Metacognition

Do you know how to learn? Many people don't. Specifically, they don't know how to look inward to examine how they learn and to judge what is effective.

That's where metacognitive strategies come in. They are techniques that help people become more successful learners.

What is metacognition?

- Metacognition is often referred to as "thinking about thinking." But that's just a quick definition. Metacognition is a regulatory system that helps a person understand and control his or her own cognitive performance.

- Metacognition allows people to take charge of their own learning. It involves awareness of how they learn, an evaluation of their learning needs, generating strategies to meet these needs and then implementing the strategies. (Hacker, 2009)

- Learners often show an increase in self-confidence when they build metacognitive skills. Self-efficacy improves motivation as well as learning success.

- For all age groups, metacognitive knowledge is crucial for efficient independent learning, because it fosters forethought and self-reflection.

The two processes of metacognition

1. **Knowledge of cognition** has three components: knowledge of the factors that influence one's own performance; knowing different types of strategies to use for learning; knowing what strategy to use for a specific learning situation.

2. **Regulation of cognition** involves: setting goals and planning; monitoring and controlling learning; and evaluating one's own regulation (assessing results and strategies used).

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Examples of metacognition skills you may use

Successful learners typically use metacognitive strategies whenever they learn. But they may fail to use the best strategy for each type of learning situation. Here are some metacognitive strategies that will sound familiar to you:

1. **Knowing your limits**. Knowing the limits of your own memory for a particular task and creating a means of external support.

2. **Self-Monitoring**. Self-monitoring your learning strategy, such as concept mapping, and then adapting the strategy if it isn't effective.

3. **Modify**. Noticing whether you comprehend something you just read and then modifying your approach if you did not comprehend it.

4. **Skimming**. Choosing to skim subheadings of unimportant information to get to the information you need.

5. **Rehearsing**. Repeatedly rehearsing a skill in order to gain proficiency (i.e. practice)

6. **Self-Tests**. Periodically doing self-tests to see how well you learned something.

Metacognitive strategies

Metacognitive strategies facilitate learning how to learn. You can incorporate these, as appropriate, into your own learning strategy.

1. **Ask Questions.** Asking questions allows learners to reflect on their own learning processes and strategies. It also allows for enhance comprehension

2. **Foster Self-Reflection.** Critically analyze your own assumptions and how these assumptions have influenced your learning.

3. **Adopt Autonomous Learning.** Challenge how you learn information. Is it the most efficient and effective way of learning? If not try new strategies as a trial and error experiment until you find a strategy that works for you.

4. **Find a Mentor.** Many people learn best by interacting with peers who are slightly more advanced. Look for opportunities to observe the proficient use of a skill by a mentor, ask questions and learn from their learning experiences.

5. **Find a Group:** Cooperative problem solving can enhance metacognitive strategies by discussing possible approaches with group members and learning from each other. This can be an excellent way of testing your knowledge on a given subject.

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6. **Think Aloud.** Report your thoughts while performing a difficult task. Discover any potential errors in thinking to address any sabotaging thoughts or language while learning new information.

7. **Self-Explanation**. Talking aloud while learning new information can help you improve your comprehension of a difficult subject and bring to light your gaps in retention.

8. **Be ok with Making Errors.** You are given the opportunity to make errors while learning. Allow yourself to make mistakes as learning is about the process of getting to know information, not the arrival at knowing information perfectly.

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