

Breaking Old Habits of Mind



Time Required: One 15-minute period
(30 minutes for creative writing portion, if used)

Materials Needed: Coat or jacket that will fit even the largest child

ACTIVITIES

Activity Objective

In order to think creatively, students need to learn to break old habits. This activity reminds the students that there are several ways to do things and we get into the rut of doing them the same way from habit.

What to Do

Bring up three students to the front of the class with the board behind them. Tell the class to watch carefully. One at a time, give each student the jacket to put on. After they do, ask the class to tell you what they did. Which arm did they put in first? Write the process on the board behind them. Do this for all three students.

Then take the jacket and ask that they put it on using the other arm first. Do this for all three students. Make sure if they used left arm first, the second trial they use the right. Ask for comments from the class. Did it look different from the other time? How was it different? Complete the task for all three students having them reverse the order they used the first comfortable time.

Lead a discussion about why it was awkward to put the jacket the second time. What stops us from trying new things out? This is something we do that is a habit. Are there habits of mind? Are our thinking habits in need of reversal? Tell them inventors sometimes reverse things purposely to make new things happen.

Bring up a new child. Put the jacket on a desk and have them face the jacket upside down. Then have them put both arms in and swing the jacket over their head and onto both arms at the same time.

Begin a discussion about things that they do the same everyday. What about if they varied their routine? What are some things they could do differently to get their creative juices flowing? Now that you did the demonstration and had the discussion, tell the students they will each have the opportunity to try this change of habit and then immediately write about how it felt. Have the students take off their shoes. Then, have them put them on the way they usually do. Now have them take the shoes off and put on the other shoe first. They are breaking a routine...a habit...a rut.

Assign a Creative Writing Experience

How did it *feel* to change my routine? Allow only 10 minutes for a very quick poem, paragraph, picture or some other expression.

The key to this activity is to then “debrief” the experience. Have children present their ideas.

Some inventors have to get out of their old habits and change their regular routines to see things differently and that helps them think inventively. You can reinforce this by having them do something creative like writing right after these experiences. It will put them in touch with strategies for getting their creative juices flowing. Writing is a great way to think about thinking.