



The Ten Components of a Thinking Environment

1. ATTENTION

Listening without interruption and with interest in where the person will go next in their thinking

- *Attention is an act of creation.*
- *The quality of our attention determines the quality of other people's thinking. Attention, driven by the promise of no interruption, and by respect and interest in where people will go with their thinking, is the key to a Thinking Environment. Attention is that powerful. It generates thinking. It is an act of creation.*

2. EQUALITY

Regarding each other as thinking peers giving equal time to think

- *Even in a hierarchy people can be equal as thinkers.*
- *In a Thinking Environment everyone is valued equally as a thinker. Everyone gets a turn to think out loud and a turn to give attention. To know you will get your turn to speak makes your attention more genuine and relaxed. It also makes your speaking more succinct.*
- *Equality keeps the talkative people from silencing the quiet ones. And it requires the quiet ones to contribute their own thinking. The result is high quality ideas and decisions.*

3. EASE

Discarding internal urgency

- *Ease creates. Urgency destroys.*
- *Ease, an internal state free from rush or urgency, creates the best conditions for thinking.*
- *But Ease, particularly in organisations and through the 'push' aspect of social networking, is being systematically bred out of our lives. If we want people to think well under impossible deadlines and inside the injunctions of 'faster, better, cheaper, more', we must cultivate internal ease.*

4. APPRECIATION

Noticing what is good and saying it

- *The human mind works best in the presence of appreciation.*
- *In life we learn that to be appreciative is to be naïve, whereas to be critical is to be realistic. In discussions, therefore, we focus first, and sometimes only, on things that are not working. Consequently, because the brain requires appreciation to work well, our thinking is often specious.*
- *The Thinking Environment recognises the right ratio of appreciation to challenge so that individuals and groups can think at their best.*



5. ENCOURAGEMENT

Giving courage to go to the unexplored edge of our thinking by ceasing competition as thinkers

- *To be 'better than' is not necessarily to be 'good'.*
- *To compete does not ensure certain excellence. It merely ensures comparative success. Therefore, competition between thinkers can be dangerous. It can keep their attention on each other as rivals, not on the huge potential for each to think courageously for themselves.*
- *A Thinking Environment prevents internal competition among colleagues, replacing it with a wholehearted, unthreatened search for good ideas.*

6. FEELINGS

Welcoming the release of emotion

- *Unexpressed feelings can inhibit good thinking.*
- *Thinking stops when we are upset. But if we express feelings just enough, thinking re-starts. Unfortunately, we have this backwards in our society. We think that when feelings start, thinking stops. When we assume this, we interfere with exactly the process that helps a person to think clearly again.*
- *If instead, when people show signs of feelings, we relax and welcome them, good thinking will resume.*

7. INFORMATION

Absorbing all the relevant facts

- *Full and accurate information results in intellectual integrity.*
- *We base our decisions on information all of the time. When the information is incorrect or limited, the quality of our thinking suffers and we can be trapped in denial. Whereas, accurate and full information provides the path to good independent thinking.*



8. DIFFERENCE

Prioritising diversity of group identities and understanding their lived experience

- *The greater the diversity of the group, and the greater the welcoming of different points of view, the greater the chance of accurate, cutting-edge thinking.*
- *Reality is diverse. Therefore, to think well we need to be in as real, as diverse, a setting as possible.*
- *We need to be surrounded by people from many identity groups, and we need to know that there will be no reprisal for thinking differently from the rest of the group.*

9. INCISIVE QUESTIONS™

Freeing the human mind of untrue assumptions lived as true

- *A wellspring of good ideas lies just beneath an untrue limiting assumption. An Incisive Question will remove it, freeing the mind to think afresh.*
- *The key block to high-quality independent thinking is an untrue limiting assumption, lived as true. To free the mind, therefore, we need to know how to construct an Incisive Question, a tool of unbelievable precision and power.*

10. PLACE

Producing a physical environment — the room, the listener, your body — that says, 'You matter'

- *When the physical environment affirms our importance, we think more clearly and boldly. When our bodies are cared for and respected, our thinking improves.*
- *Thinking Environments are places that say back to people, 'You matter.' People think at their best when they notice that the place reflects their value to the people there and to the event.*
- *And because the first place of thinking is the body, it needs to be in a condition that says to us as thinkers, 'You matter'.*
- *In these ways, Place is a silent form of appreciation.*