

Are We Born Prejudiced? Are We Born to Bully?

From the Playground to the Battlefield



Why is Everybody Always Picking on Us?

A Mini-Museum on Understanding the Roots of Prejudice



WHY IS EVERYBODY ALWAYS PICKING ON US?

A Mini Museum on Understanding the Roots of Prejudice



In today's world, there is prejudice that creates bullying everywhere – at home, at school, in offices, among nations. There are ongoing attempts to stop the bullying that prejudice creates yet it still goes on. The question we need to ask is what creates this prejudice? Is the cause outside myself – with the “other” – or does it begin in my brain?”

Once we understand how prejudice begins, where it starts – we can stop acting out of it. If we see that we're the source of this prejudice, we won't put the responsibility to understand this on other people. The truth is that the only way to prevent prejudice from happening is to begin inside ourselves – to actually see the cause of it in our brain in the way we've been conditioned to think. Due to the divisively destructive nature of ethnocentric superiority, prejudicial conditioned images of “the enemy” are what create war. Surprisingly the source of this conditioning comes from our primitive brain's reaction to feeling a threat to its survival.

The impulse or compulsion to bully is biologically and genetically based, built into us for survival – to protect us from a person or group we believe is a threat to us. We therefore see this prejudicial bullying as paradoxically necessary for our survival – survival of the fittest. Also, anyone within the group who seems weak becomes a threat to the survival of the group and is perceived as someone who needs to be eliminated, or bullied out of the group. We shun, intimidate, bully – all in the misguided name of survival. What will free us from this destructive compulsion of the survival of the fittest? It's not knowledge that will free us, but rather seeing the actual movement of this compulsion within ourselves in the way we've been conditioned to think in this divisive prejudicial way. Knowledge, motivated by the primitive biological brain, is prejudice. The prejudicial image I have been conditioned to think about you and the prejudicial

image you have been conditioned to think about me it is what separates us and creates conflict.

In the Mini Museum that follows, we focus mainly on psychological conditioning originally emanating from the primitive brain in it's misguided intent for survival. It's at this level in conditioned thought that the conflict is best recognized and more readily dealt with. Our goal is to help young people explore these fundamental factors that are at the source of human conflict.

PREJUDICE BEGINS AT AN EARLY AGE



What is prejudice? It's something that happens when people pick on and bully other people – usually for being “different.” Prejudice is something we learn – and now we realize it is something we are born with – as illustrated in the song lyric below.

You've Got To Be Carefully Taught*

You've got to be taught to hate and fear,
You've got to be taught from year to year,
It's got to be drummed in your dear little ear,
You've got to be carefully taught.

You've got to be taught to be afraid
Of people whose eyes are oddly made
And people whose skin is a different shade,
You've got to be carefully taught.

You've got to be taught before it's too late
Before you are six or seven or eight
To hate all the people your relatives hate
You've got to be carefully taught... You've
got to be carefully taught.

*©1949 Oscar Hammerstein II and Richard Rodgers, from South Pacific.

People who are taught to be prejudiced are not always *aware* that this happened. Still, there comes a time when we must understand and take responsibility for any prejudice we have. Once we become *aware* of any prejudice that's been programmed into our brain, we have the possibility to be free of it.

**Blame and hate prevent understanding.
Instead of blaming or hating people for what they think or do,
we can learn to understand *why* we bully,
why we act in prejudiced ways.**

**Discovery #1:
When you can observe prejudice clearly in your self,
it can stop.**



**HATRED SUPERIORITY CONFLICT
PREJUDICE**

What Is Prejudice?

Prejudice has roots that grow into trees of hatred, conflict, feelings of superiority or inferiority. Just like the leaves of a tree, prejudice has roots that bloom and grow, unless we learn to understand what creates it. Besides looking at what others say and do, we have to look at the way we think and act.

The best way to do this is by using the four stages of learning:

THINK about prejudice and what it means. Visualize it happening.

REMEMBER how prejudice has affected you or people you know.

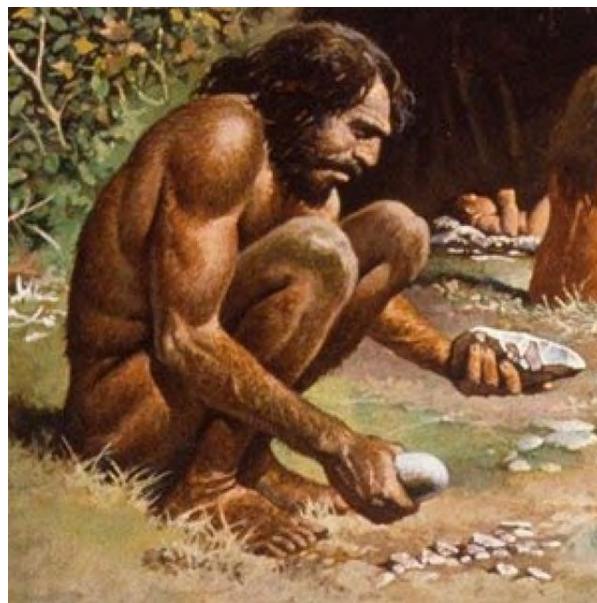
OBSERVE prejudice as it happens in your brain – this is called insight.

TALK with other people about the prejudice you observe in the moment.

Discovery #2:
The best way to understand the meaning of prejudice
is to experience it first-hand.

Where Did Prejudice Begin?

Let's go back in time to when there were no modern homes, no tall buildings, no stores, no automobiles — only blue sky, miles and miles of open land, and simple, primitive human beings — like this member of the Rock Tribe.



Everywhere they looked, they saw rocks. There were many children in the tribe, and it was becoming difficult to keep track of them. To keep the tribe together, the elders created rituals to be performed by group members. All tribe members had to create a pile of rocks, which the tribe would worship. The superstitious elders believed the rocks represented images of the mysterious forces of nature and that if the tribe did not worship these images, the tribe would perish. This made them fearful.

They also painted their faces with a specific design to show that they all belonged to the Rock Tribe. The patterns drawn on their faces ensured that members would recognize their own.



In another ritual, the elders determined that, every month, everyone in the Rock Tribe would dance to the sun to frighten away evil spirits. These recurring practices gave them a sense of belonging.

**These rituals became customs and habits,
passed from one generation to the next,
becoming strongly held beliefs and traditions.**

No one stopped to ask *why* they continued to perform these practices and live by these laws. Their thinking had become *conditioned*. They were taught – programmed – to think and act in a certain way. The Rock Tribe’s culture became an established “belief system” and, eventually, a nation, which caused a feeling of patriotism in all tribe members.

**This provided tribe members with something they valued more than anything –
survival!**

The Drive to Survive

Today, we still live in small groups, like tribes – not like the Rock Tribe, but within families, belonging to clubs, student and other organizations, houses of worship or political parties. Some of these contribute to our sense of safety; others do not.

Today people from all over the world depend on each other for survival, so the old ways of individual tribes, as well as those of modern groups, no longer make us safe. Instead, they divide us and prevent us from seeing each other as one race – the human race.



Discovery #3:
**Today, individual tribe-like groups are a threat
to the security and survival of the human race.**

The reason?
They *separate* people.

What Does It Mean to Survive?

There are two kinds of survival – physical and psychological.

PHYSICAL SURVIVAL. An ancient tribe, or clan, provided its members with food, clothing, shelter and protection.



We survive physically today when we have enough to eat and drink, clothes to keep us warm and a place to live.



PSYCHOLOGICAL SURVIVAL. Each ancient tribe member followed the group's customs and beliefs. Members had to attach themselves *mentally* and *emotionally* to the group and its ways, and loyally follow the tribe. This made the group more powerful — better able to take care of its members.



Today, we survive psychologically when we feel safe and protected by groups we choose to belong to.



Discovery #4:
Food + shelter = Physical Needs
Sharing a way of life with others = Psychological Needs
Physical Needs + Psychological Needs = Safety and Security

**A sense of safety and security comes
when both our physical and psychological needs are satisfied.**

Over time, individual tribes like the Rock Tribe grew bigger and eventually bumped into other groups' territories. The Moon Tribe also existed in the same territory. They all needed food, clothing and shelter. As a result, each tribe began to see every other tribe as a threat to its physical survival.



Since the tribes' psychological survival was tied to their physical needs, they believed their customs, traditions and beliefs were also threatened.

This led to conflict and war – not only over territory but also whose beliefs should dominate, whose birthright should rule, and whose laws should govern in order to ensure everyone's survival.

The Rock Tribe noticed that the Moon Tribe danced to the moon instead of the sun, and believed this was wrong.



The Moon Tribe

Today, thanks to science, while there are people who still don't have enough, we have the ability to provide great amounts of food, clothing and housing – the physical elements of survival.

However, psychological conflicts continue, because people are afraid of others who are "different." Science seems to have no way to resolve the different ideas people have about "how life should be."



Discovery #5:
Fear creates conflict. Awareness creates insight.

Over time, human beings have divided more and more, ever fearful of others who think or act differently. People have continued their old tribal ways through centuries, generation after generation.



Now it's OUR turn to either continue the prejudices that came before us, or become aware of them and stop them. Do we want to keep passing ancient prejudices into the future?

Discovery #6:
Deeply ingrained in our brain cells,
old tribal ways continue to make us
prisoners of the past.

Imagine a world without prejudice – where people are NOT conditioned to react to other people in negative ways. What would that be like – for all of us to become Peace Ambassadors who help educate others – nationally and internationally?



Discovery #7:
The survival of humankind relies on only one tribe –
the Human Race.

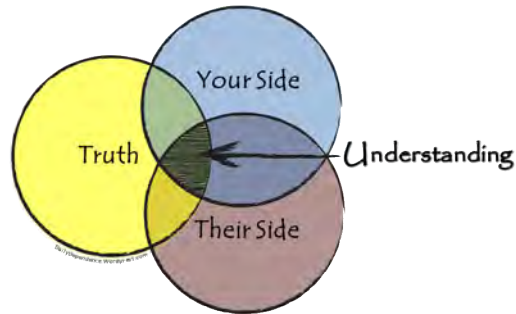
The new world would be a place where prejudices, inherited traditions and customs were no longer needed for protection. We would learn to appreciate differences – cultural differences, in such areas as the arts, architecture, food, clothing and language.

Rather than divide people or create prejudice, these differences would make for a world of interesting diversity and variety. Cultural variety enhances life and provides pleasure.

Discovery #8:
You can change the world when you think for yourself.
A journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step.



WHAT WE'RE TAUGHT TO BELIEVE



The Highest Level of Understanding

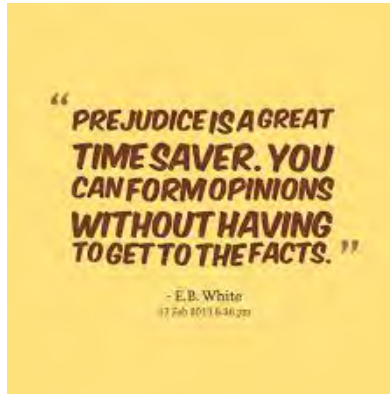
Studying how prejudice works can get us to a level of understanding that will help us see where prejudice begins. One way is to use our scientific minds. Just like our prehistoric ancestors, we want to know the best way to survive. That's why we listen to weather and traffic reports and news broadcasts about what's happening in the world.



If we study prejudice as a science project, we'll learn how to protect ourselves from ignorance, fear and day-to-day pressures. Just like exploring how a car engine works, how a flower grows, and how to produce cleaner air, examining prejudice teaches us how to survive at the highest level of understanding – learning how to get along with people.

Sometimes we humans don't think before we act. Also, sometimes we're given information that isn't true, and we don't stop to question it. At times, we believe we're stating a fact when, in reality, we're making an assumption or expressing an opinion.

Here are some definitions of “prejudice” and steps toward resolution:



Definition 1:
Prejudice is judging, assuming or expressing an opinion
before we have all the right information.



Question: “What do you think of vanilla ice cream?”

Answer: “It’s my favorite!” or “Too bland! I prefer chocolate.”

This is based on the fact that you’ve had first-hand experience with this ice cream.



Question: “What do you think of the artist Pablo Picasso?”

Answer: “He’s terrific!” or “Too abstract!” or “I don’t know – I’ve never seen his work.”

Without first-hand experience of this artist’s work, an honest opinion is not possible.



Question: “What do you think of the new student from the Ukraine?”

Answer: “He doesn’t speak our language; he just smiles. Seems kind of stupid.”

Would this opinion be based on 1) fact? 2) opinion? 3) first-hand information?

None of the above! So, the answer is definitely a prejudiced one.

Calling someone “stupid” assumes a lack of intelligence without knowing whether that person is stupid or not. Is it fair to assume someone is stupid when you’ve never had a conversation with that person?



Definition 2:
Prejudice is judging a person or group
that appears “different” from us.

What could possibly make us hate someone we’ve never met?
Why would we automatically hate people just because they’re “different”?

If you were told that there’s a new student in school who discovered that you were not born in this country, and she hates you because of it — how would you feel? In a way, it’s like sending an innocent person to jail. Can you think of a time someone called you names or tried to bully or hurt you — simply because you were “different”? That person, who acted in a prejudiced way toward you, has likely triggered feelings of prejudice inside you, and now you feel prejudiced toward him or her. This is how prejudice grows. Even though that incident is long gone, you keep remembering it, and reliving it.

The first step in becoming free of prejudice
is learning to question what we see and hear.

Discovery #9:
Although prejudice is something that happened in the past,
it can continue, and make you unhappy in the present.

What Does It Mean to Be “Different”?

Have you ever wondered how much prejudice must exist to create a tremendous conflict like war? All over the world, little conflicts go on every day. Maybe someone has called you names or tried to bully you because you were “different.” It happened to me, and I still feel the pain of it — not physically, but inside, where my thoughts and feelings are.

But what's wrong with "different"? If I told you there was a new theme park in town, and that it had an amazing ride — something different from anything you'd ever been on before — would you instantly hate it? Probably not! Would you want to go there and try the ride? Probably so! In this case, "different" means exciting and new.



How about if I told you there's a new candy bar that's so different from anything you've ever tasted, you'll never want to eat any other candy bar again? Wouldn't it interest you — even if it were "different"?



Why would someone who dresses differently, or speaks differently, or thinks differently be less exciting than a new ride, or a delicious new candy bar? Do you think some kind of prejudice is at work here?

**You and I can be taught to think in ways
that make us dislike, or even hate, another person
without ever understanding why —
without understanding how we could be taught to think and act this way.**



**Judging a person does not define who they are.
It defines who you are.**

Can you and I look upon other people's customs and traditions without judging them?
Is it possible for us to develop an understanding about life that ends prejudice?

OUR MECHANICAL BRAIN



Do We Protect, or Do We Learn?

When we hear about or read a news story that's shocking, a natural reaction is to want to push it away, forget about it, to protect ourselves from even thinking about something so horrible. But do we want to protect ourselves, or do we want to learn?

Prejudice is a way of thinking that usually negatively judges what we see. For that reason, it's been taught, mostly, as something that's bad — something we should protect ourselves from, something we "should not do."

But if we're going to be scientists, it's important for us to remain fair and impartial when we are exploring the causes of any subject we study. If we decide that any person, place or thing is "bad," before we even explore it — then we are being prejudiced.



Learning about prejudice requires a mind that looks factually, without judgment, at the root-causes of prejudice -- to understand how it happened. Sometimes it's difficult to look because of the suffering prejudice has generated.



Perhaps some people have perceived you as “different” and, as a result, have picked on you or bullied you. If you’ve felt the pain of prejudiced attitudes and words, you already have a good reason to want prejudice to end. Whatever your reason, learning to understand it will help end it — before it even begins. And hopefully this understanding will help you avoid conflict and prevent future conflicts.

We Have a Mechanical Brain

Prejudice is a mechanical difficulty in the brain. It’s like a machine in our heads that programs us to act in ways that create fixed ideas and hence conflict. It begins with someone telling us something that is a judgment rather than a fact.

1. A thought enters your brain once, giving you an image in your mind:
Example: Jan is a bad person.
2. The image is repeated by many people:
John: Jan is a bad person.
Jane: Jan is a bad person.
Pat: Jan is a bad person.
3. The message is backed up by a feeling.
Example: I don’t like Jan because Jan is bad.

Thought + Image = Message + Feeling

Are these thoughts true? No!
Are they based on fact? No!

Together the thought and feeling create a “thought/felt”.

One day you see Jan, and the “thought/felt” kicks in automatically. It’s mechanical!
But the fact is: Although this is the image in your brain – *it isn’t real!*



Discovery #10:
Prejudice is like a House of Mirrors.
All the images you have of others are created by you.

**We believe that what our brain has told us is factual,
but, in reality, we’ve been judging.
And by judging, we have not been understanding.**



Scientific Mode of Operation for Understanding

We have to do everything in our power to keep our minds in a mode of operation that promotes understanding. Here it is:



1. **Remain cool and calm.** How well can we function if we are upset? What are the chances for our understanding a situation if we are so angry that we cannot speak? It's powerful and serves us best to be able to stay cool and to think and act in an objective way when we find ourselves in a tense, fearful situation.

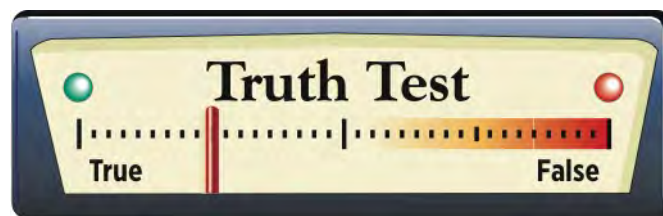


2. **Explore all parts of the machinery.** A good scientist sees a person, place or thing from every conceivable point of view.

3. **Question without judging.** A good scientist is able to see all sides of a situation in any conflict.



4. **Test findings for truth and factuality.** Think about ways to check the validity of any rumor or story you hear.



Many Prejudices – But One Root

While the roots of prejudice are hardwired in our brain and have been passed on to us by people who came before us, prejudice that now lives within us comes from *inside* us.



Discovery #11:
Prejudice is a way of thinking that's out of focus.
It causes us to inaccurately judge what we see.

From Inner to Outer

Prejudice creates inner conflict – it puts us at war with our selves, inside our minds. Seeing someone as bad, wrong, stupid or different immediately creates conflict in our minds.



Once we think and act from prejudice we feel inside, we put our prejudice outside ourselves. We act negatively toward someone we perceive as “bad.”

Which of the following kinds of prejudice have you seen?

- Skin color
- Age
- Race
- Nationality/culture
- Belief system
- Gender (male/female)
- Sexual partnership
- Social class (lower/middle/upper)
- Occupation
- Physical disability
- Body size

Prejudice Inside Us → Prejudice Outside Us = Conflict



Rather than look at distinctions that separate us, we need to look at ways we all are the same – at what we have in common and what we mutually like. Which of the following kinds of sameness have you seen?

- Thoughts
- Feelings
- Activities
- Things you like
- Things you don't like
- Your favorite people
- Your favorite sports
- Your favorite music
- Your favorite books
- Your favorite movies

**Our mechanical brain is capable of great thought and, also, false images.
Learning to recognize the difference is life changing.**



HOW DO WE GET PREJUDICED?



When We're Asleep, We Can't See

Have you ever seen people who are hypnotized? People are “put to sleep” by a suggestion and then told to do something on command, without thinking. These people are not aware that they’ve been hypnotized and are told that when they are awakened, they won’t remember that they’ve been hypnotized – or that they were asked to do something.

Prejudice is like this. We are “put to sleep” by people who tell us what to think and do. We “act out” what we are told. We react to a situation as if it were real – unaware that we’ve been hypnotized by someone else’s beliefs.

**People who condition others are most often afraid of something new or different.
Fear awakens us to a new realization.**



Discovery #12:
Acting in prejudiced ways is not orderly or safe.
It is acting out of ignorance.

Have you heard of brainwashing? Originating in the early 1950s, during the Korean War, the process of brainwashing was used to “wash” the mind of beliefs so other ideas could be substituted. Think of what it must be like to be a prisoner of war, isolated from companions and deprived of food and sleep. Imagine being endlessly badgered with constant political propaganda over periods of weeks and months, even years.

It's difficult to imagine what a horrifying experience this must have been, but it is a signal to us all to think: Do we have just grounds for everything we believe? Do we have sufficient knowledge to act on someone else's point of view?

When we're asleep, we cannot see. We need to wake up – and stay awake.



Discovery #13:
When we become prejudiced by not being aware,
we become numb to life around us.

We accept the opinions of other people
without finding out the facts for ourselves.

The following are examples of prejudice. As you look at them, maintain your scientific mode of understanding, and explore all parts of the machinery of your thinking. Ask yourself: “Do I have any of these prejudiced thoughts?” Be honest with yourself!



- Men are stronger and more intelligent than women.
- Women are gentler than men.
- White people are better business people than black people.
- Black people are more athletic than white people.
- Younger people are better workers than older people.
- To have peace, we must fight.
- Authorities don't ever need to be questioned.
- To be good we must accept what we're told to do.
- Ambition is good; winning is everything.
- The more money you have, the better person you are.

Are you not sure about some of these? Which ones? Why do you think you share these thoughts or feelings? Do you think they are factual?



The Ten Mental Steps to Conflict

Let's say someone taught you to think of people across the street from you as "bad." This kind of thinking creates fear, which leads to conflict.

Here are the ten steps to such a conflict:

1. That person across the street is "bad."
2. That person is different from me.
3. That person is "my enemy."
4. That person is a threat to my safety and security.
5. That person is a threat to my group's wellbeing.
6. I must defend myself against my enemy.
7. I must defend my group against "them."
8. I feel inner conflict.
9. I project my conflict onto my "enemy."
10. We're going to fight!



Discovery #14:
There is only one enemy.
It's the one we create in our brains.

How do we get prejudiced? We look without really seeing, we act on images we've been conditioned to believe, and create enemies that exist in only place – our minds.

How many of us do this?
All of us!

The Bells and Knots of Conditioning



The “Fight or Flight” Response

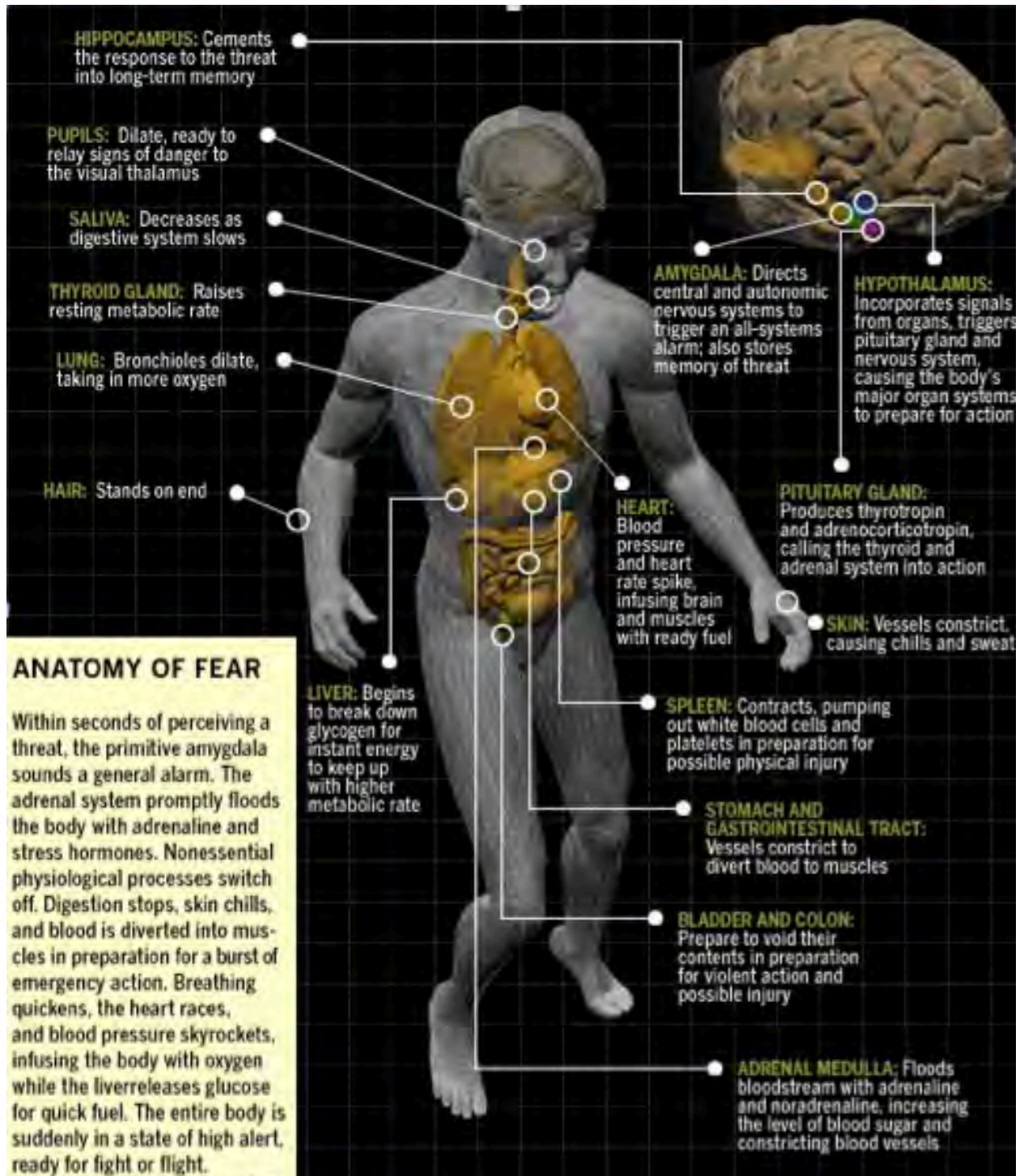
Can you imagine having to make a decision about whether to either save your life, or stay and defend your home? Conflict situations like this happen every day in countries around the world where people are forced to flee their homes or stay and fight.



A simpler example: Say you’re walking down the street and see a mean-looking black-and-white dog. It growls at you and appears getting ready to attack you. You clearly feel fear and you realize you either have to run away or you may have to fight the dog.



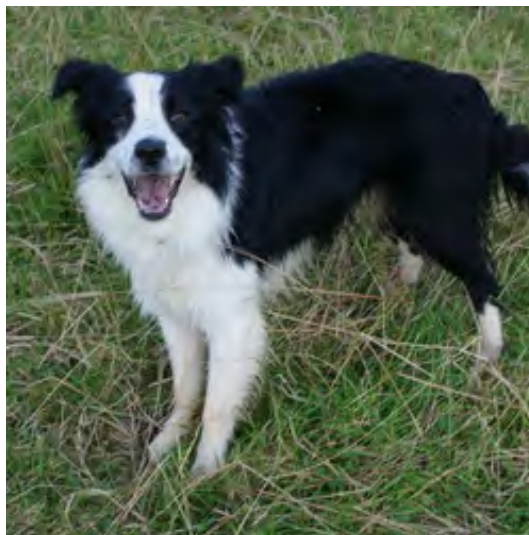
This is called the “fight or flight” response. Your brain wants you to survive, and so it searches for the best way to make this happen. Your mind and body go through instantaneous changes when you are faced with this challenge.





Discovery #15:
The “fight or flight” response is there to help you survive.
It’s an instinct to protect you from harm.
It’s a healthy and natural response to *real* danger.

Let's say, a few weeks later, you see another black-and-white dog. This one is wagging its tail and being friendly, but you feel afraid. You are re-acting to the memory of the previous dog. This is how the human brain operates! Your first encounter prejudices you to believe that you need to defend yourself against ALL black-and-white dogs.



**The next time you notice how someone is different from you,
stop and remember what we all have in common:
When we’re scared, we either want to fight or run away.**

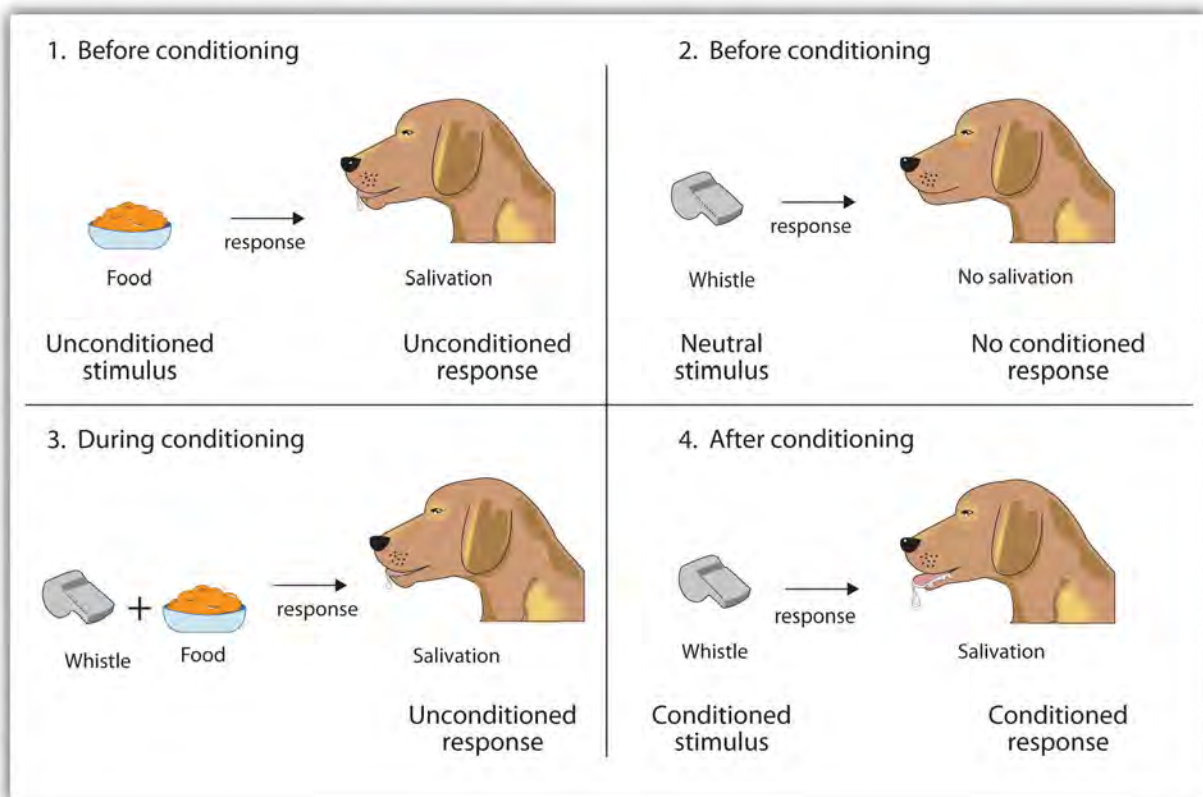
Pavlov's Dogs

Ivan Pavlov was a Russian surgeon who developed the concept of the “conditioned reflex.” In a well-known experiment, every time he fed his dog, no matter what time of day, Pavlov would ring a bell.

Over time, the dog came to understand that when he heard a bell, he was going to eat. The dog associated the bell with the sight of food, and when the dog heard the bell, he would salivate, producing water at the mouth in expectation of the delicious food. Then, Pavlov would feed him.

One day, to try something different, Pavlov rang the bell but didn't give the dog food. What amazed the scientist is that the dog salivated anyway. Days later, when Pavlov again rang the bell, even though the dog didn't know if he was going to get food or not, he salivated.

Pavlov discovered that he had **conditioned** his dog to salivate — to **react** in a certain way — by creating an association between the sound of a bell and food.



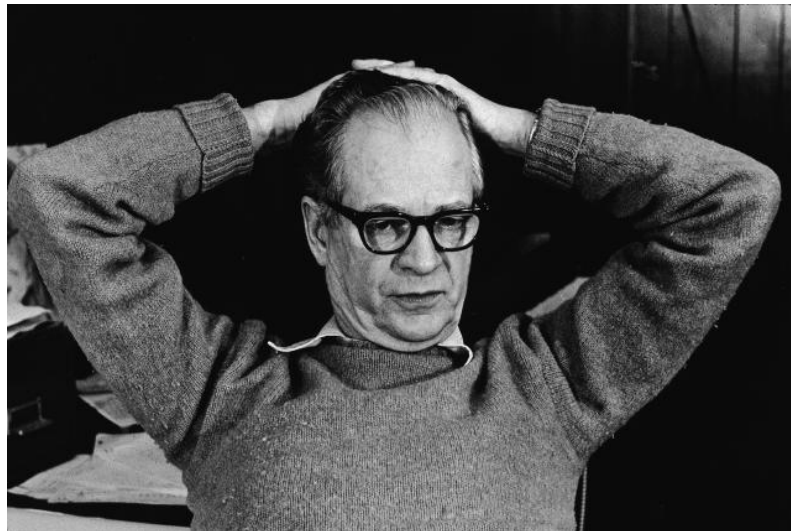
In our daily life, people often “ring” a certain “bell” that we react to — without thinking. For example, if someone calls you a name you don't like — is there a kind of bell that goes off inside you, making you want to fight or run away? If someone tells you to do something you don't want to do — does a bell inside ring with anger? Fear? Shame?

Taught by His Students

B.F. Skinner was a psychologist who became famous for studying human conditioning and the way people respond to rewards and punishments. He was also a teacher.

One day, his students decided to teach *him* something about conditioning. They were all aware that Professor Skinner, when he lectured, he paced up and down the front of the classroom. They devised a plan that they had the power to get him to stand on only one side of the classroom.

That day, whenever Professor Skinner walked to the right side of the room as he was teaching, the students would listen attentively and raise their hands to ask many questions. When he walked to the left side of the room as he paced, the students would act bored, not ask questions and didn't pay attention.



By the end of class, Professor Skinner, who normally paced back and forth continually, was pinned up against the right side of the room! He liked hearing the positive remarks and responded well to the rewards his students gave him. The lesson for that day was — the use of reward and punishment creates conditioned reactions.

False Image, False Alarm

In the 1970s, in a California town called Sebastopol, townspeople had contacted a town in Russia of the same name. It turns out that the California town had actually been named by Russians within the last century and wanted a “Sister City” relationship with the Russian people to take some steps toward fostering peace between the two countries.

Some of the Russians decided to visit the U.S. town. Many people were nervous because, to them, the Russians were still “the enemy” — a concept that had been ingrained in them by their upbringing and the air raid drills they had experienced as children.

**When the Russians arrived,
they were not what the Californians had expected.
They were dressed like Americans, looked like Americans,
walked like Americans — and some spoke better English!**



The Californians were confused. Some didn't want to speak to one of "them," because they were afraid. Instead, one of them picked a shy lady to speak with, who returned his hello. When he said to her that it was interesting to have Russians visit us, she said, "Oh, yes, we are glad to be here." He had thought that she was "one of us," but in a split second she became "one of them" — his supposed enemy!

In that next moment, he had a "fight or flight" reaction. He froze and felt himself feel the urge to protect himself or run away. The bell in his brain was ringing loud and clear. "Danger! Danger! Enemy attacking!" While all this was going on in his head, his stomach knotted up, his palms were sweating, his eyes widened, and his heart was beating fast! He was ready to fight her, or to run away from this threat.

But where was the threat? What was making him prepare to fight or to run away? It was his prejudiced vision of Russians, conditioned by years of repeated judgments. But now, right in front of him, was reality, in the form of a real person who was nothing like the "enemy" his conditioned mind had envisioned. And she spoke perfect English!

Russians are wonderful people who want peace as much as we do. This experience shows how someone can fear and hate other people — even kill them and believe it's necessary to do so — in the name of self-protection.

**Discovery #16:
Unaware of our programming, we act as if our hatred is necessary.
But WE are the ones who keep it alive.**

**If we want to NOT hate,
all it takes is insight to become AWARE
of whether we are acting based on a real situation,
or reacting to an imagined fear.**

The Prejudice Knot



A confusing, tied-up knot in our brain, like prejudice, can hurt the person thinking it. It can also hurt the person who's the object of that thinking. Here's how the knot looks:

1. A basic thought becomes a statement of information.

"I think that all people with blue skin are mean, greedy and distrustful. I know this because my best friend told me."



2. The statement is accepted without question and repeated by others.

"I was told by experts that all people with blue skin are mean, greedy and distrustful. These people know what they're talking about. Since I'm too young to know what I'm doing, I can't question them. They're the ones who know and, therefore, they must know what's true and right for me."

3. The thought continues in the wrong direction and keeps going.

I believe what they tell me is true. People with blue skin are mean, greedy and distrustful. I shouldn't put up with such people — not even tolerate them. When I meet a blue-skinned person, I automatically think, "That person is mean!" "That person is greedy!" "That person is distrustful!"

4. The knot gets tighter.

I can't trust **them**, so I'm afraid of them. Being afraid of **them**, I want to protect myself.

So, I join other people who think the way I do, so we can feel safe and secure.

So our friends, family, leaders, country can feel safe and secure, and together we can defend against all blue-skinned people who are mean, greedy and distrustful.

"Why should we defend against all blue-skinned people who are mean, greedy and distrustful? Because **they** threaten four values and beliefs, customs and traditions, our heritage, our nation, our birthright, our way of life — everything we stand for!"

If blue-skinned people are a threat to US, and are against everything **we** stand for, **they** must be "the enemy"! And, being our "enemy," **they** must be terrorists. And if **they** are terrorists, **we** must be "freedom fighters." And If **we** are freedom fighters, **we** must be proud of those who are our "heroes" in our "war" — against the blue-skinned people who are mean, greedy and distrustful. **We** must defend against **THEM**, because **we** have no choice, do we?

Elements of Knot-Like Thinking – Defective Wiring in Our Brain

Over time our brain, like a worn-out mechanical device, can cause trouble because its wiring is defective. Knot-like thinking ties up the wires in our thought process and keeps us from seeing things as they are. As amazing as it sounds, people often “wake up” to discover that, for most of their lives, they believe something that isn’t true.



To free ourselves from the wires in our own brains, let's learn to recognize knot-like thinking – in others, and also in ourselves.



Repetition:  **Saying and hearing the same thing, over and over again.**

Example: Hallmark: “When you care enough to send the very best.”

Question: Do you have to buy a Hallmark card to send the very best?



Comparison:  **Comparing one group of people with another.**

Example: “Those people are bad.” “We are good.”

Question: How are we, and those people, really different?



Projection: **Throwing an image in our minds onto another person.**

Example: “All foreign people are a threat to our way of life.”

Question: Really? ALL foreign people? In what way?



Identification: **Becoming part of a group in order to “belong.”**

Example: “I belong to a social club – a family I can relate to.”

Question: What makes you want to “identify” with this group?



Authority: **The power to command, demand obedience, enforce laws.**

Example: “We are the best country in the world. Believe it!”

Question: What makes this country the best? The best in what?



Reinforcement: **Rewarding behavior with positive words or actions to achieve a certain effect.**

Example: “You’re a good kid. Do what I say and I’ll give you money.”

Question: What exactly do you have to do for that money?

Belief: **Accepting something, with no proof that it’s true.**

Example: “Our beliefs are the only true beliefs!”

Question: How can they be the ONLY true beliefs?

Discovery #17:

It’s important to see that there are many authorities who can be helpful in your life.

But it’s also important to be able to tell the difference between authorities who are helpful and those who are not.

You and I were born into a world already full of conditioned and prejudiced thinking. The culture we were born into was programmed into us — often without question — and continues to be programmed into us on a daily basis.

So many things we believe today may be an old “tribe-like inheritance” we’ve been conditioned to claim as our birthright. In a way, our ancestors are us.

If this is so, perhaps we should ask ourselves:

- How do we find out if anything we’ve been taught is true, and still works for us today?
- How do we learn whether our belief system is healthy or destructive?
- Are we acting in prejudiced ways? If so, don’t we want to make some changes?

Discovery #18:
Any problem created by prejudice
is not “your” problem, “my” problem, or even “our” problem.
It’s THE problem – it affects us all.



WHAT'S THE EFFECT OF OUR PREJUDICE?

We are what we think.
All that we are arises from our thoughts.
With our thoughts we make the world.



Here is what we've learned so far:

- ❖ We've begun to notice the difference between opinion and fact, between assuming and getting information first-hand, and between judging and understanding.
- ❖ We've uncovered our mechanical brains and seen how they've been programmed to create images — many that aren't real or true.
- ❖ We've seen how these images can be formed when we're asleep, under the hypnotic spell of knot-like thinking.
- ❖ We are aware of what happens when we repeat, compare, project, identify with, and reinforce this thinking by listening to authorities who may not be passing along accurate information.
- ❖ We've discovered that fear sometimes creates negative images that get stuck in our brains, and that conditioning helps us hold on to these images, sometimes forever, if we don't wake up.
- ❖ We've discovered that the hate we feel, passed on to us by our ancestors, is now our own invention.
- ❖ We've learned that prejudice is a reaction, and that if we want to act rather than react, we have to think for ourselves.

Concepts That Numb the Brain

Now, we want to look at the *effects* of prejudice – what happens inside us, outside us, and all around us – when prejudice exists.

Hurtful words. There are words in our vocabulary that disrespect and dehumanize people. Many are designed to put down certain groups. Using hurtful words is one way we let our prejudices show.

**Conditioned Thoughts + Reinforced by Conditioned Feelings
= Conditioned Re-Actions**

Making generalizations. Lazy thinking causes us to make generalizations about people without taking the time to find out the specifics of who they really are. Take a look at a few results of prejudiced thinking.



STEREOTYPING: A standardized mental picture held in common by members of a group, that represents an oversimplified opinion, attitude or judgment.

Test your prejudiced thinking by mentally filling in the blanks:

Westerners are _____.
Northeasterners are _____.
Southerners are _____.
Northerners are _____.
Foreigners are _____.
Asians are _____.
Americans are _____.
Germans are _____.
The Irish are _____.
Native Americans are _____.
Blacks are _____.
Mexicans are _____.
Jews are _____.
Russians are _____.
Whites are _____.
Africans are _____.
Arabs are _____.

Did you notice any prejudiced thoughts? What are they?

BIGOTRY: Refers to one who is strongly partial to one's own group, belief system, race or politics, and is intolerant of those who are different.

A bigot has a fixed mindset, an immovable way of thinking that divides people. Bigots think in terms of "my group" vs. "your group." As soon as we have "my" vs. "your" anything, we have conflict. Sectioning the human race into "different" parts creates separation and conflict.

In this life, we focus more on differences than similarities, and we need to change this.



DISCRIMINATION: The act of judging others as inferior.

Some people talk about having discriminating tastes. This means that they care a great deal about their choices – the food they eat, the clothing they wear or the way they live their lives. This kind of discrimination involves making decisions about likes and dislikes and, for the most part, is positive and harms no one.

It's the second meaning of the word that creates conflict. Practicing discrimination is judging other people and seeing them as inferior to you or your group. When we call a certain group of people "bad," we're discriminating against them and acting on a pre-judged set of values we've been conditioned to believe. The effect? Conflict inside us that promotes conflict outside us — hostility and discord that can lead to a battle.

**SCAPEGOATING: Making someone bear the blame of others.**

Our brain finds someone to blame, to find fault with, and to condemn. This kind of blame can begin as an anthill and soon grow into a mountain. It begins with a single, simple thought in the mind of one person that can escalate. The effect of prejudice is irrational fear. And the effect of fear could be the unnecessary loss of millions of lives and the devastation of an entire culture.

In Nazi Germany, and throughout history, many groups blamed Jews for problems in the world. The Germans, whose sense of self had been beaten down by previous wars, felt they needed a "scapegoat" — someone to blame for their own frustration and anger. Adolph Hitler came along and said, "*These are the people who are responsible.*" And the Germans, whose brains were heavily pre-conditioned at that time, believed him. Six *million* Jews were killed!

Scapegoating takes the problem from oneself and puts it “out there” onto another person or group. This leads us to believe that the resolution of the problem is “out there” instead of “in here” — inside ourselves.

Our Shadows Continue to Follow Us

We came into a world where many prejudgments already existed. Without questioning them, our parents, teachers and friends taught us to think in “old ways.” Not because they are bad people, but because they were taught these ways by *their* parents — who didn’t question either!

These old ways are like shadows that stay with us. Passed down from generation to generation, they have formed ideas and actions that exist inside us all. At their roots, all forms of prejudice — stereotyping, bigotry, discrimination and scapegoating — are automatic mechanical reactions in our brain that result in hurt, anger, and despair.

It is, however, within our power to stop our programmed thinking, and this leads us to our newest discovery:

Discovery #19:
Prejudice ends when we can observe it in the making.
Once it is observed, it can stop in ourselves.



When we see our prejudice, as it’s happening, we are engaged in a “Stop! Think!” action. Our *awareness* of the prejudice stops the prejudice in its tracks, and in that moment of awareness, there’s time to think in new ways.

What follows are a few forms of prejudice that are cruel and destructive. As you read about them, allow your awareness of them to help you take a “Stop! Think!” moment to consider what could possibly cause anyone to inflict such harm on other people.

Racism

The word “race” was originally meant to define people in a positive way — to classify us by who we are, or to what group, tribe, clan, country, nation or culture we belong. It refers to the way we look — the color of our hair or eyes, the size and shape of our nose or mouth, the size and shape of other physical features that make us similar to some people and different from others. Other factors include where we come from, our beliefs, customs and traditions, types of food we eat, songs we sing, and holidays we observe.



The word “racism,” traditionally used in a negative way, occurs when one group of people believes that they are superior to another group of people and “put down” the other group for being different. Believing they’re “better than” others allows the self-labeled “superior” group to make fun of, or hurt, the “inferior,” less powerful group. Such prejudice can have catastrophic effects.

Slavery

Many people believe that slavery began only 100 years ago, but, in fact, it’s been around for centuries and practiced by both primitive and advanced people all over the world. Slavery is a *tradition* whereby one person owns another and can demand from that person labor or other services. In this form of servitude, the laborer is considered property — bought and sold like merchandise.

The history books say that slavery emerged as an “economic necessity of convenience” when people began to establish permanent communities that relied heavily on agriculture.

In the 2nd Century slavery was accepted as legal, despite its being considered *contrary to natural law*. It existed throughout the ancient world, from the Mediterranean regions to China. In Greek cities, a freed slave could not be a citizen, because citizenship was *inherited*.

In the 15th and 16th centuries, European exploration of the African coasts led to a slave trade carried out by the British, French, Dutch, Spanish, and Portuguese. African slaves were in demand in the Americas, and were brought to Virginia during the 17th Century.

A movement to abolish slavery for economic and humanitarian reasons began in the 18th Century. Britain outlawed slave trade, and Latin American nations abolished slavery when they became independent from Spain in the 19th Century. Slavery continued, however, in many places, even though it outraged many people's sense of justice.



France abolishes slavery in 1794.

In the United States of America, slavery had disappeared in the North by the early 19th Century, but remained integral to the South's plantation system. The Republican Party with its antislavery platform and the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860 led to the secession of Southern states and the Civil War. Northern victory ended slavery in the U.S., and Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation freed the slaves in 1863.

One hundred years later, along with activists like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., were many people who sought the truth and questioned existing traditions. Rosa Parks, a community activist, refused to leave a bus seat to move to the rear of the bus — which blacks were *lawfully*

required to do then in Montgomery, Alabama. By forcing the police to remove, arrest and imprison her on this occasion, she helped instigate a strong movement in Montgomery that attracted worldwide attention.

Although outlawed today in most countries, various forms of slavery still exist. There have been steps taken by international organizations such as the League of Nations and the United Nations to curb such practices, but millions of people worldwide still live or work in slave-like conditions.

Genocide

Never in the history of the world have so many millions of people been *deliberately* destroyed as during the 20th Century — 1900 to 1999. For the most part, these millions were not casualties of war. They were the victims of the deliberate and organized destruction of racial, religious, ethnic, or political groups. While it's difficult to even admit that this kind of human behavior has occurred, our hope is that by looking at these occurrences, our knowledge and understanding will prevent it from happening again.

Genocide is a crime against a group. Individuals are victims simply because they belong to the group. In this way, individual members are dehumanized, reduced to numerical statistics.



The phrase on the main entrance gateway to the Auschwitz camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau translates to "Work will make you free." Auschwitz-Birkenau was the largest Nazi concentration camp and extermination camp.

Societies that have suffered genocide have had at least one significant minority group that was "different" from the majority, usually racially, ethnically, religiously or politically. Most notorious was Nazi genocide — the killing of more than six million Jews from all over Europe. The Nazis also killed another six million people, targeting Gypsies, homosexuals, and Slavs.

Today we ask: How could so many people die because one person willed it to happen? The answer is: In the act of genocide, all normal constraints against killing human beings are set aside in the name of a so-called “higher” aim. Adolph Hitler was the German dictator at the time. His reported aim was “racial purification” of the German people.

For Stalin in the Soviet Union and Mao Zedong in China, the goal for similar behavior was “to build socialism.” Other groups of people targeted have been Gypsies and homosexuals, because they were considered “sinful.” In Latin America and in the Caribbean areas settled by Spain, millions of Native Indians died in what was regarded as the “march of progress and civilization” led by European Christians. *The weaker were displaced in favor of the stronger.*

Since the beginning of the 20th Century, Armenians and Turks, people of India and Pakistan, Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs have all been at war. In World War I — which lasted four years — more than ten million people were killed. Millions more were lost in the establishment of Bangladesh in 1971 and the Indochina war ending in 1975. In Cambodia, almost three million people were purposely destroyed by the new government for “economic revitalization.”

Ethnic Cleansing

The term “ethnic cleansing” describes an alarming act of terror — killing people because they’re different.



Do you remember the country Yugoslavia? “Ethnic cleansing” is a term used to describe Serbian treatment of Muslim and Croat minorities (and possible treatment of Serbs by Croats and Muslims), initially undertaken by Serbian forces trying to annex Bosnia and Herzegovina

after the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. The violence was aimed at Muslims, thousands of whom fled the country, while uncounted thousands who remained were killed.

The Ottoman Turks first invaded Bosnia in 1386 and completed their conquest in 1463. Now, more than 500 years later, they continue to fight.

Ethnic fighting has also erupted between the Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda. As many as one million were killed, and two million fled into exile. In 1996, an international war crimes tribunal began proceedings in Tanzania against suspects charged in connection with the genocide of 500,000 people.



What Prejudice Has Created

Can we understand why such injustices were able to occur? As human beings who feel this terrible suffering, we want to know:

1. What would cause a group of people to purposely create the deliberate and organized destruction of another group of people?
2. Is it easier to dehumanize individuals when “the enemy” is a group?
3. What do you think of these so-called “higher aims” for genocide that are named?

Political improvement, racial purification, building socialism, march of progress, religious warfare, and economic revitalization.

4. Do you see these “higher aims” as good and valid justifications for killing masses of people?
5. Why do we continue to see people flee their homeland?
6. Why must people be so terribly hurt? Are most of these people “innocent”?
7. If two factions in one part of the world have been battling for centuries, why do you think they haven’t been able to resolve their differences?



The Strengths and Weaknesses of Minorities

Throughout history we have had minorities. In ancient Greece and Rome, the bulk of work was done by slaves who were, most often, “ethnically different.” During the Middle Ages, there were economic minorities who passed their training from one generation to the next and kept outsiders from getting into certain trades. In modern society, labor unions may be considered minority groups.



There have been different forms of “caste” systems throughout history, where classes are set off from each other. Religious leaders, kings and queens, nobles had great power; those who raised the food and made the goods everyone needed were at the bottom of society.

India is a country in which some people believe in previous existences. They believe that how we live today depends on how we lived in a previous life. While obviously creating differences, the caste system is not regarded by most Hindus as unjust. At least, that’s what they’ve been taught.

Pecking Order

Have you ever heard of the term “pecking order”? It’s a way of life natural to the animal kingdom in which the strongest dominate in order to survive. The “stronger” traits are genetically passed on, to ensure the survival of the species.

In the same way, if a few of our tribal ancestors were sick, injured or too old to work, the old tribes would separate these people from the safety and comfort of the tribe. Sometimes they were sent out to die — a very cruel act, but one they deemed necessary in the early development of tribes so the tribes could feel secure.



Survival for the old tribes, like the Sioux Indian Tribe above, meant that everyone had to be fit, or else their survival would be threatened.

Today, human beings have carried this thinking into modern times, even though the world is vastly different than it was thousands of years ago. Some people believe that we humans need to have a pecking order. They have developed “theories” that “prove” that certain races or countries are superior to other races and countries.

Even though most people today have the opportunity to live in physical security, so many continue to act like members of the primitive tribes of yesterday, still trying to prove who is strongest, best, “right.” But today, that way of thinking is more likely to be destructive than safe. Today, identifying with a “tribe” gets us the *opposite* of what we want, which is to survive and to live in peace.



Discovery #20:

**Today, fighting to be “the most powerful” works *against* our security.
It creates conflict between people and keeps us from acting as a single race.**

Minorities today are dealt with in two different ways: they either become part of the culture, or they are persecuted. In the process of becoming part of the culture, values and ways of thinking are exchanged and shared between a minority and the majority.

Persecution and oppression, on the other hand, separate people and have resulted in such acts as segregation, slavery, ejection and genocide. And in today’s world, the most disturbing effect is the devastation and annihilation of millions of people.

The Problem with Perfection

Most of us are brought up to be “good.” Learning to be good is important, but how we are taught can make a difference in how we see “good.”

Many of us are *programmed* to behave in certain ways, *conditioned* to believe that we cannot know what is right ourselves — that only certain people know what’s right and good, and therefore we have to obey them and not listen to what we feel, inside us, is the right thing to do. Adults mean well when they teach children, but they don’t always realize that the way they teach what it means to be “good” can create conflict inside their children. A child can feel bullied when persuaded to be “good” about something that the child questions.

Discovery #21:
No one is perfect. Trying to be perfect creates conflict.



Inner conflict can arise between **judgment** and the **ideal**. If we are judged as being less than perfect, this creates conflict in our mind. If we do something judged as “good,” we can feel set to be some kind of ideal picture of perfection. Most of us know that we are not perfect, so this

can create conflict inside us. The ideal of “perfection” is a destructive image. It’s something we can never completely achieve.

Discovery #22:

The intelligent way to bring about “good” behavior is not through judgment, but through insight.

We need to understand what creates our behavior, who we are, and how we’ve been conditioned to act in ways that create conflict.

When we are taught to understand how we have been conditioned – how we all think and act in ways that bring about conflict, we are less likely to feel insecure or doubt about our self-worth.

Our Robotic Nature

Our “Forgotten Ancestors” who lived in tribes realized that there is safety in numbers. This was the beginning of “tribal identification” – keeping the group together for self-preservation. Their tribal rituals were passed from one generation to the next.

In our world today, we are all recipients of tribal inheritance from those who went before us. Shouldn’t we question any organized belief system to find out – for ourselves – if it is true or false, healthy or destructive?

The effect of being conditioned with prejudices, without questioning them, is that we become robots – mechanical beings programmed and controlled by others.

Are We Conditioned or Educated?

When we’re young, we need intelligent guidance to help us make appropriate decisions. This is education. But sometimes there are “authorities” that want to condition us to automatically accept their established beliefs without question.

Some use slogans, promises, play emotional music — all to condition us to empower them with authority. Some want us to vote them into office, give them money, help them in their power games, go off to war to fight and kill.

We cannot always tell which are telling the truth and which aren’t. Some authorities will give us healthy and constructive direction, and others will not.



**Are we being “educated” with intelligent thoughts,
or “conditioned” to believe destructive thoughts?
The ability to know the difference is what creates intelligence.**

The effects of prejudice are many. Some of the most prominent are:

- Robotic thoughts and actions
- Irrational fear
- Sorrow and suffering
- Separation
- A lack of love and compassion
- Conflict
- Wars

If we don't understand prejudice at its roots, and end it *before* it becomes a problem, then we're destined to pass them on to our family and friends, the way they were passed on to us.

The Anatomy of Prejudice

A scientist examines a subject much like a detective at the scene of the crime. A scientist looks for solutions to the problem and works hard to not let emotions rule. A good questioner observes the facts, and from these facts comes upon certain insights. With each piece of evidence, such an investigator begins to see what's happening — *via first-hand experience*, rather than relying on what he or she's been told.

Attempting to live the “ideal” — trying to think only peaceful thoughts — creates conflict inside us, because it's based on judging ourselves as “bad.” Questioning idealistic thinking that prevents peace — gives us peace.



Discovery #23:
Without prejudiced people, there can be no prejudice.

**Without conflict,
there can be no war.**

CAN WE GET FREE OF OUR PREJUDICE?



Taking Time to Stop

When a teacher asked her students to *show* her what prejudice looks like, most students provided explanations: 1) bullying someone whose skin is a different color from yours, 2) not liking a group that speaks a foreign language, 3) people feeling superior to other people.

One student grabbed a bunch of small flags sticking out of holder, each from a different country, and put a small flag in the hand of several different students and asked them to stand. She asked one student to appear angry and hold his flag higher than the others, then another, to hold her flag even higher. Soon, all the students were vying for the highest position.

When the teacher asked them all to stop, the students could all see the prejudice that was happening. This was the teacher's point: That as soon as you see prejudice happening, you are stopping it, simply by recognizing it. It's taking a moment to stop. You decide, in that stop moment, "Am I going to participate in it, or not?"

**Spotting prejudice, right when it happens,
is a moment that provides an opportunity to end it.**

The first question to ask in any situation is: Am I questioning, or am I judging?

Discovery #24:

**We believe whatever we've been either educated or conditioned to believe.
Education brings us understanding; conditioning brings us prejudice.**

Avoid, Resolve or Manage

Here's a gauge to help us measure the various levels of prejudice:

1. Primary (first) = Avoid



2. Secondary (second) = Resolve



3. Tertiary (third) = Manage



Avoidance – Stop It Before It Starts!

Someone calls you a terrible name and you want to call that person a name, too, in retaliation. But instead, you take a Stop! Think! Moment, you turn and walk away. Or, you ask: *“Why did you call me that? Are you angry about something? What’s wrong?”* This stops prejudice in its tracks! It goes no further! We can **avoid** a conflict like this one by having **insight** into it, right as it’s happening. You step on the brake inside your mind, and prevent yourself from crashing into conflict!



Resolution – Resolve It, Now!

Sometimes it's too late to prevent a conflict from beginning, but this is an opportunity to resolve it – before it escalates into something bigger.

Let's say someone calls you a name and you call that person a name back. As soon as you do, you see that you've added to the conflict. So when this person calls you another name, this time, you say, *"Okay, this name-calling doesn't work for me. Let's talk about this."* This is you using *mental self-defense!*

Management – Work Out the Details for Fixing!

At this level, it's too late to avoid and too late to resolve. All you can do is manage what's happened. Let's say that two of you have called each other names and then started fist fighting. Now someone's glasses are broken, and someone's bleeding. Time to phone a doctor. Why do we wait this late to handle the conflict? Wouldn't it be easier to avoid or resolve it?

Discovery #25:
Instead of fighting, we can reason with a bully.
We can use our *brain* instead of our fists.

Here are 12 ways to help you *resolve* conflict nonviolently, if you cannot avoid it:

Twelve Ways To Walk Away with Confidence

1. Make friends. Treat the bully as a friend instead of an enemy.
2. Use humor. You can turn a threatening situation into a funny one.
3. Walk away. Don't get into it — just walk away.
4. Use cleverness. Use your creative imagination to resolve conflict.
5. Agree with bully. Let insults go — without fighting back.
6. Refuse to fight. The winner of a fight is the one who avoids it.
7. Stand up to bully. Stick up for yourself. Just say NO! to bullying.
8. Scream/yell. A powerful shout can end conflict before it starts.
9. Ignore the threat. Be like bamboo — bend in the wind.
10. Use authority. Call a proper authority to help you "defeat the bully."
11. Reason with bully. Use the most powerful tool you have — your brain.
12. Take a stance. Be a victor — not a victim.

Taking Responsibility – A.R.M.ing Ourselves to Deal with Prejudice

Below is a simple organization scheme, which we call A.R.M., to help us look at the three main levels at which we deal with conflict arising from prejudice.



The first stage — avoidance — is insight.

It's the ability to recognize conflict, or prejudice, right now — right when it's happening — so that it can be stopped immediately! This stage is the one that prevents conflict, and it's always our highest goal.



The second stage — resolution — is hindsight.

Yes, there was conflict. Yes, I see that what that person did was an act of prejudice, and what I did was a reaction to that prejudice. Hindsight shows a sense of recognition that prejudice happened.



The third stage — management — is a sign that we have an intellectual understanding that there was some kind of conflict, or prejudice, going on. This is called **late-sight** because we're too far-gone to see what created it. Although it's too late to prevent the conflict, we now go about the business of straightening everything out, so that we go on with our lives. There's no time to do anything about it, except clean up.

Whether prejudice has caused problems at the first, second or third level, the most important thing we can do is understand the **cause** or **root** of it. One way to do this is to take some responsibility.

Say to yourself: “*It’s possible that I have somehow taken part in creating this problem.*”

Whether you have or not, is irrelevant. What’s important is that you take responsibility.

Then say to yourself: “*Since I may have taken part in creating the problem, let me think of some way I might be helpful in resolving it.*”

If we can manage it, perhaps we can resolve it. Then, we need to go to the first stage and educate ourselves about its causes so — next time — we can end a situation like this one at the root level.

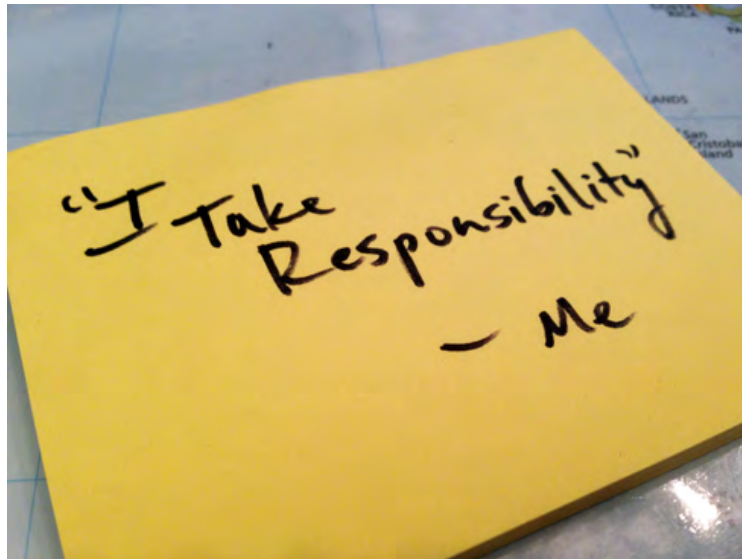


Discovery #26:
No matter at what level,
prejudice needs to be stopped in its tracks,
before it rises to the next level.

Choose Responsibility Over Blame

When we question, we can find out for ourselves whether something is true or false. Insight is being able to clearly see what’s happening as it occurs. It’s first-hand experience rather than something someone tells you.

**What’s necessary in understanding and ending prejudice
is not memorization of knowledge,
but seeing what prejudice actually is through your own observation.**



Discovery #27:
No one is to blame.
I must take responsibility for my own life.

We have to become active in our own education. We can speak with people we know, but all anyone can do is show us something, or tell us something. It's then up to us to find out for ourselves whether what we've been told is true or not.

**That's real education –
and real education is what ends prejudice.**



Prejudice Is a Decision

A man named Kaspar Hauser was locked in a dark cellar and chained there for the first 18 years of his life. For as long as he could remember he spent his life totally alone in a darkened cell about two metres long, one metre wide and one and a half high (about seven feet long, about three feet wide and about four feet high) with only a straw bed to sleep on and two horses and a dog carved out of wood for toys. He had never seen the sun, the moon, flowers, and trees – anything but a toy wooden horse that had been left in his cellar. When he was discovered and let out of the cellar, Kaspar was completely unprejudiced. He didn't know how to discriminate between a black person and a white person. He'd never been taught to call anyone a name, to feel jealousy, spite, hatred, or even fear. His life proved something important.



Discovery #28:

**As we have discovered prejudice is something we are born with
and also what we learn.
This is called “nature “ and “nurture.”**

We're all vulnerable to the effects of prejudice, but we're all also capable of understanding how we've been conditioned and responding correctly to a new situation. Here are three steps that can help:

- 1. Become aware of new insight we need.** Any action we take that's not based on awareness is a **re**-action. Whether we react to a red light or to someone who's different from us, our reaction is mechanical, automatic unless we make ourselves **aware** of what's happening!
- 2. Concentrate on what's new that we need to do.** Once we're aware, the reaction can stop in its tracks! Is this a conditioned action? Is it constructive, or destructive? Is my *new* behavior based on prejudice, too? Is my mind's door open to new insights? Am I showing judgment, or understanding?

3. Focus on the new way until we understand it. The way we became conditioned in the first place took time and repetition; now we must focus our attention on how that conditioning works inside us. When we're aware of what's happening both inside and outside us, we learn new behavior just by keeping our mind open to new possibilities!

We must never be afraid to stop in the middle of behavior that could prove destructive — to ourselves or someone else.

Thinking in New Ways

We live in a world in which prejudices run through our lives on a daily basis and have effects on us that we're only beginning to recognize.

Did you know that the country of Costa Rica, in Central America, has no army? And did you know that all the money that could have been spent on the military goes toward education? Does this help you realize that such a world might possible?



PERCEPTION OF PERSON "X" OR GROUP "Y"

PATH TO CONFLICT

PATH OF PEACE

Mistaken Information

Conception = Thought:
All people like Person
"X" and Group "Y"
are DANGEROUS!"

Intelligent Questioning

1. What's the evidence?
2. Is this true?
3. Where did this come from?
4. Do I have to think this way?

**STOP!
THINK!**



Fear = Threat =
FIGHT OR FLEE!

Calm = No Threat =
RELAX AND UNDERSTAND

Feeling of Panic

Feeling of Confidence

Need to Defend

Desire to Resolve

CONFLICT

PEACE

EXAMPLES OF FALSE THINKING	EXAMPLES OF TRUE STATEMENTS
All "X" people are dangerous.	This is conditioned thinking.
Foreign people frighten me.	A "foreign" person is someone new.
I need to defend against "them."	There are only "we" humans.
"They" are a threat to my beliefs.	Beliefs can separate people.
My country, right or wrong.	We all share the same planet, Earth.
I must tolerate "them."	I want to understand them.
How can I trust "those types"?	I am reacting to stereotypes.
"They" have weird customs.	Customs can be beautiful.
"Their" clothes are strange.	Clothes are only costumes.
"Their" language is odd.	Language can be fun to learn.
"They" look queer.	That's my judgment.
"They" act like freaks.	What's wrong with differences?

**When we're angry with someone we perceive as different and a threat,
this anger comes from fear.**

We need to understand that our anger is hiding our fear.

**We can stay angry.
Or we can uncover the fear and deal with it.**

Discovery #29
Anger hides fear. We need to understand the fear!
We fear what we do not understand.

How do we recognize our fear? Fear consists of scary thoughts that usually begin with “What if...” such as:

What if... **they** take over our school, town, and country?

What if... **they** want to belong to our group?

What if... **they** attack **us**?

What if... **they** want us to believe in their ways?

What if... **they** (fill in *your* scary thoughts).

The key is to understand that our thoughts affect our behavior.
More realistic thoughts might be:

What if... they're no different than us?

What if... they have new and interesting ideas?

What if... they only want to be our friends?

What if... they just want to live their lives in peace?

What if... they (fill in *your* friendly thoughts).

Whenever you have a thought, stop and look at it – don't resist.
A thought creates a feeling.
The feeling creates your action.



It's up to you.

**Prejudice can stop in your brain, right at the start,
when it first comes up.**



**We are what we think.
All that we are arises from our thoughts.
With our thoughts, we make the world.**

We get free of prejudice by:

- Acknowledging that fear happen.
- Questioning how it happens.
- Keeping ourselves aware of conditioned reactions of any kind.

Rights and Responsibilities

In a democracy we're supposed to have certain rights and, with them, certain responsibilities. One of our rights is freedom of speech. With this right comes the responsibility to use speech in an intelligent, constructive way, for the betterment of humankind.

We also have the right to be intelligently educated, the right to receive accurate information. If we are denied accurate information, how can we think and speak intelligently?

The basis of a democracy is clear and intelligent thinking, the ability to act in ways that bring equality and peace to all humanity. If we live in a country that wants us to think in a fixed, conditioned way, then are we free to learn?

**Discovery #30:
If we're conditioned to think in a fixed way,
we cannot make an intelligent decision on our own.
We cannot see the truth or act upon it when we have only a piece of the puzzle.**



A Checklist to Avoid Prejudice

- Question! Assume nothing!
- Gather accurate information!
- Do not judge! Observe! Think for yourself!
- Question questionable authority!
- See what's happening in the moment!
- Examine your own thinking! Are you thinking for yourself, or are your thoughts thinking you?
- Make a decision to act based on accurate information!
- Dismiss second-hand information.
- Look for causes — roots!



A List of Questions to Ask Yourself

1. Who is the “we” and who’s different from the “other”?
2. Is there really an “other”?
3. Is “the other” really different? Aren’t we all “different”?
4. Why do some groups believe they’re superior to “others”?
5. Do we all want to be “the same”?
6. Can we enjoy a variety of cultures and “different” people?
7. Do we have to fear and hurt “them”?
8. What things about “different” groups create conflict?
9. What’s the root of prejudice? What’s its cause?
10. Is what I’m hearing fact or opinion?

Finally, ask yourself this question, and think before you speak:

**Do I want to protect myself from the truth,
or learn from it?**

**The essence of a democracy
is the freedom to find out for myself what’s true.**



Prejudice has caused a lot of conflict and many wars. Grown beyond its roots, it’s hard to stop. Once off and running, it can create a lot of pain and suffering.

You are the source of your freedom from prejudice! *Thinking* is what has created prejudice and the problems of prejudice. *In-sight* can help you avoid those prejudices.

**When you look at the roots of the tree of prejudice,
you are looking at yourself —
because you are the world
and the world is you.**



**Acting out of intelligence, rather than prejudice,
is the highest form of action.**

“The book, *Why Is Everybody Always Picking on Us?* explores the roots of prejudice. I don't think I've seen another book like it. How wonderful if this book could be used in one's social studies classroom! I have learned where prejudice begins, how it is created, how it is perpetuated, and how it can be resolved. This book looks at stereotypes, bigotry, discrimination, scapegoating, racism, and more. It is a wonderfully comprehensive manual for young people and adults alike on understanding our conditioning and the root of prejudice.”

— *American Pride Through Education*

Additional Resources

prejudice.bravenewchild.org

www.atriumsoc.org/youth-understanding-prejudice.php

[DOWNLOAD BOOK](#)