



What does it mean to have a Beginner's Mind?

Very young children approach the world with open hearts and minds. Each experience is a new one, and they explore the world with an eager excitement to discover what will happen next without regard to what might go wrong.

Only as we get older do we begin to develop a fear of the unknown, the potential for embarrassment and failure. Although this fear can be helpful in preventing us from falling off the edge of a cliff or running into traffic with our eyes closed, it also holds us back from truly throwing ourselves headfirst into new experiences.

Developing a Beginner's Mind means adopting the non-resistant approach of a beginner even when working on or learning about something with which we are already familiar. It means leaving one's ego and inhibitions behind in order to continually move forward and grow toward a graceful expertise.

How can you support your child with having a Beginner's Mind?

When your child is attempting something new and challenging, take note of your reactions. Even when we tell our children that we are excited for them to begin something new, our body language and facial expressions can tell a different story. Be aware of any tension or anxiety you may be feeling and expressing and be thoughtful about what you convey to your child. Emphasize the excitement of discovery and your belief in the value of a non-resistant approach to learning, both verbally and physically. Refrain from offering advice and correcting missteps, and enjoy your child's journey toward learning something new. You may consider embarking on a project or taking a class along with your child so that you can experience being beginners together.

Habits to practice each day:

- Begin each day sharing something new you're going to try. Have your child do the same.
- Take a completely different approach to one thing you do every day (how you brush your teeth, what you eat for breakfast, which hand you write with) and have your child do the same. Talk about what you notice, how your experience is different, how it can broaden your perspective, etc.



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- Approach projects and tasks with curiosity (even those with which you're very familiar). Take some time to wonder together - What might happen here? How many different ways can we approach this? Why try it this way? Why try it that way?

Interested in learning more?

- [Shift Happens](#) - Video essay exploring the shift from a childlike approach to learning, in which we're open to making many mistakes and learning from them, to a fear of making mistakes and being seen as a failure.
- [How to Cultivate Beginner's Mind for a Fresh Perspective](#) - detailed explanation of Shoshin (Beginner's Mind) and tips for how to practice it

The Art of Learning Project is a non-profit educational initiative centered on the learning principles outlined by Josh Waitzkin in his book [The Art of Learning](#). For more information about Josh and The Art of Learning Project, please take a look at our [website](#) and, to go more in depth, watch and listen to these [interviews](#).