What is psychological literacy?

Psychological literacy is the adaptive capacity to apply psychological science to achieve personal and societal needs.

What is adaptive cognition?

Ways of thinking (and consequently behaving) that are beneficial to one's (and others') survival and well-being. Psychological literacy can be applied to three different domains:

- Self and others
- Local communities (including employment settings)
- Global communities

This information is adapted from A/Professor Jacqueline Cranney (UNSW), the author of the book ‘The Psychologically literate citizen’.

Concentric circles

There are different domains in which we can apply our psychological literacy. Ideally we will learn to be psychologically literate in all 3 domains. The orange arrow represents how we can move through these different domains.

Are you psychologically literate?

I apply psychological science (critical thinking, psychology principles, evidence framework) to:

**Myself and others**

- I am self-reflective and try and understand myself and others?
- I try and enhance the well-being and resilience of myself and others?

**The local community**

- I apply psychological principles to understanding group behaviour?
- I contribute to the wellbeing of a local community? (e.g., employment, sporting organisation)

**The global community**

- "I think and behave in ways that concern those in other countries as well as my own (e.g., trade, environment, social, poverty)"
- e.g., global citizenship - I behave as if the world was my home

Scientific reasoning

We live in the information age. How do we know what information is accurate? Not all information needs to be
questioned, but when it does the scientific approach would be to:

**First** - Be sceptical about the information that one encounters. That is, to hold reservation
- "It may be true, it may not be".

**Second** - Ask a series of questions to evaluate the information.
- What is the credibility of the information source?
- What do experts think? Why do they think this?
- How was the information obtained? (research or intuition)
- Is it possible that there are other explanations?
- Does the person/organisation have another motive to tell you this information?

If you are still are unsure, then it is good to reserve your decision rather than accept or reject the information given to you. Try and use the best evidence available to make important decisions.

For example, imagine somebody told you that chemotherapy is not good for treating cancer. Instead, they say that the best treatment is to use alternative therapy. It would be wise to ask yourself (a) whether this individual is a medical doctor, and what is the consensus among other medical doctors?, (b) how do they know this to be true? (c) Is it possible that all the cases of people who were supposedly cured would have recovered without the alternative therapy? or could they be in remission (d) will the organisation that sells the product make a lot of money?

**Videos**

Neil DeGrasse Tyson talks about scientific literacy. It is not about how much you know about science, but how you think that is important. How do you react to information given to you?

What is global citizenship? How can you contribute?

The world is shrinking. Your actions can have a bigger positive impact than ever before. Do you have any ideas that could change the world?

Knowing this psychological principles that have occurred here, what would you do if this happened to you?

Normal people can do great things. However, sometimes they can do evil things. Do you know why? Now you know these principles, what would you do if you were in a similar situation?

What are the conditions that bring out evil in people?

Critical thinking is an important aspect of scientific literacy:

Some more principles of critical thinking: