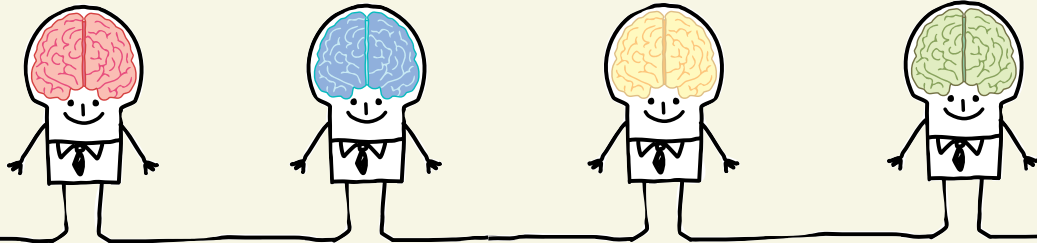


# How Do You “Know”?

Each of us has a “Way of Knowing” that filters our experience of ourselves, others, and our relationships. This chart offers a framework based on Robert Kegan’s constructive-developmental theory to understand how each of us, depending on our way of knowing, develops during adulthood. It also includes ideas about how we can challenge ourselves and support each other’s growth. Use the top part of the chart to identify which “way of knowing” best describes you. The bottom part shows some ways you can further your development to incorporate other ways of knowing. —Ellie Drago-Severson writes, consults, and teaches about adult educational leadership at Columbia University.



Stages:	<b>I am rule-based.</b>	<b>I am other-focused.</b>	<b>I am reflective.</b>	<b>I am interconnecting.</b>
<b>The most important thing is:</b>	Fulfilling my own needs, interests, and desires.	Meeting expectations and getting approval.	Staying true to my values, which I generate.	Reflecting on my identity, being open to others’ views and to changing myself.
<b>Concerns:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rules.</li> <li>• Clear definition of right and wrong.</li> <li>• Immediate self-interest.</li> <li>• Other people are either helpful or obstacles.</li> <li>• Abstract thinking has no meaning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Authority figures set goals.</li> <li>• Self-image comes from others’ judgment.</li> <li>• Responsible for others’ feelings and vice versa.</li> <li>• Criticism and conflict are threatening.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set goals based on own values and standards.</li> <li>• Self-image based on my evaluation of my competencies and integrity.</li> <li>• Contradictory feelings and conflict are ways to learn.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set goals in collaboration.</li> <li>• Share power.</li> <li>• Find common ground, even with seeming opposites.</li> <li>• Open to exploration, conflict, complexity, and others’ perspectives.</li> </ul>
<b>Guiding questions:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Will I get punished?”</li> <li>• “What’s in it for me?”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Will you like/value me?”</li> <li>• “Will you think I am a good person?”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Am I staying true to my own personal integrity, standards, and values?”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “How can other people’s thinking help me to develop and grow?”</li> </ul>
<b>Tasks at your “growing edge”:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be open to possibility of new “right” solutions.</li> <li>• Take on tasks that demand abstract thinking.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generate own values and standards.</li> <li>• Accept conflicting viewpoints without seeing them as a threat to relationships.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open up to diverse and opposing views.</li> <li>• Accept and learn from diverse problem-solving approaches.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accept that some differences cannot be resolved.</li> <li>• Avoid insisting on absolutely flat, nonhierarchical approaches.</li> </ul>
<b>Learning exercises to try:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dialogues that offer multiple perspectives and go beyond “right” and “wrong.”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dialogue that helps to generate and clarify one’s own values.</li> <li>• Share perspectives in pairs or triads before sharing with larger groups and authority figures.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate dialogue, especially when perspectives are diametrically opposed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affiliate with an authority or an impersonal system.</li> <li>• Commit to a project without a clear purpose.</li> <li>• Appreciate the time it takes to reach a conclusion when others may not move at the same pace.</li> </ul>
<b>Ways to support the growth of these folks:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set clear goals and expectations, agree on step-by-step procedures and specific due dates.</li> <li>• Offer concrete advice, specific skills.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite to leadership roles.</li> <li>• Demonstrate ways to confirm, acknowledge, and accept others’ beliefs.</li> <li>• Model disagreement without threat to relationships.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer opportunities to promote, analyze, and critique one’s goals and ideas.</li> <li>• Encourage consideration of conflicting or discordant ideas.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage refraining from taking over and rushing a process.</li> <li>• Model sensitivity to those who do not have the same capacity (e.g., for conflict).</li> </ul>

Source: Adapted from Drago-Severson, E., *Leading Adult Learning: Supporting Adult Development in our Schools*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin/Sage Publications, (2010). [www.yesmagazine.org/51facts](http://www.yesmagazine.org/51facts) for additional citations.