

## The Tip #9

*'A problem can't be solved by the same consciousness that created it' (Einstein)*

*"If knowledge is power then knowing what we do not know is wisdom".*



Photo by Nathan Bingle

## The Tale #9

You all know how annoying it is – you are at a meeting or in a social setting and someone is 'preaching' and 'proselytising' to you about an issue. You may have inadvertently mentioned something that stomped on this person's sacred ground, but they are determined to set you straight. Eventually you disentangle yourself from that person only to find yourself next to another ultra-persistent person who wants to prosecute this issue all legalistically and tell you why your views are factually wrong. Not content to be prosecuted in this way, you join some friends and up comes the statesman who curries favour with your view and just about jumps on the chair telling you all why his perspective should be the majoritarian one.

In his book, [Think Again](#), Adam Grant says "we think and talk with the mindsets of three different professions: preachers, prosecutors and politicians. *'In each of these modes we take on a particular identity and use a distinct set of tools. We go into preacher mode when our sacred beliefs are in jeopardy - we deliver sermons to protect and promote our ideals. We enter prosecutor mode when we recognise flaws in other people's reasoning - we marshal arguments to prove them wrong and win our case. We shift into politician mode when we are seeking to win over an audience - we campaign and lobby for the approval of our constituents. The risk is that we become so wrapped up in preaching that we are right; prosecuting others who are wrong; and politicking for support, that we don't bother to rethink our own views.'*

Leaders and conflict solvers can unconsciously or consciously revert to assumptions, instincts and habits in our thinking all of which guide discourse and limit our ability to find solutions. It restricts our ability to explore alternative pathways for resolution.

Too often, we see issues through the prism of bias. In psychology (and practice) there are at least two biases that drive a way of thinking. One is confirmation bias - seeing what we expect to see, and the other is desirability bias - seeing what we want to see. We arrive at conclusions before we have given sufficient thought to ideas or interrogated problems and solutions with an inquiring mind.

Most of the time we are unaware of what we are doing. We haven't allowed others to question us, challenge us, ask us 'why'. We need to think about our thinking – be metacognitively predisposed and not bulldoze an opinion that alienates new ideas and perspectives.

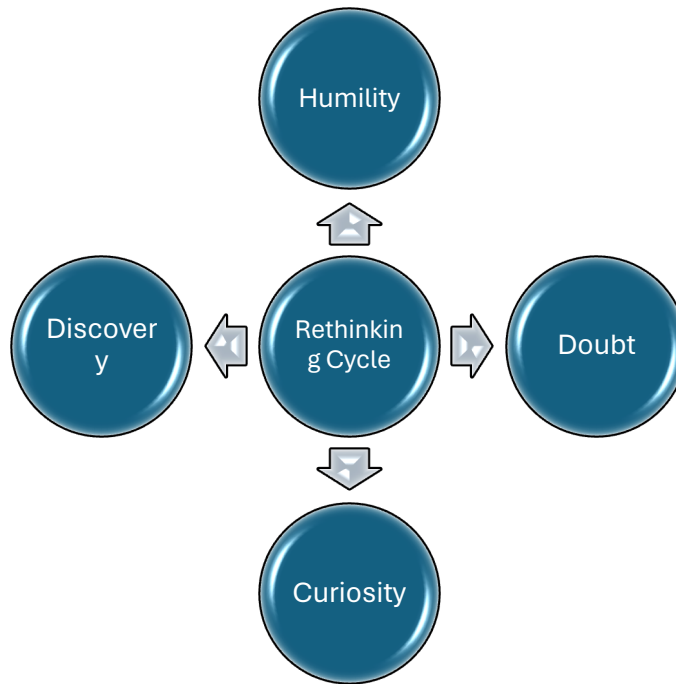
Think about this for a moment before we defend others for being or ourselves as not being preachers, prosecutors or politicians (PPP). Algorithms sort us into groups of like-minded individuals and create echo chambers that amplify our views, leaving us uninformed and less likely to hear opposing arguments, and this not only has a polarising effect on our societies but on ourselves.

Grant suggests that we must start thinking like scientists. We move into scientist mode when we're truly searching for facts and truth. There may be rare occasions when we are obliged to talk and think like a preacher, prosecutor or politician (PPP) but to keep an open mind, to question assumptions, instincts and habits and to view the landscapes in which we work with curiosity can have a liberating impact on the culture and the prevailing work ethic of the school or organisation. In social experiments, the effects of thinking scientifically on emerging start-ups has yielded astonishing results driving revenue 40 times higher than control groups that were not thinking 'scientifically'.

When we think in scientist mode, Grant says *'we refuse to let our ideas become ideologies. We don't start with answers or solutions, we lead with questions and puzzles. We don't preach from intuition, we teach from evidence. We don't just have healthy scepticism about other peoples' arguments, we dare to disagree with our own arguments'*.

Research shows that we are more inclined to surround ourselves with like-minded people. This is often true of leadership teams, so the diversity of views may not exist. If one is a PPP, the chances are others are too, which leaves the 'scientist's perspective' either extinguished or muzzled.

Consider the diversity of issues leaders manage on a day-to-day basis, the challenges and complications inherent in some of the conversations and the temptation to deliver finality to these in being one of the P's. It is not always easy to think like a scientist but when [global scientific output](#) doubles approximately every 9 years perhaps the imperative to is going to become even more critical and is reason enough to be open to rethinking. There are some issues on which we simply can't have certainty. Being overly self-assured and overly confident sets up a virtuous cycle.



Grant says we should shift our PPP thinking as *'scientific thinking favours humility over pride, doubt over certainty, curiosity over closure'*.

It is argued that had Mike Lazaridis from BlackBerry been more prone to rethinking, then the demise of BlackBerry might not have been as inevitable as it was. Even Steve Jobs from Apple was dragged by his more open, scientifically minded colleagues to consider turning the iPod into an iPhone – he was peculiarly closed-minded and PPP in thinking. And look where the change in thinking has led!

Are you demonstrating enough curiosity at the right time? Is your team? Coaching & Mentoring (Moaching) can help. Call +61 410 586 700 **Be and Become.**