

PMI: Plus, Minus, Interesting


The PMI is directing an open-minded attitude into a tool that can be used deliberately. This is a very basic lesson which is introduced right at the beginning so that the PMI process itself can be used as a tool in the course of subsequent lessons.

Instead of just deciding whether or not you like an idea, this thinking operation has you make an effort to find the good points (P=Plus), the bad points (M=Minus) and the interesting points (I=Interesting) about an idea. The interesting points are those which are neither good nor bad but are worth noticing.


The PMI is a way of treating ideas, suggestions and proposals. The natural reaction to an idea is to like or dislike it, to approve or disapprove. If you like an idea, it is very unnatural to look for the negative or minus aspects. If you dislike an idea it is very unnatural to look for the positive or plus aspects. It is equally unnatural to pick out the merely interesting aspects of an idea.

Using the PMI as a deliberate operation gives students a means of by-passing the natural emotional reaction to an idea. Their objectives change from emotional reactions to carrying out with skill a formal operation. Once the PMI has been practised as a tool it can be asked for in subsequent lessons: "Do a PMI on that idea."

The PMI is never intended to prevent decision or commitment but to ensure that this happens after both sides of the matter have been considered and not before. In simple terms the PMI operation enlarges the view of a situation; without it, emotional reaction to an idea narrows the way we look at it.



PMI = Plus, Minus, Interesting:



P = Plus - The good things about an idea - why you like it
M = Minus - The bad things about an idea - why you don't like it
I = Interesting - What you find interesting about an idea

Instead of just saying that you like an idea, or don't like an idea, you can use a PMI. When you use a PMI you give the good points first, then the bad points and then the points that are neither good nor bad but are interesting. You can use a PMI as a way of treating ideas, suggestions and proposals.