reminders for your children of the

key characteristics of the 7 learning behaviours taught at Roselea. Remember not to overwhelm them with too much information at any one time. Keep things simple return to them regularly and they are more likely to be remembered and applied.

SKILLS FOR A LIFETIME

BUILDING THINKING SKILLS IN YOUR HOME

WHAT'S IT ABOUT?

Do your family members...

- explore the consequences of their actions before they decide to do something?
- try to see things from other people's point of view?
- tackle problems and try to figure things out for themselves?
- talk together about situations, asking questions and listening to each other?
- speak up (in a courteous way) for what they believe is right, even when it's not popular?
- realize that they can't believe everything they hear read, or see on television?
- work hard, and not give up on tough problems, puzzles, homework, jobs?
- examine assumptions on taken-for-granted ideas?
- develop a "plan of action" before they launch into a project?

That's what Critical is all about!

HOW TO ENCOURAGE THINKING IN YOUR HOME

How can you create a critical thinking climate in your home? Consciously use language that will help family members think deeply.

- How will we decide which movie to rent? How would you compare these two?
- You say Thomas is lucky. Could you give me some examples?
- Now that you will be using the family car, what evidence can you give us that you will be a safe driver?
- I wonder how Sarah feels about moving to Queensland. What do you think?
- Which of these two cereals do you think is more nutritious for our family? Let's analyse them.

- I know you're angry with Liz, but what do you predict might happen if you call her and yell at her?
- This is a tough maths problem. What strategies have you tried so far?
- What is your plan of action for your school project?
- Based on what we know about (current event), what do you think might be the outcome?

Your family members will automatically begin to use this kind of language if you model it. They may ask some hard questions of you. That happens when you promote independent thinking!

DECISION MAKING

Help family member make decisions about their own behaviour. Help them think about their own thinking.

To promote critical thinking say: Instead of: HOW DO WE KNOW WHEN IT'S IMPROVING?

The noise you are making distracts me. Is there a way you can work so I won't hear you?	Be quiet
Jane where can you find another place to do your best work?	Jane, quit fooling around and get to work.
I like it when you take turns	No interrupting!
Thank you for the way you came in quietly and got right to work.	Good girl
What do we need to remember to take with us when we go to the movie?	We're going to the movie, so get your jacket and bag
What do we need to prepare lunch?	Get out the bread, butter, lunchmeat, tomatoes, and milk.
What might happen if you don't have that work ready for school tomorrow?	You're going to be in big trouble, Buddy!
Tell me what you do to help yourself remember.	Did you forget again?

Help me understand why you chose to pull out of the team	What? You dropped out of the team. What a quitter!
From your point of view, explain the fight you had with your sister	Stop fighting! Leave each other alone
When you say everybody is going to the party, who exactly do you mean?	I don't care if the Queen of England is going. You're not.

HOW DO WE KNOW WHEN WE'RE GETTING BETTER AT USING 'MINDFUL' LANGUAGE AND ENCOURAGING THE DEVELOPMENT OF *HABITS OF MIND*?

When you hear or see family members using deeper thinking, you know that your language and your modelling are paying off. What might you see or hear?

- Your son sticking with his model of the tropical rain forest until he's really pleased with the result.
- Your daughter taking notes and planning the pictures before she starts her pop-up book on giraffes.
- Your son saying to a friend, "Okay, we'll try the game your way. It's a good idea"
- Your daughter, saying, "My school project turned out well, but it was a big rush to finish it on time. Next time I'm going to have a plan!"
- Your son checking his test results to see which concepts he didn't understand.
- Your children asking questions, (some of them hard) such as:

I wonder why some plants are meat-eaters

Why does Peter get to ride his bike to the shops? I didn't at his age.

How can countries settle their problems without wars?

Why did I get in free, Dad? It says, "Twelve and under, no charge." I'm thirteen.

What do you mean, Mum, when you say I'm just like my dad?

Your daughter, discussing with her friends, saying, "Let's see how many ideas we can come up with for next week's party."

- Your child trying new activities, even though he/she isn't very good at them.
- Your child showing eagerness and curiosity to explore the world and learning to solve

problems: digging in the garden, taking apart an old clock, fixing his/her own bike, collecting leaves and insects, building with wood, straws or toothpicks, and discussing community issues.

Learn to recognise these critical thinking behaviours within your family and reinforce them.

In summary, how can you help create a climate in you home that foster critical thinking?

- Encourage looking at issues and situations from many points of view.
- Use language and questions that will trigger deeper thought.
- Give your child information to find a solution instead of telling him/her the solution.
- Ask your children to think and tell you about their own thinking.
- Help your child to use precise words instead of generalisations.
- Use "thinking words" such as compare, analyse, predict, classify, conclude, give evidence.
- Allow you children to look at a problem, decide what is needed and act.
- Let your child see you trying new things, learning, growing, and thinking through problems

Be thinkers together. We're always improving in our thinking and we all have a long way to go!

Think on!