

VitaMin

Vital health information in a minute

BE OPEN TO BEING OPEN-MINDED

Open-mindedness is a strength that can help you solve problems and discover new possibilities in life. It means being flexible and willing to accept when you're wrong. Being open-minded involves listening to all sides without letting your own bias get in the way.

Here are three types of close-minded behaviors and how to shift toward open-mindedness.

1. The defensive specialist. Do you immediately get defensive when someone opposes your ideas? Do you get flustered by questions or criticisms? You might respond by doing whatever it takes to prove you're right.

Shift gears: Let go of the need to "win" the conversation. Accept that it's OK to be wrong. You might even change your mind after weighing other viewpoints.

2. The sentence-grabber. Perhaps you're engaged in a conversation and you believe you know what the person is going to say next. So, you jump in to finish their sentence.

Shift gears: Open-minded people allow others to express themselves without trying to control the conversation. Show your interest with nonverbal cues such as facial expressions and nodding.

3. The naysayer. A co-worker or friend shares an idea that catches you off guard. You focus on what's wrong with the plan and react with a quick judgement, such as, "I know this won't work."

Shift gears: Open-minded people try to gain a better understanding before drawing any conclusions. Try asking questions to understand the other person's point of view, such as, "Why do you think this will work?"

POP QUIZ

Think about a time when you finished a book or movie with an uncertain ending. How did it make you feel?

Frustrated - I want just one ending and I want it be clear to me.

Neutral - I'm comfortable with not having a clear ending and am okay with choosing an ending that makes sense to me.

Intrigued - I can imagine even more ways the story could play out and enjoy visualizing them.

If you're "Neutral" or "Intrigued," it may be easier for you to explore differing viewpoints with an open mind. If you're "Frustrated," you may have a narrower view of what's possible. Remember, there's always room to grow and become a more flexible thinker.

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