

TED® Connection, Category 2 30-day Challenge

Overview

Mensa for Kids' TED Connections are short, easy to use guides that help teachers, parents and youth use TED talks in a classroom or home setting. They are not written in a lesson plan format, but they do have a list of discussion questions, all at higher levels of thinking.



Watch the TED talk at:

www.ted.com/talks/matt_cutts_try_something_new_for_30_days.html

THINK ABOUT IT:

1. Matt Cutts begins his talk explaining that his idea is a way to prevent feeling stuck. He says you can either add or subtract something for 30 days. Which do you think is more likely to make you feel less stuck – adding or subtracting? Which do you think is more difficult?

2. Cutts says that the challenges made his life more memorable. What is the value of a remembered life? Why would that be considered something for which to strive?

3. The more challenges he did and the harder they were, the more his self-confidence grew. Why do you think this is? Wouldn't it be better to do easier challenges that you knew you could do well? Why try difficult challenges?

4. Cutts says that if you want something badly enough, you can do anything for 30 days. Do you agree? What is something you have tried to do but failed? Why do you think you weren't successful? Could you do it again if you tried and wanted it badly enough?

5. When he was participating in National Novel Writing Month, he broke down the 50,000 words needed to a more manageable 1,667 words per day. He says the secret is to not go to sleep until you've written that many words. Is this a good solution? What could get in the way of this? What happens if you get behind?

6. According to Cutts, small changes were more sustainable. The "big, crazy" challenges were less likely to stick. Why do you think this is? Could you go without sugar like he did? What would be the biggest possible (reasonable) challenge you could conceive of for yourself? Why do you think people are attracted to the big, crazy challenges?

7. Do you think a 30-day challenge is an all-or-nothing thing? What do you think makes a challenge successful? Imagine that someone challenges him/herself to walk 100 miles during the 30 days, yet only ends up walking 50? Is that success or failure?

8. If you search for "30-day challenges," most results refer to fitness and weight loss. Why do you think that is? If you had to create a health or fitness goal that was the most important thing possible to accomplish with regard to health, what would it be?

9. The question Cutts asks at the end is, "What are you waiting for?" He points out that the next 30 days are going to go by, whether you challenge yourself or not. Choose a challenge for yourself by listing three possible challenges in each category (add/subtract), including both physical and mental challenges. Select one of the challenges. Track your experience on the calendar page included below. After you have completed the challenge, come back and answer the post-challenge questions.

Possible Challenges to Add		Possible Challenges to Subtract
1.		1.
2.		2.
3.		3.

Post-challenge questions

1. What was the hardest part of the challenge for you?

2. Do you feel like participating in another challenge? Would you want to do them back-to-back, or would you rather take a break in between?

3. Did you notice what Cutts did, that your month was more memorable?

4. Would you do a challenge again? If so, would you add or subtract something this time?

5. What is something you learned about yourself during the challenge that surprised you?

DO IT:

- Use the calendar below to chart your progress on a 30-day challenge. Use the space available to note any goals you set for yourself (like the 1,667 words per day).

Challenge: _____

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
6.	7.	8.	9.	10.
11.	12.	13.	14.	15.
16.	17.	18.	19.	20.
21.	22.	23.	24.	25.
26.	27.	28.	29.	30.

Reflection: _____

- The results of a recent survey of adults on hardest habits to break came up with this list in order of most-to-least difficult:
 1. Swearing
 2. Drinking caffeine
 3. Biting fingernails
 4. Watching television
 5. Smoking

Take a survey of at least 25 people you know, and see how your results compare. Develop a 30-day challenge to help people break the hardest habit (as decided by your survey). Would it be beaten best by adding something or subtracting something? See if you can get someone you surveyed to try it!

- If Matt Cutts inspired you by writing a novel in a month and you'd like to be able to introduce yourself as a novelist, visit the National Novel Writing Month Web site <http://www.nanowrimo.org/>

READ ABOUT IT:

- You can follow Matt Cutts's blog at www.mattcutts.com/blog/ and read about others of his challenges. You can challenge yourself to do at least one challenge he has done. With parent permission, write a comment on his blog about your experience.
- Read "The Power of Habit" by Charles Duhigg. If it's too much to read the entire book right now, read about it and listen to an interview with the author here www.npr.org/2012/03/05/147192599/habits-how-they-form-and-how-to-break-them

WATCH IT:

- Matt Cutts mentions Morgan Spurlock's movie, "Supersize Me," in his talk. You can watch it here www.snagfilms.com/films/title/super_size_me
- Watch Sam Hill's TED talk on how less, not more, stuff can make you happier. www.ted.com/talks/graham_hill_less_stuff_more_happiness.html