

ASSUME A BEGINNER'S MINDSET



WHY assume a beginner's mindset

We all carry our experiences, understanding, and expertise with us. These aspects of yourself are incredibly valuable assets to bring to the design challenge – but at the right time, and with intentionality. Your assumptions may be misconceptions and stereotypes, and can restrict the amount of real empathy you can build. Assume a beginner's mindset in order to put aside these biases, so that you can approach a design challenge with fresh eyes.

HOW to assume a beginner's mindset

Don't judge. Just observe and engage users without the influence of value judgments upon their actions, circumstances, decisions, or “issues.”

Question everything. Question even (and especially) the things you think you already understand. Ask questions to learn about how the user perceives the world. Think about how a 4-year-old asks “Why?” about everything. Follow up an answer to one “why” with a second “why.”

Be truly curious. Strive to assume a posture of wonder and curiosity, especially in circumstances that seem either familiar or uncomfortable.

Find patterns. Look for interesting threads and themes that emerge across interactions with users.

Listen. Really. Lose your agenda and let the scene soak into your psyche. Absorb what users say to you, and how they say it, without thinking about the next thing you're going to say.