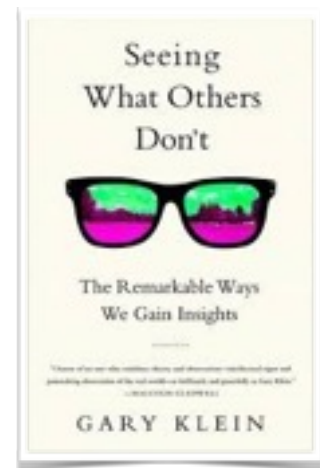




## Genius-inspired Questions (GIQ): Or how to ask "a more beautiful question."

There is a very important practice that great detectives, Pulitzer Prize winners, and creative geniuses have in common -- a practice of asking paradigm-busting questions. After studying many break through discoveries, Dr. Gary Klein wrote about what our past and modern geniuses did that helped them "break through" the popular, everyday -- inaccurate -- thinking. In his book, Dr. Klein outlines three paths that lead to "genius" discoveries:

- **Contradiction** - Finding an inconsistency and following it up instead of excusing it as a random error;
- **Connection** - Connecting-the-dots, noticing coincidences, and being curious about the implications of the phenomena under study;
- **Creative Desperation** - Racing the clock and trying to manage anyway with limited resources; Alternatively, "when the chips are down," taking a risk and discarding a weak, popular-but-erroneous assumption can lead to a reimagining a new system of relationships or properties.



Specifically, Dr. Klein says we can actually increase our chances of getting those "Aha!" insights -- the BIG breakthroughs -- by practicing the following habits of mind:

**Habit #1: Tilt!** - Be on alert when your experience and logic inform you that something is "off" in the situation you are studying. Also, be on the look out for something is "wonky" about your practical approach, results, or observations. Be mindful that, as many advertisers know, your "opinion" is easily subject to bias and can be influenced for better or worse. "Opinion" is vastly different from your mindful, careful observations and empirically tested questions, however. If these conscientiously derived observations cause your "Tilt!" alarm to go off, it may be worth your further investigation.

**Habit #2: Swirl** - A surprising number of breakthrough discoveries occurred because the investigator made links across diverse sources or fields of expertise. Essentially, these insights came when people "swirled" together all their various disciplines, activities, etc. that they engaged in and made a "leap" across disciplines and connected dots that no one had connected before. Dr. Klein recommends: reading from many disciplines; working in groups with people from diverse cultures and back grounds; and adopting an eclectic or wide range of hobbies to increase the chances of your making one of these "connect-the-dots" leaps of insight.

**Habit #3: Critical Thinking** "We are cornered and must find a way to escape a trap set in our own minds. We're overlooking something. We're making an unwarranted assumption (p. 187)." Gary Klein advises that we need to detect the "shaky assumptions" by logically reviewing the evidence and finding the weak link even if it is a current "favourite" of those involved.

In sum Dr. Klein says, "We use the contradiction path to notice, search for, and apply inconsistencies and anomalies. We use the connection path to increase our exposure to novel ideas. When we get stuck, we use critical thinking methods to locate and correct flawed assumptions and beliefs. (page 190)" But there is one more habit we can adopt to increase the frequency of our insights.

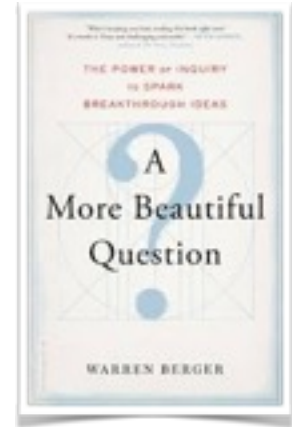
**Habit #4: Pause that refreshes** - This habit of mind can also be called "incubation" when we take a break, shift gears, relax a moment and allow ourselves to recover from the mental fatigue of intense inquiry. Incubation works better if we review our notes before sleep or taking a break and allow our mind to work on the problem on the back burner.

The following *Genius-inspired Questioning* process was inspired by three books (see references below). We hope that this GIS process will help you practice – and ultimately master – a habit of mind that has been shown to yield more insights and increase the chances that you will "see what others don't – a crucial skill in any police investigation.

**Instructions for GIQ assignments.** In this course, you will be given weekly assignments. After you have done your reading and other assignments, please go to the relevant Class # in Blackboard and complete your GIQ notes before the deadline. (Usually 48 hours before start of class.) Note questions marked with a \*star\* are required. The others are recommended and optional if they apply to you.

### Genius-inspired Questions

1. **\*Questions were asked?** What were the primary questions explored by the author(s)/ presenter(s)?
2. **\*Know?** What did you already know? Where, when, and/or how did you learn it?
3. **\*Confused?** What part of the reading, video, etc., left you puzzled? Provide a specific quote. Also provide a page number.
4. **\*New?** What information was new to you? What did you learn?
5. **\*Useful?** What information or conclusions would you like to take away and remember from this reading, video, etc.?
6. **\*Missing?** Whose voice, or what perspective or context is missing?
7. **\*More Beautiful Questions?** What new small or big "Why, What if and How" questions can you ask to extend the inquiry and discussion on this topic?
8. **\*Declaring my blindspot(s).** Research shows us that our human inductive reasoning process allows us to sometimes leap to conclusions. Often we get a physiological FEELING of certainty about our conclusion even when we are not correct. We all frequently have these "blindspots" and must go looking for them to avoid making mistakes. What are YOUR blindspots on this topic? How could YOU be mistaken about or biased for -- or against -- this topic? (see also Banaji & Greenwald 2013).



### **Answer the following questions IF they apply:**

9. **Bothered?** What irritated you if anything. Why exactly did this bother you? Note if you are "bothered or irritated" then there is a "friction" between what you have read, watched or listened to and something about you or your values, opinions, ethics, comfort, etc. This is an opportunity to learn more about how you process information.
10. **Unexpected?** If something surprises you, then -- good news -- you have discovered you had a previous expectation. Explore what you **expected** and why you **expected** it.
11. **Challenged?** What challenged your usual pattern of thinking?
12. **Connect-the-dots?** What connections can you make between the assignment and anything else in your academic work, career, hobbies or personal life?
13. **Contradictions?** What if any contradictions or exceptions did you spot?
14. **Other?**

### **References**

Banaji, M. R. and Greenwald, A.G. (2013). *Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People*. New York: Delacorte Press.

Berger, W. (2014). *A More Beautiful Question: The Power of Inquiry to Spark Breakthrough Ideas*. New York: Bloomsbury.

Klein, G. (2013). *Seeing What Others Don't: The Remarkable Ways We Gain Insights*. New York: PublicAffairs.