Flexibility Food for Thought

Here are some great ideas for staying flexible in all areas of your life. Keep them in mind, try them out—you’ll learn and grow.

1. Learn from any source you can. Friends, acquaintances, and coworkers. Books, magazines, and newspapers. New information is the source of new options, and new options offer greater flexibility.

2. Adjust your attitude and perspective. They filter reality, acting as colored glasses, distorting everything you see. When you begin to view strangers as friends you haven't made yet instead of potential threats, you'll become more flexible.

3. Whenever the opinions of others make you feel uncomfortable, don't run and hide. Instead, be especially alert for hidden treasure. For whenever we are forced to step outside of our comfort zone, we grow.

4. To be flexible, we must be willing to break from tradition, custom, and habit. We must be willing to question everything. Keep an open mind, but remember gullibility enslaves you to the opinions of others, while skepticism frees you to discover the value or uselessness inherent in the ideas of others.

5. Don't cling to your opinions, for they are nothing more than knowledge in the making, nothing more than potential truth. Remember that you don't own the truth—it is shared by all. Everyone is necessary to arrive at the big picture.

6. When you're listening to the viewpoint of another and are tempted to disagree with it, remember that you will be changing your own opinion in the future. So, does it really make any sense to debate the point? Rather, remain open. The more ideas you have to draw upon, the more flexible, creative, and solution oriented you will become.

7. Did you ever notice that the only people we consider intelligent are those that share our opinions? If so, it's time to get rid of that narrow viewpoint. When your companions give their opinions, rather than focusing on the differences between theirs and yours, focus on the differences their opinions have made in their lives. If their opinions have changed them in positive ways, it may be time to think about changing your viewpoint.

8. To benefit from the wisdom of others, don't get turned off by how they present their opinions. Focus on the substance, not on the presentation—focus on the gift, not on the package.

9. Don't rely exclusively on the left hemisphere of your brain. That is, don't depend solely on logic or rational thought. Increase your use of the right hemisphere, which is the seat of intuition and creativity. Become more attuned to the arts, nature, beauty, and the wisdom of your inner voice.

10. Learn to view the world through the eyes of another. How would you see things differently if you were an infant, five years old, or a teenager? What if you were a member of the opposite sex? Or ninety years old? Or gay? What if you were confined to a wheelchair or a prison cell? What if you were raised in poverty in the third world or were homeless in North America? What if you were a faithful follower of a different religion? What if you were a traffic cop, schoolteacher, or bank teller? Use the power of your imagination to place you into as many roles as possible, for flexibility consists of understanding the viewpoints of others and learning as much as possible from them.