

1. Mark your confusion.
2. Show evidence of a close reading.
3. Write a 1+ page reflection.

The Difference Between Open-Minded and Closed-Minded People

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Why do some people seem to make constant progress in their professional and personal lives while others repeat the same mistakes? I think part of the answer is how they approach problems. It comes down to mindset. Over time, the person who approaches life with an openness to being wrong and a willingness to learn outperforms the person who doesn't.

How do you respond to anomalies?

How you respond to anomalies is a good indicator of your open-mindedness. Anomalies are like a glitch in the matrix. You can identify these moments when you find something surprising, missing, or strange. Anomalies indicate the world doesn't work the way you thought it did. These moments can be worth their weight in gold if you pay attention.

Closed-minded people tend to ignore or gloss over anomalies. Open-minded people want to dive in and understand. Of course, diving in is hard as it may require you to discard your ideas and beliefs. Anomalies are not the only way to figure out which mindset people are operating with. In his book *Principles*, Ray Dalio, self-made billionaire and founder of the largest hedge fund in the world, lays out seven other ways to tell the difference.

1. Challenging Ideas

Closed-minded people don't want their ideas challenged. They are typically frustrated that they can't get the other person to agree with them instead of curious as to why the other person disagrees. Closed-minded people put their ego ahead of the outcome. They refrain from inquiring and instead focus on disproving others without attempting to comprehend their perspectives. They tend to become frustrated when questioned and perceive those who seek clarification as hindrances to progress. They tend to easily get angered with people who disagree.

In short, they're on the wrong side of right.

Open-minded people are more curious about why there is disagreement. ... They understand that there is always the possibility that they might be wrong and that it's worth the little bit of time it takes to consider the other person's views. Open-minded people find learning in everything. They see disagreement as a thoughtful means to expand their knowledge. They don't get angry or upset at questions; rather, they want to identify where the disagreement lies so they can correct their misperceptions. They realize that being right means changing their minds when someone else knows something they don't.

2. Statements vs. Questions

Closed-minded people are more likely to make statements than ask questions. Closed-minded people listen to win not to understand. They sit in meetings and are more than willing to offer their opinions but never ask other people to expand on, or explain, their ideas. Closed-minded people think of how they would refute the other person rather than trying to understand what they might be missing.

Open-minded people genuinely believe they could be wrong; the questions that they ask are genuine. Open-minded people know that while they may have an opinion on a subject, it could count for less than someone else's. Maybe they're outside their circle of competence or maybe they're experts. Regardless, they're always curious as to how people see things differently and they weigh their opinions accordingly.

3. Understanding

Closed-minded people focus much more on being understood than on understanding others. People's default behaviors offer a quick tell. When you disagree with someone, what's their reaction? If they're quick to

rephrase what they just said or, even worse, repeat it, without asking any questions, then they are assuming that you don't understand them rather than that you disagree with them.

Open-minded people feel compelled to see things through others' eyes. When you disagree with an open-minded person, they are quick to assume that they might not understand something and to ask you to tell them where their understanding is incomplete.

4. I Might Be Wrong, But...

Closed-minded people say things like "I could be wrong ... but here's my opinion." This is a classic cue I hear all the time. It's often a perfunctory gesture that allows people to hold their own opinion while convincing themselves that they are being open-minded. If your statement starts with "I could be wrong"..., you should probably follow it with a question and not an assertion.

Open-minded people know when to make statements and when to ask questions.

5. Just Shut Up

Closed-minded people block others from speaking. Closed-minded people don't have time to rehash something already talked about. They don't want to hear anyone's voice but their own. (Dalio offers a "two-minute rule" to get around this: Everyone has the right to speak for two minutes without being interrupted.)

Open-minded people are always more interested in listening than in speaking. More than that, they say things like, "Sam, I notice you've been quiet. Would you like to offer your thoughts to the group?"

"The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function."—*F. Scott Fitzgerald*

6. Only One Sperm Gets In

Closed-minded people have trouble holding two thoughts simultaneously in their minds.

This reminds me of the memorable quote by Charlie Munger: "The human mind is a lot like the human egg, and the human egg has a shut-off device. When one sperm gets in, it shuts down so the next one can't get in." It's our nature to close our minds around our favorite ideas, but this is not the ideal way to think and learn.

Open-minded people can take in the thoughts of others without losing their ability to think well—they can hold two or more conflicting concepts in their mind and go back and forth between them to assess their relative merits.

7. Humble Pie

Closed-minded people lack a deep sense of humility. Where does one get humility? Usually, from failure—a crash so terrible they don't want to repeat it. I remember when a hedge fund I was on the board of made a terrible investment decision. We spent a lot of time rubbing our noses in it afterward in an attempt to make sure we wouldn't repeat the same mistake. In the process, we learned a lot about what we didn't know.

Open-minded people approach everything with a deep-seated fear that they may be wrong.

If you recognize some closed-minded behavior patterns in yourself, you're not alone. We're all somewhere along the continuum between open- and closed-minded. Further complicating things, it varies by day and task. Being open-minded requires a lot of work and it doesn't happen by accident.

When you catch closed-minded tendencies, acknowledge what's happening but don't blame yourself. Instead, reflect on what's going on at a deeper level. Maybe you feel the world should work differently than it does. Or maybe it's something else. Either way, it's an opportunity to learn more about yourself and the world.

Do you know anyone who doesn't have any blind spots? I strongly doubt it. Then why would you be any different? As Dalio makes clear, you must be active in the process of open-mindedness: It won't happen by accident.

Possible Response Questions

- What are your thoughts about open vs. closed mindedness? Explain.
- Did something in the article surprise you? Discuss.
- Pick a word/line/passage from the article and respond to it.
- Discuss a "move" made by the writer in this piece that you think is good/interesting. Explain.