

RESOURCEFULNESS: Cognitive Aspects of Learning

Resourcefulness in the supple learning mind is about different ways of thinking.

The Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget once defined intelligence as 'knowing what to do when you don't know what to do'. Being resourceful means having a good repertoire of attitudes and strategies for confronting the world when it becomes strange or out of control. Good learning involves engaging with uncertainty in effective ways: ways that are most likely to deliver an expanded sense of mastery and comprehension. If resilience is to do with *getting and staying engaged*, with attention and emotion, then being resourceful means being skillful at learning. It is about having the right frame of mind to want to get to the bottom of things and make sense of them.

There are several behavioral aspects to resourcefulness and cognition such as **questioning, unbuckling, reasoning, imagining and inventing, linking, engineering, capitalizing and problem-solving.**

Strong resourceful learners ...

- develop their own toolkit of learning attributes;
- are naturally curious and inquisitive;
- are adventurous but within clear boundaries;
- are not afraid of 'not knowing' and find an answer;
- play with materials and ideas;
- look for underlying patterns and relationships;
- connect new learning with their existing opinions and beliefs;
- have an 'active' and 'receptive' imagination and use it;
- play with ideas and possibilities;
- slip problems to the back of their minds but constantly revisit them;
- use analytical and disciplined thinking;
- apply their thinking tools to real-life concerns;
- draw on a wealth of materials to help their learning.

Research tells us... *Dr David Perkins, Harvard University, USA*

'Education doesn't help you think. It is an uncomfortable fact that much of what is learned in school doesn't transfer to real-life situations.'

Dr David Perkins asked several thousand people to make notes for a discussion on general topics such as the impact of TV violence, and then scored their notes in terms of the number and quality of the arguments considered. High School drop-outs performed as well as High School graduates; first-year undergraduates performed as well as fourth-year students; and freshly graduated students embarking on academic research were no different from those completing their PhDs. Perkins concluded that, 'Broadly speaking, most educational practice does little to prepare students for reasoning about open-ended issues'.

A further thought ...

'He who is afraid of asking is afraid of learning'.

Danish proverb
