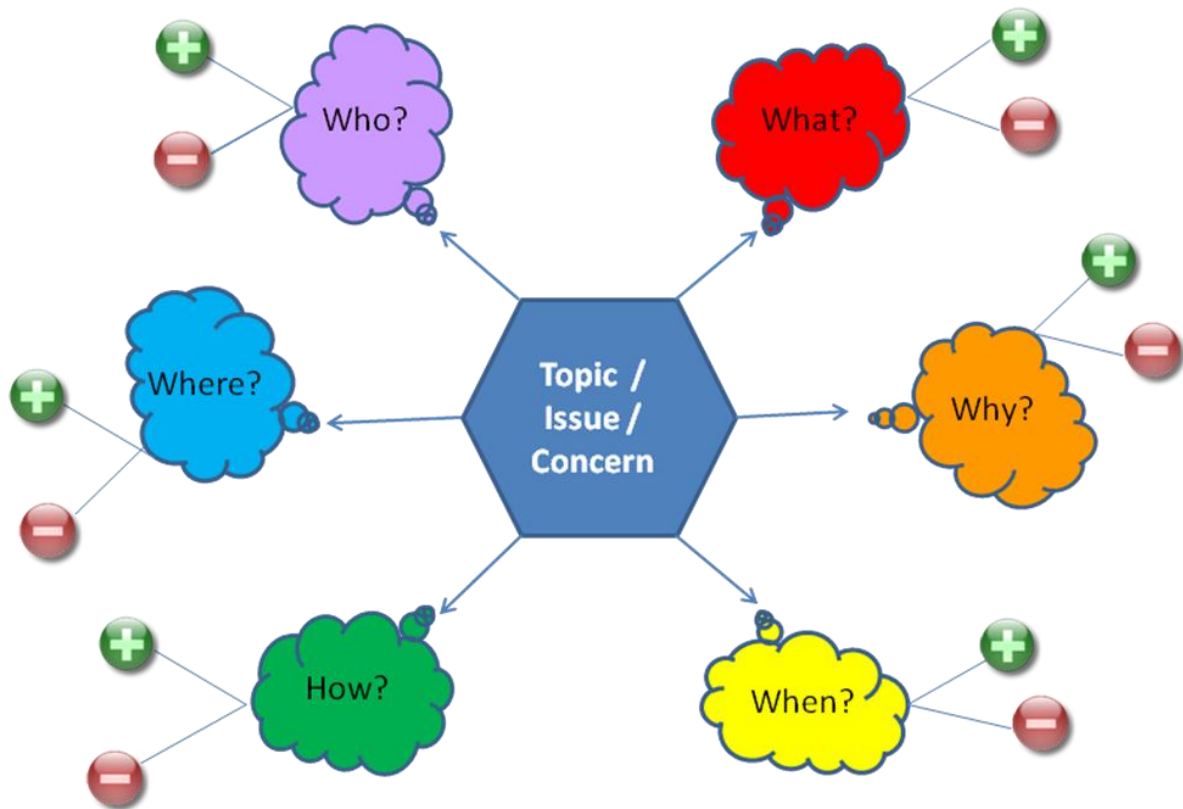


VALUES-THEMED ARTICLE: Autumn 2015

How to EMPOWER learners to live smarter



Deliberate questioning sparks curiosity, unlocks learners' ideas and helps them to think deeply, gain clarity and make more sense of a range of topics, issues and concerns that are important to themselves, relationships, society and the environment - in short, the fast-changing world in which they are growing up. With the aid of a framework based upon Rudyard Kipling's poetic "six honest serving men": WHAT? WHY? WHEN? HOW? WHERE? and WHO? lessons can become lively and interesting as children and young people explore, examine and reflect upon both positive and negative aspects and viewpoints of matters, problems and values and then see where their delving takes them.

This engaging and stimulating approach to learning enables young citizens to open up all kinds of possibilities and discover strong links across subjects. It's also conducive to them making connections between what they are being taught at home and while at school and what is occurring in real-life situations all around them and elsewhere in the world.



Over time participants become more aware of how values drive and motivate and how different values have shaped the past and are influencing the present. As individuals they start to feel more empowered as they apply their growing knowledge and enjoy developing reasoning and problem-solving skills, underpinned with values, which they consider important and which give consistency to their thinking, decision-making and actions.

Systematic questioning expanding learning opportunities

In the interest of learners' growth, development and problem-solving skills, it is helpful to introduce them to a simple tool in the form of a table that promotes systematic questioning and encourages consideration of assumptions, values, beliefs, standards, 'normal' practices, reasons, purpose, timing, methodology, application, circumstances, ramifications, likely outcomes, people and other living things, etc.

Focusing on a specific topic, issue or concern, they can use the elements in the table, as set out below with 'the six honest serving men' and corresponding exploratory prompts, to start framing a series of questions to elicit positive and good aspects as well as negative or bad aspects, which they can then record. The resulting plus and minus viewpoints may then be used to take the process a step further to clear up misconceptions, come up with answers, formulate action plans and inform solutions to problems.

This engaging process creates a shift in consciousness and promotes a growth mindset that allows children and young people to live and learn smarter.

6 serving men ...	exploratory prompts		
What?	event/occurrence/entity		
Why?	reason/purpose/aim		
When?	time/date/period		
How?	process/system/route		
Where?	venue/location		
Who?	people involved/affected		

For example, consider a widely cherished value such as *respect* and its counterpart *disrespect*. The group can be divided into smaller groups of learners and then assign to each, one of the six serving men questions and invite the participants to explore these two values seeking out either the positive aspects of respect or the negative aspects of disrespect or both and after a time, bring everyone together to share their findings and learn from them.

With the Rio 2016 Olympic Games and the Paralympic Games just over the horizon, another example of the exercise could be for groups to consider positive and negative aspects of these Games (bringing in past Games and future Games) and generally what improvements or malpractices are associated with them. Such considerations may then be used to throw light on concepts such as diversity or highlight the effects illegal drugs can have on individuals and communities.

To EMPOWER learners to live smarter

Patrik Somers is a consultant who has worked extensively on values with teachers in schools and directors of businesses. This is how he has explained the importance of understanding the significance of values:

A child without values is as a bird without wings.

An adult without values is like a zebra without stripes.

A school without values is like an orchard without fruits.

To live and to work without values is like eating soup with a fork.

Our values are central to who we are. They motivate and drive us, crystallise what is important to us, direct our decision-making, impact our emotions and help us realise why we do the things we do. Being aware of values enables us to live smarter.

Shared values are arrived at through mutual exploration and understanding.

The combination of high quality, systematic values education and purposeful questioning is transformative, nurturing and nourishing the innate passions of children and young people and enabling them to tap into and maximise their true potential. The experiences are enlightening and energising, particularly as they lead to greater meaning and sense of purpose in life and open up a wide range of opportunities for personal growth and rounded development and for co-creating improvements for the individual learners themselves and others.

The table below illustrates how age-appropriate, values-based education empowers participants, constantly enriching all aspects of their development and learning and enabling them to apply fresh skills and creative mindsets to make inner changes and external changes for the betterment of one and all.

E	<i>Explore</i>	Encourage curiosity, which widens horizons, fosters greater understanding, problem-solving and reasoning skills. Let participants explore and make sense of what is happening around them and further afield in such ways as to promote a sense of adventure and taking ownership of their own progress.
M	<i>Motivate</i>	Motivation is a psychological catalyst and driver that helps to accomplish goals. Introduce participants to actively seeking out role models who have achieved and let them delve into the obstacles and challenges those people may have faced and the personal qualities and strategies they used to overcome them.
P	<i>Practise</i>	Practice is an important facet of development and life-long learning, building self-esteem and confidence and accelerating the mastery of essential competences and skills, including those that aid long-term retention and facilitate recall. Show participants that with a vision, robust personal qualities and practice, the world really can be their oyster.
O	<i>Opportunities</i>	Getting into the habit of being on the lookout for stretching and expansive learning opportunities, acting on them and learning to cope with setbacks opens up experiences that help participants succeed during their school careers and as their lives subsequently unfold. Support participants as they pluck up the necessary courage to venture beyond their comfort zones, have a go, be resourceful and take well considered risks.
W	<i>Wellbeing</i>	Key to maintaining a happy, healthy lifestyle is a healthy mind (psychological wellbeing), a healthy body (physical wellbeing) and a healthy culture (social wellbeing). Let participants consider how different environmental factors and care for the environment at large can impact them as individuals, relationships, society and everything that is dependent on the wellbeing of Earth now and in the future.

E	<i>Exercise</i>	There is strong scientific evidence to show that being physically active can help individuals lead healthier and even happier lives. Those who regularly exercise have a lower risk of many chronic diseases and research shows that physical activity can also boost self-esteem, mood, sleep quality and energy, as well as reducing the risk of stress, depression and other debilitating mental health conditions.
R	<i>Recreation</i>	In today's frenetic world, the importance of downtime, switching off and recreation - or opportunities to re-create and refresh oneself by engaging in pleasurable activities on a daily basis - cannot be over emphasised. Proactively support participants as they regularly exercise their choices to rest, relax, refresh and renew themselves. Recreational activities are of enormous value to individuals and the enjoyment and quality of our lives since they tend to boost mental, physical, spiritual, social and emotional wellbeing. For example, quality time spent alone, with loved ones and family members, with friends, and in the company of nature, can improve health and inter-personal skills, raise self-awareness, build and nurture relationships, boost confidence, create space to develop and showcase talents, broaden horizons and deepen appreciation of other cultures and places in the world.

Learning to question and make good, well informed, values-based choices is very important, particularly when decisions can have far-reaching and long-lasting effects. The reason why more and more schools are embracing a values-enhanced curriculum is because this holistic approach to learning and life delivers so many positive outcomes, including improved academic performance, rounded development and enhanced wellbeing.