

Metacognition



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Metacognition is knowing you know something, without necessarily having that thing in mind. When a name or a word is on the tip of your tongue, that's metacognition. When you know you can figure out a particular type of problem, that's metacognition. When you get the gist of a thing without having all the details, that's metacognition. A gist is really quite a slippery thing when you look at it closely, pointing as it presumably does to a complete and detailed

rendition of the thing about which the gist is supposed to be. The substance behind the gist is presumably encoded somewhere in memory. But being human, we sometimes have gists that turn out to have nothing behind them at all. We thought we knew something but we didn't.

Metacognition is one aspect of intuition, which informs us generally and tells us what to think and do. Stereotypes, insights and knowledge are all metacognitive objects, providing the gists we live and reason by; whether they are true or not. We think about our friends and family in terms of stereotypes we develop just for them, and we behave accordingly. What is the gist of your lover, partner, friend or colleague? Forcing that question produces a recitation of facts, feelings, relationships, expectations and characteristics. This is your stereotype for that person. This detached perspective allows you to be analytic for a moment, which could change the way you see things. Trust me. Call me.

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