

5 Ways to Practice Positive Skepticism

Skepticism vs. cynicism: the modern day quest for certainty. Cynics are those who distrust most information they hear or see, and even more so when the information challenges their own system of beliefs. Because of this they tend to be intolerant of other people's ideas.

Skepticism, by comparison, is a key part of the critical thought process, and it derives directly from the need for education and information – further understanding, if you will. Skeptics typically need additional evidence or information before quickly accepting claims to be true. They have no problems breaking out of the status quo to challenge and question authority.

We should be creating a world full of positive skepticism, and here are five ways we can model it right now:

- **Detecting Deception** – An easy to way challenge claims and notions put forth is to ask the right questions. “What makes you think this way?” “What assumptions have you based your claim upon?” “Can you find any research or studies to support what you’re claiming?” Never blindly accept what anyone tells you.
- **Doubt** – With much of the mass media nowadays being owned and operated by just a handful of families and corporations, it can be easy to fall prey to the commercials, TV news cycles, and political campaign ads that try to influence how we think and act. Always try to recognize the limits that come with anyone's claim of

truth. If something doesn't feel right then it most likely isn't.

- **Play Devil's Advocate** – Skeptics like to see things from both sides, and playing on both sides of an argument allows them to obtain a better understanding of a problem. This practice is great for everyone to learn and utilize, especially children.
- **Use Logic and Intuition** – Everyone has both logic and intuition to some degree, but most of us tend to rely on one more prominently than the other. Alternating between the two qualities of mind will help you to become a better thinker, because “doubting and believing are among the most powerful root acts we can perform with our minds.”
- **Bias-Detecting** – A true skeptic bears the important task of determining whether or not information and research is without bias. Most people like listening to radio stations, news channels, and programs that are in line with the way they view the world. But to be a skeptic is to oft wonder what the other side of the story being presented is. There is a difference between messages that are meant to persuade rather than inform.

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