

Developing Intellectual Virtues Requires Routinely Asking These Questions of Yourself

Intellectual humility – knowledge of ignorance, sensitivity to what you know and what you do not know.

- What do I really know (about myself, about the situation, about another person, about my nation, about what is going on in the world)?
- To what extent do my prejudices or biases influence my thinking?
- To what extent have I been indoctrinated into beliefs that may be false?
- How do the beliefs I have uncritically accepted keep me from seeing things as they are?

Intellectual courage – the disposition to question beliefs you feel strongly about.

- To what extent have I analyzed the beliefs I hold?
- To what extent have I questioned my beliefs, many of which I learned in childhood?
- To what extent have I demonstrated a willingness to give up my beliefs when sufficient evidence is presented against them?
- To what extent am I willing to stand up against the majority (even though people might ridicule me)?

Continued on inside.



Developing Intellectual Virtues, continued

Intellectual empathy – your awareness of the need to actively entertain views that differ from your own, especially those you strongly disagree with.

- To what extent do I accurately represent viewpoints I disagree with?
- Can I summarize the views of my opponents to their satisfaction?
- Can I see insights in the views of others and prejudices in my own?
- Do I sympathize with the feelings of others in light of their thinking differently than me?

Intellectual integrity – holding yourself to the same intellectual standards you expect others to honor (no double standards).

- Do I behave in accordance with what I say I believe, or do I tend to say one thing and do another?
- To what extent do I expect the same of myself as I expect of others?
- To what extent are there contradictions or inconsistencies in my life?
- To what extent do I strive to recognize and eliminate self-deception in my life?

Intellectual perseverance – the disposition to work your way through intellectual complexities despite frustrations.

- Am I willing to work my way through complexities in an issue or do I tend to give up when I experience difficulty?
- Can I think of a difficult intellectual problem in which I have demonstrated patience and determination in working through the difficulties?
- Do I have strategies for dealing with complex problems?
- Do I expect learning to be easy or do I recognize the importance of engaging in challenging intellectual work?



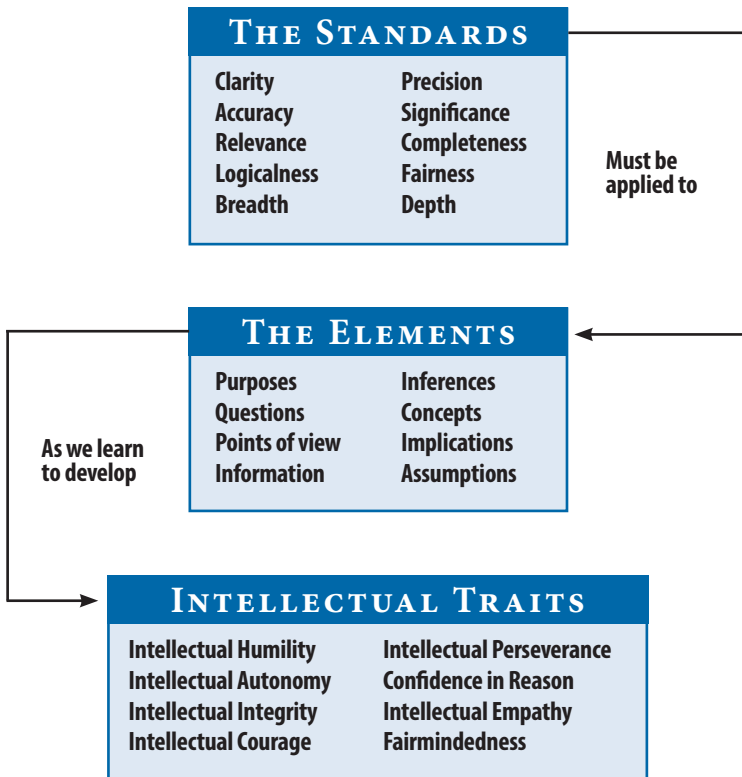
Confidence in reason – based on the belief that one’s own higher interests and those of humankind at large are best served by giving the freest play to reason.

- Am I willing to change my position when the evidence leads to a more reasonable position?
- Do I adhere to principles of sound reasoning when persuading others of my position or do I distort matters to support my position?
- Do I deem it more important to “win” an argument, or see the issue from the most reasonable perspective?
- Do I encourage others to come to their own conclusions or do I try to force my views on them?

Intellectual autonomy – thinking for oneself while adhering to standards of rationality.

- To what extent am I a conformist?
- To what extent do I uncritically accept what I am told by my government, the media, my peers?
- Do I think through issues on my own or do I merely accept the views of others?
- Having thought through an issue from a rational perspective, am I willing to stand alone despite the irrational criticisms of others?

Critical Thinkers Routinely Apply the Intellectual Standards to the Elements of Reasoning



Graphic excerpted from "The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking Concepts and Tools", page 21.

