

COMMON SENSE & I.Q.

GOAL:

To clarify the meaning and promotion of common sense.

To share selected literature indicating the potential for diminished common sense in individuals with a high I.Q.

KEYWORDS FOR APPLICATION:

Common Sense

Intelligence Quotient (I.Q.)

To have “common sense” means that you share the common efforts of thinking carefully before doing anything. Common sense is often seen as a natural and easy reaction to life and its complexities with shared knowledge, understanding, and agreement regarding the expected response. The result is smarter choices! Common sense provides sound practical judgment that stabilizes or improves your life or the lives of others. It is an effort to try and make our important and life-changing decisions and situations make sense. Common sense is not always a gift—it can be a punishment because you must deal with everyone who doesn’t have it!

Unfortunately, some literature states that educated people with a high Intelligence Quotient (I.Q.) lack common sense, especially when dealing with other human beings! People with a high I.Q. often direct their thinking and decision-making toward high intellectual concepts rather than shared concepts of commonly known and proven successful solutions.

Historical recollections of Mr. McGoo show a short-statured retiree who gets into a series of comical situations due to his extreme nearsightedness, compounded by his stubborn refusal to admit the problem. He symbolizes the inability to see problems/issues and possibly the common sense approach to resolutions. His “lingo” or vocabulary represents a person with a high I.Q., and he thinks he is so smart—but he is totally “off the mark” due to his lack of seeing things clearly. Thus, the many comical implications suggest that firmly implanted common sense may be more difficult than we realize for individuals with high I.Q.s. At least those individuals with high I.Q.s with ultra-focused thoughts around their elevated intellectual theories should stop and apply common sense about decisions before automatically using their highly learned philosophical concepts and approaches to problem-solving. And, who would ever guess that the professor, doctor, lawyer, nurse, merchant, chief, etc. (for which many have aspired to become) would need a reminder to use common sense? However, common sense is a precursor to conforming to intellectually-acquired knowledge. Using common sense means we are smarter than having a high I.Q.

Because of habitual expectations and judgments, many small decisions seem to float into place. Or, sometimes, we choose not to think about choices—at all—and habitually do what is easiest. We sometimes don’t try to combine all the common variables/elements that influence the situation to come to a simple, common sense resolution.

What we do (or should do) to make crucial, positive, and common-sense decisions:

1. Take the time to write down the positive and negative aspects of possible decisions.
2. Compare risks and rewards.
3. Sometimes our gut might provide our best instinctual analytic choice(s).
4. Weigh the outcome of each of our potential choices. With its many consequences, will the result be what we expected? Will we be sorry in the long run—because it might not turn out how we expect!?
5. Look at yourself in the mirror and realize *you are your best friend!!* Don't betray yourself! A true friend sometimes gives the best common-sense advice.
6. As if you are giving that true friend (yourself) advice, what would your advice be knowing so well the situation as you think you do?
7. Ask the advice from "good people" you can trust.
8. Stop-think-reflect-and then redo that process again on another day.

Sometimes our common sense recognizes illness or distress in others because we have experienced it. It just takes a bit of personal awareness of situations to ignite the fire that says, "Hello"—time to have common sense about our decisions for ourselves and others. Making crucial decisions requires much effort toward practicing common sense for every person (including ourselves).

Your common sense relates to age, past experiences, happenings, and behaviors. And—common sense is improved by practicing/performing the following:

1. Using your intuitive thought or gut feeling—not just logical thinking. Know that overthinking might yield good or might not result in common sense.
2. Using meditation to quiet the mind. Sometimes guiding by mind suggestion, a mantra (word repetition), or mindfulness by allowing the mind to flow in and out of thoughts without judging yourself or others.
3. Taking mindful walks and paying more attention to what is seen, smelled, and the surrounding sounds.
4. Paying attention to your thoughts—do your repetitive thoughts make common sense in the present situation? If not, encouraging the mind to seek common sense thoughts from your past life experiences.
5. Listening to your body. Considering your heart rate, pulse, perspiration, etc. Using common sense tends to quiet the body and mind.
6. Living in the moment, not in the past. Keeping your mind on track as you listen, watch, and experience daily happenings.
7. Starting with a hunch—but always testing it with your knowledge and acquired common sense.
8. Watching, learning, and listening to others. Learning to "read others." Do the behaviors you see, and the message you hear from others make common sense?
9. Keeping an open mind and realizing that first impressions might not be accurate. It is your learned common sense that will provide clues to hidden messages.
10. Learning the art of timing your perfect common sense response when responding to others.
11. Accentuating the positive—not dwelling on negative aspects.
12. Opening your heart to be kind, helpful, thoughtful, and reassuring during another person's stress/distress.

13. Avoiding impulsive decisions and huge decisions made on your gut feeling.
14. Use your brain, heart, and gut to make final common sense decisions.

Now—I know you see others make “wrong” decisions from our perspective. We, too, make occasional wrong decisions—especially toward other people. The important thing is to learn from recognizing bad choices/decisions and continue life with more common sense in our decision-making—even though we might have a high I.Q. With common sense, we learn to make choices with fewer negative outcomes because we are more aware of our surroundings and the personal bodily messages others give us. With all this input that you hear and feel, think before you speak by choosing a good vocabulary related to common sense.

There is always an opportunity for learning and improving our use of common sense—no matter our I.Q. We learn from our misguided decisions—resulting in painful results. However, life will go on. And, I promise you, there will be other opportunities to re-establish your successful approaches to common sense resulting in more positive outcomes regardless of your I.Q.

References:

1. Clever Sillies: Why high I.Q. people tend to be deficient in common sense. (<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19733444/>) by Bruce G. Charlton
2. Mr. Magoo’s comical examples are available on the computer web.

Carolyn Taylor, Ed.D. M.N. R.N.