

Wisdom Practice: The Power of Inquiry and Curiosity (Not Judgment)

The ability to approach situations and others with curiosity not only creates more and potentially better outcomes, it also has the power to develop more trusting and collaborative relationships (Gino, 2018).

Curiosity helps us overcome two problematic biases: confirmation bias and fundamental attribution bias. **Confirmation bias** is when we only pay attention to evidence that confirms our existing beliefs, rather than exploring information that may contradict them. For example, if we think that a patient is always late, we don't notice the times when she is punctual.

Fundamental attribution bias is when we mistakenly attribute a behavior to a particular intent.

As in, "She is always late for appointments because she doesn't respect my time." In both cases, a curious question might reveal solutions and improve our relationship with the patient. By asking, "I wonder why she has trouble getting to appointments on time?" we might learn that she doesn't have reliable transportation or that she cares for a sick parent and has trouble finding respite care.

Fundamental attribution error seems to happen more often during times of stress (Kabuta, 2014).

Studies have shown that curiosity can lessen our defensiveness when we're stressed and can moderate aggressive reactions when we're provoked (Gino, 2018).



Wisdom Practice: How to do it

When you are aware that you are making assumptions about an event or a person, gently stop that train of thought and approach the situation with curiosity.

Ask yourself,

"Are there are other possibilities?"

"Could there be something going on that I'm not aware of?"

"Could I be wrong?"

And the best question of all: *"I wonder why..."*