

Intellectual Curiosity asks thought-provoking questions to explore unknown aspects of an idea and challenge existing perspectives and explanations. This requires being open to new experiences and novel ways of thinking that may lead to alternative ideas and solutions. An intellectually curious person asks disruptive questions that peel back layers of complexity to explore the multi-faceted nature of a problem.

Cultivating Intellectual Curiosity

Engage in intellectual curiosity by fueling exploration and discovery while continually questioning your assumptions and avoiding identifying solutions too quickly. One method to consider is the process of “questionstorming,” as proposed by Dyer et al.,¹ to transform challenges into actionable inquiry:

1. Generate problem statement(s) that reflects the reality that you assume to be foundational to the situation being explored.
2. Formulate these problem statement(s) into questions. Explore the problem with both *fundamental* and *disruptive* questions, listing as many questions as needed to fully examine the breadth and depth of the problem.

Question Type	Examples	Aims
Fundamental	“What is...?”	To explore the way things are
	“What caused...?”	To gain insights into why things are the way they are
Disruptive	“Why...?” or “Why not...?”	To challenge assumptions and established beliefs
	“What if...?”	To generate new angles of inquiry

3. Prioritize the list of possible questions and decide what is important to explore now and what is out of scope. Consider a question-centered journal to record questions that are important for future phases.

Assessing Your Intellectual Curiosity Competency

Intellectual curiosity is nuanced and complex, yet it is still a skill that can be learned. As you explore your intellectual curiosity, consider the degree to which you have:

- acquired new knowledge and gained insights into why things are the way they are;
- challenged your assumptions and established beliefs to generate new perspectives; and/or
- sought explanations that deepen your understanding.

References

1. Dyer J, Gregersen H, Christensen CM. *The Innovator's DNA: Mastering the Five Skills of Disruptive Innovators*. 2011. Boston, Massachusetts. Harvard Business Press.
2. Palmer M. Forget brainstorming. Try Questionstorming. Inc. Available from: <https://www.inc.com/melina-palmer/forget-brainstorming-try-questionstorming.html>.
3. Von Stumm, S., Hell, B., & Chamorro-Premuzic, T. The Hungry Mind: Intellectual Curiosity is the Third Pillar of Academic. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*. 2011; 6(6), 574-588.