

Slow to Speak Up

It might surprise you to hear this, but it usually takes a long time before I'll speak up in a new situation.

If I join a group, get a new job, or hear about something new that I haven't yet considered, I don't immediately start giving my opinion. I prefer to sit quietly and absorb what's going on, and *only then* to speak up. If I feel the need. Speaking up only happens once I understand something pretty deeply and see a problem I know has a solution (or an angle) that other people aren't seeing.

First of all, I know that speaking up when you don't understand what's going on doesn't help anyone, and only makes you look foolish. I look foolish often enough even when I know what's going on; I don't need to add to it.

So, usually, if I share an opinion or an idea, you can be sure I have thought about it a lot. I have probably considered every side I can imagine, and tried to find sides I can't yet imagine at all. Then I've probably followed every argument down every rabbit hole I find in it; twists and turns and dead-ends right up to the monsters in hidden lairs. To the logical conclusion and the absurd conclusion. I may still be wrong, or may have reached a different conclusion than you, and maybe there are points to consider which I missed, but I've thought about it thoroughly, and suggesting I haven't isn't going to get you far. And, I respect others when I can tell they've done the same.

A lot of times, in discussions with statisticians, they refuse to make a case for their position. They'll just make an assertion and refuse to explain their reasoning when asked. I suspect they can't explain, because they haven't thought it through, but are simply parroting something that sounded "right" to them. It *feels* right. That's not going to impress me and it's certainly not going to convince me of anything.

I know it is said that unless you can explain something in language simple enough for the "average person" to understand, you probably don't really understand it, yourself. Maybe. There are things I believe I understand pretty well, but that I have no way to explain to other people. Sometimes the adequate words don't exist for concepts I see inside my mind. But that may just mean I don't understand it as well as I think I do. That's probably a safe bet.