

## AGO: AIMS, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Pronounce this tool: 'A', 'G', 'O', or A.G.O.

This is another of the attention-directing 'thinking tools' which is also included in the CoRT thinking lessons. Although the tool is very simple to use, this particular lesson is one of the most difficult in practice. Youngsters find it very hard indeed to think in terms of objectives. This may be because their own lives are so arranged by other people (having to do this and having to do that) that setting an objective is something quite strange. If asked why some action is done they would answer: 'Because I have to.' The idea of setting up an objective (or sub-objective) and then working towards it seems very strange. Since there is no emphasis on operacy, there probably is no point in their education at which this can change. Setting out to pass an exam is really still following the routine channel prescribed by others - it is more an intention than an objective.

'AGO' stands for Aims, Goals and Objectives. Although there are differences between the three words these differences are ignored for the sake of the attention-directing tool. There are circumstances where one or other of the terms would fit best but, in general, the task is to set up objectives or to pick out the objectives that seem to be in use.

For example 'doing an AGO' on the aims of a car designer might turn up the following:

- fit the market trend and need (looking ahead as well)
- right price bracket
- distinctive advertisable features
- economic to run
- reliable
- eye-catching style

Some of these include other sub-objectives. For example, 'economic to run' includes aerodynamic styling so as to reduce drag. In this regard priorities come to be included as sub-objectives.

For warming up exercise, spell out the AGO in the following situations:

1. In setting up a small business, what would be the first year's objectives?
2. A newspaper cuts its price very sharply. What might be the objectives behind this?
3. What should be the aims of the police in dealing with juvenile crime?
4. What are the aims of a school?
5. In tackling a big fire, what might be the objectives of the fire chief?
6. What are the goals of a journalist?

AGO is related to the thinking habit of wanting to know the focus and purpose of thinking at every moment. AGO, however, is more concerned with the over-all purpose or objective of the thinking than the moment-to-moment focus.

... 'You have called this meeting. I want to know what is the exact objective of our thinking here. I am asking you to do an AGO.'

... 'We have been talking for an hour but I still don't know what we are trying to achieve. Can we, please, do an AGO?'

... 'It is quite clear that your AGO is very different from mine. Perhaps we ought to sort that out before going any further.'

... 'When he took that money I think he just acted impulsively. I am sure he would not have taken it if he had done an AGO.'

Do not try to make a distinction between 'aims', 'goals' and 'objectives'. Such a distinction can be made but it is not helpful and is likely to be confusing.

What is the objective of our thinking?

What do we want to end up with?

As soon as you have a clear view of the ideal outcome of your thinking effort - then you have a clear AGO.

... 'I want to end up with a solution to the problem of young people taking drugs.'

... 'I want to end up with a way of keeping drug pushers away from school.'

... 'I want to end up with a way of convincing young people that drugs are dangerous.'

All the above are clearly specified objectives. They are all within the same area. A broad problem may be broken down into separate problems each of which is tackled as a distinct problem.

## ALTERNATIVE DEFINITIONS OF THE OBJECTIVE

An AGO is often a matter for discussion. Someone may do an AGO and others may not be happy with the definition of the objective that has been suggested. It is always worth trying alternative definitions. There is no one right way of defining a problem (until after you have solved it) but some ways are much more helpful than others.

## SUB-OBJECTIVES

On the way to a distant town there may be other towns that we pass through on the way. So we may set up sub-objectives on the way to solving the over-all problem. This is related both to breaking down the big problem into smaller ones and also to picking out focus areas. Deciding between these definitions is not important. What is important is to know the objective of the thinking that is taking place.

What is the objective of our thinking? What is the focus at this moment?

be? Also break down the over-all problem into three smaller problems.

You think that the clothes your friend is wearing do not suit her at all. Do an AGO on this.

One of your group is telling lies about you. You do not know who it is. What is your real AGO here?

Why do young people go to school? Do an AGO for parents. Do an AGO for teachers. Do an AGO for society in general. Do an AGO for young people. What is your personal AGO in going to school?

There is a scare that certain cans of food from a particular manufacturer contain some harmful substances. This has not been proved. If you were the maker of those cans what would your AGO be?

In the back of a taxi you find an expensive camera. You are not sure if the cab driver has noticed you finding the camera. What should your AGO be?

Every government is concerned with the security of that country. There are different opinions on how this is best managed. If you were asked how you saw the AGO of the defence department, what would you suggest?

Do an AGO on the purpose of school tests.

## EXERCISES ON AGO

1. Three cars have run into each other at a busy intersection. No one is badly hurt. What is your AGO if you are a police officer who arrives at the scene?
2. Too many aeroplanes are flying in the skies. The airports and air traffic control are congested. There are long delays and the danger of collisions. You are invited to join a team set up to think about this problem. What should the AGO of the team be? Also break down the over-all problem into three smaller problems.
3. You think that the clothes your friend is wearing do not suit her at all. Do an AGO on this.
4. One of your group is telling lies about you. You do not know who it is. What is your real AGO here?
5. Why do young people go to school? Do an AGO for parents. Do an AGO for teachers. Do an AGO for society in general. Do an AGO for young people. What is your personal AGO in going to school?
6. There is a scare that certain cans of food from a particular manufacturer contain some harmful substances. This has not been proved. If you were the maker of those cans what would your AGO be?
7. In the back of a taxi you find an expensive camera. You are not sure if the cab driver has noticed you finding the camera. What should your AGO be?
8. Every government is concerned with the security of that country. There are different opinions on how this is best managed. If you were asked how you saw the AGO of the defence department, what would you suggest?
9. Do an AGO on the purpose of school tests.