

ABC's of Wisdom – Knowledge

Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress, in every society, in every family. – Kofi Annan

Knowledge is information, understanding of a subject, facts and skills that will improve a person's life. You cannot possess wisdom without knowledge. Having knowledge can mean just knowing things like the child prodigy who can recite loads of information. He doesn't possess wisdom. He just knows stuff. You can be really smart without knowledge of your true self, the most challenging knowledge of all.

Knowledge is gained in countless ways. We usually think in terms of education. Eager learners will gain knowledge from a teacher. Once knowledge is gained you have it in your *knowledge bank* and others cannot take it from you. Even though I have an excessive amount of formal *education* that does not necessarily convert to knowledge. It may just be loads and loads of facts with little application. Knowledge is what the student takes-in that will make his or her life better. In some cases, knowledge makes huge changes in the student's earning potential provided she transfers the knowledge to application.

My children are life-long learners without advanced formal education and doing very well. My father had a vast amount of knowledge but very little education. His knowledge did convert to wisdom.

Knowledge makes a difference for all of us. Knowledge changes our lives. You have knowledge to thank for: modern medicine including early detection of serious diseases, transportation advances, and worldwide communication via satellites.

Some knowledge comes through experience. Thomas Edison tried 1,000 unsuccessful attempts at creating a light bulb. With each unsuccessful attempt he gained knowledge of what didn't work.

Some knowledge comes to great minds that studied to learn like Marie Currie. Her discovery of radioactive elements made your X-rays possible. She is also credited with having said, "Be less curious about people and more curious about ideas." Ideas come with knowledge.

Some knowledge comes with observation. Sir Isaac Newton realized that a gravitational force exists between all objects. Of course, he is also credited for "discovering" calculus.

Some knowledge comes by reading. When the reader is willing to apply the written word to their lives, knowledge is gained. Frederick Douglass, a slave, learned to read and against all odds, eventually became a social reformer, orator and statesman. But if the reader is unwilling to adopt a teachable spirit little is gained and certainly not wisdom.

Leonardo Di Vinci's curiosity led to his wide-ranging knowledge and lifelong learning. We are indebted to Di Vinci for the parachute, the armored tank, diving suits and much more.

The greatest of all knowledge is knowing oneself. As Lao Tzu said, "Knowing others is intelligence; knowing yourself is true wisdom. Mastering others is strength; mastering yourself is true power." It is so easy to find the fault in others. To know our own faults isn't so easy. Self-awareness takes effort.

As I began my studies of personality types about twenty years ago I gained lots of self-knowledge. My sister, eight years my senior, attended the first personality conference with me. The night before we began she asked me about my personality profile. When I told her how mine came out she laughed and said, "Oh, no! That is not you!" Since she knew me well I gave-in and went along as she had me redo the entire forty-point profile. And guess what? I didn't know myself so well. Since then I've become more self-aware through personality studies and the journey has been worthwhile.

Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom. - Aristotle