

# **Wisdom Beyond the Classroom**

**Real World Advice Not  
Taught in School**

**by**

**Ryan Lockee**

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# Introduction

If you look up the definition of school, you'll find that it's defined as a place where people, especially young people, are educated. Students are taught how to read and write, along with a variety of subjects that include mathematics, science, history, geography, art, and music. While much of what we learn in school is important, we live in a world that is constantly changing. Acquiring and learning new skills and information will become more important and part of our curriculum, while other subjects, over time, will become less important or obsolete.

What remains constant is that we are human, and having a human experience has its challenges. Being comfortable in your own skin, learning how to manage and control one's self, shaping your mind to be your greatest asset, along with appreciating and loving yourself is a continual process. It requires guidance and is something that many people never fully embrace or develop.

We're imperfect, emotional beings with our own experiences, thoughts, beliefs, strengths, abilities, challenges, weaknesses, doubts, and insecurities. Shouldn't we be taught at an early age and throughout our school years how to: embrace who we are, put thought into the questions we ask ourselves and the attitude we choose, create better habits, and have more control over how we respond to how we feel? I certainly think so and believe that if we were taught more about personal development, it would make being human much easier with increased enjoyment, success and fulfillment. I also believe it would void us of many unwise decisions as well as put an end to a lot of the pain and suffering we cause to ourselves and one another.

As someone that taught various subjects and grade levels in the U.S. as well as internationally, my passion and interest has always been the development of the individual and is the inspiration for this book. Since we've all been in school, and because we all take on the roles of teacher and student in various parts of our lives, *Wisdom Beyond the Classroom* comes to you from the perspectives of a wise teacher and his students, who all teach and learn from each other.

Now, take a deep breath and slowly exhale, you're about to meet some new characters that want nothing but the best for you.

[www.wisdombeyondtheclassroom.com](http://www.wisdombeyondtheclassroom.com)

# Chapter 1:

## What's in It for Me?

### [Classroom]

"Let me ask you a question, class. Have you ever had an assignment or been asked to do something, and you say to yourself, *why on earth am I being asked to do this?*" asked Mr. Ocean.

Almost everyone in the class was nodding their head or said yes.

"Or you say to yourself, *this doesn't seem very important. When am I ever going to use this in the real world?*"

A resounding "yes" was heard throughout the classroom and one of the students shouted, "All the time Mr. O!"

"That's what I thought. Guess what? I thought the same thing when I was your age, and I still think the same thing from time to time, even as an adult!"

*Mr. Ocean had a passion for teaching and the body language, the facial expressions, the different tones of voice, and the energy he displayed when speaking with his students was a sight to behold. As one of the two 8th grade teachers that had been at Jefferson Middle School for several years, he was a master at capturing and keeping the students' attention, while being able to connect with each of them in the process. He also had great success because he saw the best in his students and had a deep care and concern for their personal development. Far and wide, parents, teachers, and students all considered him a leader and role model.*

"Let me give you an answer to that question you can use and hold onto whenever this happens. This will change the way you look at things and make a positive impact on your life," said Mr. Ocean.

He paused for a moment.

"Not everything you are taught or do in life is completely relevant. This is true when you're young and in school, and it's true when you get older. What you will find extremely useful throughout your life is your attitude and the questions you ask yourself. When you're asked to do something that you don't understand, or something you find unimportant or irritating, such as a homework assignment or perhaps being asked to help out at home, here are three questions you can ask yourself."

He looked around the room, noticing that the students were listening and wanting to know more.

"Number one, what can I learn from this? Number two, how can I be completely present with what I'm doing and do it to the best of my ability? Meaning you're not distracted with something else and that you're giving your full attention to what is in front of you. And number three, what kind of attitude would serve me best right now?" asked Mr. Ocean.

"It takes just as much or more energy and effort to be upset and frustrated as it does to be grateful and enjoy what you're doing. Throughout your life, you will be asked to do things you're not jumping for joy to do, and things will happen that are annoying, but guess what—that's okay. The primary cause of unhappiness is never the situation, but thoughts about it. Be aware of the thoughts you are thinking."

He let that sink in for a moment.

"When we struggle with or are frustrated with something, that's where the lessons are, and that's when the learning takes place. Situations like this allow you to pause, take a deep breath, and ask yourself questions that benefit you. Doing this helps you take control of how you want to think, rather than the unhelpful ways you've thought in the past. If you feel what I'm talking about, let me get a *yep yep*," said Mr. Ocean.

"Yep yep," said the class.

"Good, go ahead and get out your journals to write these questions down. Here's what I want you to write down. At the top of a new page in your journal put, 'What's in It for Me?'"

He paused for a moment.

"Below your heading, write this down ... three questions to ask myself when I feel like this. Number one, what can I learn from this? Number two, how can I be completely present and do this to the best of my ability? Number three, what attitude would serve me best right now?"

He gave the students enough time to write and repeated the questions one more time for them.

"Let me ask you a question class, when you've been asked to do something you don't want to do, what kind of thoughts run through your mind?"

About half of the students raised their hands.

"Niyah," said Mr. Ocean, pointing in her direction.

"This is stupid," said Niyah.

"Yep, I've thought that. Someone else?" he said, pointing to a different student.

"This sucks!" exclaimed Kobe.

The class laughed.

"Oh, I've thought that too. And one more," said Mr. Ocean, pointing to a different student.

"I hate this," said Andre.

"Yep, that too. So, we've got, *this is stupid, this sucks, and I hate this*. Does that pretty much sum up what we've thought when asked to do something that doesn't make any sense to us?"

"Yes," said the class.

"What was that? I couldn't hear you."

"Yes!" yelled the class even louder.

"Oh okay, I heard you that time," said Mr. Ocean.

The students laughed.

"I'm guessing that when you have thoughts go through your mind like, *this is stupid, this sucks, and I hate this*, you're not at your best. And chances are, you'll likely be in a crummy mood throughout the task and maybe longer. And you're probably not going to do things to the best of your ability. Is that a fair assumption?" he asked.

"Yes," said the students.

"Did you know that you're actually smarter when you're in a positive frame of mind than if you're not? It's true, this has been studied and proven. Your brain in a positive frame of mind is more productive, can work longer, sees more possibilities, makes better decisions, and will outperform your neutral, negative, or stressed brain. Incredible! Now you just have to remember that and keep it in mind, especially when you're in a lousy mood."

Mr. Ocean continued, "What if, instead of defaulting to negative thinking when you're asked to do something you don't understand, or when something arises in life that you don't like, you ask our three new questions instead? What then? Do you think that would change things?"

Some of the students nodded their heads, and a few said yes.

"It's easy for us to automatically think a certain way when something happens that we don't agree with or like. It's as if our thoughts take over without asking for our input. Before you know it, we've gone down the rabbit hole to negative thinking, and it can take some time before we climb back out. That's why it's a good idea to instead pause, take a deep breath, and think of questions to ask yourself that benefit you.

Doing so will keep you in control, rather than your thoughts and emotions running the show," said Mr. Ocean.

He took a sip of water.

"Class, let's practice this for a moment. I want you to think of a time you were asked to do something that seemed unimportant or something you thought you'd never use in the real world."

He paused for a moment.

"Okay, did you think of one? I'm sure some of you thought of a few. Now that you have your example, I want you to think of how you responded or what you thought of, and based on your mindset, how you went about doing the task."

The students all looked deep in thought.

"Now, I want you to think of being asked to do that same thing. Only this time, I want you to imagine yourself pausing, taking a deep breath, and then asking yourself our three questions. What can I learn from this? How can I be completely present and do this to the best of my ability? What attitude would serve me best right now?" said Mr. Ocean.

He paused, gave the students some time to think about this, and then continued after about thirty seconds.

"So, what did we come up with after thinking of the three questions? Were you able to see in your mind the difference between the two scenarios? Does anyone want to share?"

About one third of the students raised their hands.

"Go ahead, Luke."

"I pictured myself in both situations, and in the second one, I felt like I had a lot more energy to do what I was asked, and I did it a lot better," said Luke.

"What were you asked to do?" asked Mr. Ocean.

"To clean my room," said Luke.

The class nodded, as if they had thought of the same situation.

"So, you had more energy, and as a matter of fact, you cleaned your room better in the second scenario."

"Yeah, and I learned something from this. I always thought it was stupid that my mom asked me to do this, 'cause it's my room and I should be able to have it any way I want. But then I thought, what can I learn from this, and a light bulb went off. My mom wants me to clean my room 'cause she's teaching me

how to pick up after myself, which will be good for me when I do get in the real world. And the quicker I clean my room, the quicker I can do things I want to do, like play basketball or video games," said Luke.

"Amazing answer Luke, that's exactly why we're doing this. Let's hear from one more student," said Mr. Ocean.

This time, even more students raised their hands.

"Yes, Colleen."

"When I pictured myself the first time and then the second time, I noticed that I enjoyed what I was doing a lot more the second time around. When I asked myself, what attitude would serve me best, I pictured myself smiling and then doing what I was asked to do, and it wasn't as frustrating," said Colleen.

"What was it that you were asked to do?" asked Mr. Ocean.

Blushing, Colleen hesitantly said, "A writing assignment you gave us."

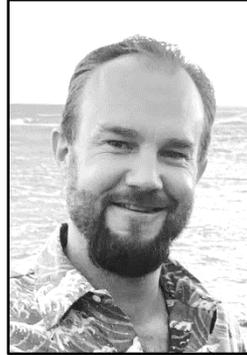
*You will have two Wisdom Beyond the Classroom questions at the end of each chapter. The first question will be about your thoughts and essential takeaways from the chapter. The second question will often be two-fold, asking specific questions about the chapter. To make sure you are fully engaged and get the most out of what you're reading, it's recommended that you answer the questions before moving onto the next chapter. If this is your book, feel free to write in it and put your answers under each question.*

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**What are your thoughts and most important takeaways from the chapter?**

**Think of a time when you've been asked to do something you didn't understand or agree with, or thought was a waste of time. What kind of thoughts did you immediately think, and how would the outcome of the situation have been different if you had paused, taken a deep breath, and asked yourself the three questions instead?**

## About the Author



Ryan Lockee is an avid learner and meditator, with great interest in the happiness, fulfillment, health, and development of us as individuals and as a society. He has been a high school baseball coach, a 4th and 6th grade teacher in San Francisco, California, and taught English in Seoul, South Korea.

Ryan grew up as the oldest of six kids in Omaha, Nebraska, and currently lives with his wife and newborn son in San Francisco, California.

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