

Why Teach the Voice in Decisions Technique?

**If you haven't done so already, we suggest that you begin by reading the document:
"Why Teach People to Ask Their Own Questions?"*

Decisions are everywhere in our lives. We make decisions all the time: for example, what to have for breakfast, where to live, what job to take, how to raise our children and families. At the same time, there are also decisions that people make that can affect us: a political leader can decide to go to war, a public school can be shut down, your doctor can prescribe a medication for you, your child can be held back in school--the list goes on.

Everyone should have the opportunity to have a say in decisions that affect them.

However, people are often not aware of when and where decisions are made, or don't know how to advocate for themselves and participate in the decisions that affect them, their families, and their communities.

The **Voices in Decisions Technique (VIDT)**, taken from lessons learned in our decades of work across the country, is an educational strategy that builds people's skills to understand and participate effectively in decisions that impact their lives, regardless of their level of income, education, or literacy.

The VIDT, a main component of the Right Question Strategy, along with the Question Formulation Technique (QFT), provides a simple, step-by-step process for participants to:

- learn a simple, clear definition of a decision.
- look at different components of a decision: the *reasons* for the decision, the *process* for making the decision, and the *role* the person affected plays in the decision.
- come up with *their own questions* about a decision that affects them. Participants learn to produce their own questions, improve them, and strategize about how to use their own questions about decisions.

There are three key things to look for in any decision: the reasons for it; the process for making it, and the role you can play in that process. Simple words--reason, process and role--but incredibly important elements of a good and fair decision. They are relevant when individuals advocate for themselves or their families, and **they are relevant in a democracy**. Focusing on those three things makes it easier to hold accountable anyone who is making decisions about health care, job training, welfare, education and many other services. Put those three pieces together with the ability to ask one's own questions and you have a very powerful advocacy and accountability tool.

The chart below shows the three key elements of the VIDT and how they relate to three fundamental principles of decision-making in a democracy: legitimacy, transparency, and opportunities for participation.

- When you ask questions about **the reason for a decision**, you expect that those reasons be legitimate.
- When you ask questions about **the process**, you expect that you have a right to know how the decision was made--a right to transparency.
- When you ask questions about **your role**, you expect or seek an opportunity to participate in the decision.

| Three key elements in decision making from the VIDT | | Three fundamental principles for democratic decision-making |
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| <p>REASON:</p> <p>Should help explain or provide a basis for the decision—policies, standards, regulations, etc.</p> | ➔ | <p>LEGITIMACY:</p> <p>The decision must be based on policies and standards and rules that are fairly applied.</p> |
| <p>PROCESS:</p> <p>Helps explain how the decision was made—the steps taken, information used, meetings held, protocols used, place, time, and people involved.</p> | ➔ | <p>TRANSPARENCY:</p> <p>The process for making the decision must be visible to all.</p> |
| <p>ROLE:</p> <p>The part people affected by the decision play in the decision- making process.</p> | ➔ | <p>OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTICIPATION:</p> <p>There must be ways for people who will be affected by the decision to participate in the process of making it.</p> |

To teach the VIDT, access our free materials at our website, rightquestion.org. We’ve found that people working in many fields can quickly learn the process and easily integrate it into their daily work. We look forward to supporting you and hearing from you about how you’ve used the Right Question Strategy--write to us anytime at contact@rightquestion.org.