

### **Attitude Activity 5: O.D.A.**

Observe, decide, act is one of the simplest-looking problem-solving processes we've seen; three simple steps whenever you've got an issue with study and, as if by magic, a solution should appear!

In theory, that is. Most study-related problems are actually really complicated, and an obvious three-step approach isn't necessarily helpful. We've found complex study problems often involve:

- Habits and beliefs that have strengthened over time and need changing
- Patterns of behaviour that seem logical but are part of the problem
- Relationships that aren't straightforward but messy
- Situations and locations that add to the complexity
- Resources that are incomplete or missing altogether

So over the last few years, inspired by Warren Berger's *The Book of Beautiful Questions*, we've been working with students to develop a problem-solving process that more accurately reflects what it's like to face a problem at school or college.

We've kept the simple O.D.A. structure, but we've filled each part of the process with a massive array of questions.

So if you've got a study-related problem...

**Start with 'observe'.** This section requires you to see the problem freshly and clearly, so take your time; stay here for at least ten minutes. Aim for fifteen. You don't have to answer every question but consider every single one for a moment or two before deciding whether it's useful or not. Make notes as you go – challenge yourself and *really get to know your problem from every angle*.

**Now have a go at 'decide'.** Stay here for ten minutes too, checking every question carefully, and answering as fully and honestly as possible. Generate as many thoughts and observations as you possibly can, and make notes as you go.

**Finish with 'act'.** There's space here to record plans. You'll have more than one plan here – you might have two or three possible solutions that have occurred to you as you answer the questions. Take your time noting them down. Once you got your solutions written down, use the remaining questions to test which solution might be best.

Then try it out!

<b>Observe (<i>Why does this problem or situation exist?</i>)</b>
If I had to summarise my problem in one sentence, what would it be? Why does this problem matter to me? Why does it exist in the first place? If I had to blame others for the issue, what would I say? If I had to take 100% responsibility for the issue, what would I confess to? What are the underlying forces, the larger issues? Is this a problem that keeps coming back? How have I tried to solve something similar in the past? Am I seeing this with fresh eyes, or with old judgements? What might I be assuming? What might I be missing? What critical information do I have and not have? Has someone else solved this problem already? Who do I know that's least-likely to have this problem? Why?

What am I dreading about this problem? What might I be hiding from?  
Do I seek out opposing views?  
What am I inclined to believe?  
What is the evidence behind my beliefs, and how strong is it?  
What's the other side of this issue?

**Decide** (*What am I really trying to achieve here?*)

What would a successful outcome look like?  
How would I know things were improving? What would I see or feel?  
What outcome matters most?  
What feels like it might be important to me?  
What do I need to go big on?  
What does a solution need to be a classed as a 'good' one?  
What have I tried already? Have I been persistent enough in the past?  
What can I bring to this that others can't?  
What might be a new way to come at this challenge?  
What if I could only solve this by subtracting things?  
What if I could only take one, high-impact action? What would it be?  
What would my best-self advise me to do?  
What could I simplify?  
What could I put on a not-to-do list?  
What am I willing to abandon?  
What do I keep coming back to as I think?  
Who could help me get solve this more quickly?  
Am I prepared to truly listen to advice about this particular issue?  
Would I rather be right, or would I rather understand?

**Act** (*My shortlist-of-plans includes...*)

Which option allows me to flourish/develop the most?  
Which options interest me most?  
Which will take me furthest, fastest?  
Which feel like they're easiest to start?  
How can I lower the bar, make getting started easier?  
Which has the strongest upside?  
Which solution looks like the best use of my time?  
What do I like least about these solutions?  
Why am I resistant to a particular solution?  
How would I justify a solution to others?