Habits of Mind Tool for STAY INVOLVED

CLASS PARTICIPATION: More than Just Raising Your Hand

Take the mini-quiz below to assess your participation level.

HOW WELL DO I PARTICIPATE IN CLASS?

1. If you saw me in class, you could describe me as: (3 pts.)
   a. that person in the corner looking out the window.
   b. the person who monopolizes class discussions.
   c. the person with prepared notes and questions and ready to participate.
   d. none of the above.

2. My instructor probably thinks during class that I: (3 pts.)
   a. suffer from tendonitis since I never write anything down.
   b. am the next Picasso based on all the doodling that I do.
   c. wrote the textbook since I always know what it said without even opening it up.
   d. none of the above.

3. Check all that apply: (2 pts. per correct answer)
   a. I contribute to the discussion every week in class.
   b. I check my e-mail during class.
   c. I could give classes in study skills since I exhibit them so well.
   d. I read the text five minutes before the class starts for the first time.

SCORE YOURSELF AND SEE WHAT IT MEANS:

8-10 points: You’ve got the right idea! Participation is a regular part of what you do in class. This activity provides additional ideas on how to use different strategies and ideas to improve your participation.

5-7 points: You’re on the right track. You may need some ideas on how to continue to get better.

2-4 points: Uh-oh! Let’s get to work. Participation isn’t something that just happens—you need to make it happen!

0-1 point: You’re having a class participation emergency! Take extra notes during this activity so you can put these ideas to work right away.

APPLY IT: Now, based on your score, what is the biggest factor that is preventing you from fully participating in class? How can you address this problem and improve your involvement in class discussions?

Adapted from: Student Learning Support Tutorials
http://www.sfsu.edu/~ctfd/tutorials
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Discuss the questions below with a partner, and be ready to share your ideas with the rest of the class:

1. Why do you think most instructors encourage class discussion of topics found in the textbook?
2. What contributes to true learning? In other words, what behaviors cause your brain to comprehend and retain information?
3. If you want to fully participate in a class discussion, what must you do before coming to a class?
4. What advice would you give to a shy person or a self-described loner regarding class involvement?
5. How can participating in class make the subject matter more interesting to you?
6. How can developing the ability to discuss ideas help you later on in your career or in relationships?

LISTENING: An Often-Overlooked Skill That Is Crucial to Class Participation

Explain what you think each of these quotes on listening means:

“We have two ears and one mouth, so we should listen more than we say.”
— Zeno of Citium

“I like to listen. I have learned a great deal from listening carefully. Most people never listen.”
— Ernest Hemingway

“I remind myself every morning: Nothing I say this day will teach me anything. So if I’m going to learn, I must do it by listening.”
— Larry King

HOW TO TRAIN YOUR BRAIN TO LISTEN ACTIVELY:

1. During a class session, keep track of every time your mind wanders away from the lecture. Put a check mark on a piece of paper. Consciously force yourself to pay attention; discipline your mind. Over time, you should see improvement in your ability to listen actively, i.e. less check marks on your paper!

2. Fill in the thought bubbles on the next page with the sorts of comments that you think might pass through the mind of an active listener vs. a non-listener, both attending the same lecture on English grammar.

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Final Quiz on CLASS PARTICIPATION:

1. Some of the basics of class participation include:
   a. Showing up early
   b. Picking out a good seat
   c. Turning all of your electronic devices off completely
   d. All of the above

2. Asking questions in class:
   a. Shows that you seek clarification
   b. Helps you learn by engaging with the material
   c. Helps you learn by hearing responses from your peers
   d. All of the above

3. Participating in class can help you:
   a. Prepare for tests
   b. Improve your grade
   c. Integrate the lectures and the homework materials
   d. All of the above

4. It is OK to give an opinion during class as long as you:
   a. Make sure the class knows that it is just your opinion
   b. Tell the class that it is a summary of the readings
   c. Talk for a long time
   d. None of the above

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