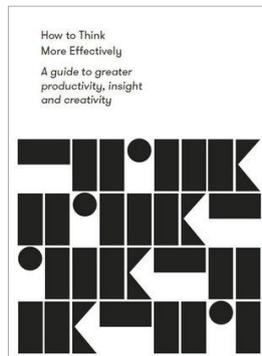




HOW TO THINK MORE EFFECTIVELY



THE BOOK



How to Think More Effectively

by The School of Life.



INTRODUCTION

Put aside old ways of thinking. Gain the confidence to trust your own mind and find your own genius.

From The School of Life, a global organisation dedicated to teaching life skills, comes *How to Think More Effectively*. A series of short essays, this book is designed to get you ‘thinking about thinking’... and thinking better. Easily digestible and with practical exercises at the end of each chapter, *How to Think More Effectively* is perhaps the most practical guide to thinking you will ever find.

With the central thesis that the human mind is an incredible tool that all too often goes underused, *How to Think More effectively* systematically lays out the different ‘forms of thinking’ and explains how you can do them better. With examples from some of history's greatest minds and artists, the book clearly lays out how your own mind is there to be used, if only you understand how to use it.

How to Think More Effectively is a must-read for anyone who wants to expand their way of thinking and break new horizons.



5 BEST QUOTES

“The good listener doesn’t moralise. They know their own minds well enough not to be surprised or frightened by strangeness.”

“During our meditative sessions, we need to give every so-called small anxiety a chance to be heard: what lends our worries their force is not so much that we have them but that we don’t allow ourselves the time to know, interpret and contextualise them adequately. Only by being listened to in generous, almost pedantic detail will anxieties lose their hold on us.”

“The most necessary tool for thinking is also the simplest: the notebook. We need a notebook because we can’t contain what is important within the bandwidth of active memory. We can’t keep in view what is significant within our amnesiac, misty, temperamental consciousness.”



5 BEST QUOTES

“It is an implicit faith in their own perfection that turns people into unbearably harsh judges.””

“We all have very similar and very able minds; where geniuses differ is in their more robust inclinations to study them properly.”



10 BIG IDEAS

1. STRATEGIC THINKING

The human brain tends to think much more about execution than strategy. People tend to hone in on the mechanics of what they are doing or thinking about rather than the reasons behind it. You need to start thinking:

- Why am I doing what I am doing?
- What is the greater purpose behind my actions?

Without putting the effort in to think strategically, you are often rushing towards fruitless goals that have no real impact or relevance to your life. Try shifting your thinking from execution to strategy.

2. CUMULATIVE THINKING

You can't expect your thoughts to come out in one fell swoop. The best ideas are the result of hours or days of thinking and contemplating as thoughts accumulate and meld together into something cohesive.

How to Think More Effectively points out the work of writer Marcel Proust. His epic novel, Remembrance of Things Past was not the result of a spontaneous outpouring. Proust had tomes and tomes of notebooks and manuscripts filled with revisions and corrections. It took cumulative thinking to create his masterpiece. In the same way, you can't expect many eureka moments in your life. Take some time and let your thoughts accumulate.

3. BUTTERFLY THINKING

Like butterflies, people's thoughts tend to flit around and tend to be hard to catch. You need to accept the fact that your brain is strange and flighty and thoughts will come and go. How to Think More Effectively recommends finding time away from distractions to help let butterfly thoughts settle and allow you to catch them. A long train journey spent in quiet contemplation of the passing countryside is an example. Thoughts come and go, let them happen and catch them when you can.



10 BIG IDEAS

4. INDEPENDENT THINKING

It is the norm for people to be taught that knowledge lies outside themselves.

You must seek the wisdom of the experts. Every idea you have must already have been thought of by someone else and cited accordingly. However, how did those people have their ideas in the first place? You have to have confidence that you are just as capable of coming up with great ideas as anyone past or present. As *How to Think More Effectively* says, “We have read more than Socrates; we have had as many – if not more – experiences than Plato.”

5. FOCUSED THINKING

The human mind has a strong tendency to be vague. When asked, “What are you missing from your life?” for example, you might answer “fun”. This just isn’t focused enough. You need to change your thinking to narrow down your answers to specifics. What exactly do you mean by fun? Focused thinking is about pushing past the obvious vague answers and finding the specifics that are the actual foundation of your ideas.

6. ‘MAD’ THINKING

Everyone has thoughts that seem too far out there. However, many of the greatest ideas in history came from thoughts that seemed “mad” at the time? Don’t be afraid to let your mind take wild flights of fancy. Think of science-fiction pioneer Jules Verne. When he wrote his novels in the 19th century he had no idea how a submarine or a rocket to the moon would actually work. He didn’t let that stem his creativity and, in time, his flights of fancy have become reality.

7. FRIEND THINKING

Thinking doesn’t have to be a solo enterprise. A good friend or adviser can be invaluable in helping you to form and complete thoughts and ideas. Not all friends are good at this, although that doesn’t mean they’re not good friends.

Find someone who is a good listener. Someone who actually listens to what you are saying and isn’t just waiting to talk about themselves when you finish. Together, you can take your thinking and creativity further.



10 BIG IDEAS

8. EMPATHETIC THINKING

People often think of empathy as thinking like someone else. How to Think More Effectively doesn't believe this is quite true. The authors advise, rather, that genuine empathy comes from looking inward, not outward. It comes from finding experiences of your own that relate to how others might feel. It isn't possible to truly know what another person is feeling or thinking. You can know your own thoughts and feelings though, and this is where you find true empathy.

9. DEATH THINKING

No one can be truly at peace until they come to terms with the concept of death. This concept, however, is not as grim and macabre as it may seem. It is more about the idea of embracing the fact that you have limited time. In the past, many thinkers would ensure they had a human skull in their studies. This was to remind them of their own mortality and to instil a sense of urgency. When you come to terms with death thinking you understand that your time is finite and will be more likely to maintain momentum.

10. SCEPTICAL THINKING

Sceptical thinking isn't about doubting everything you hear. It is actually about embracing the fallibility of the human mind. It is about looking at everything from different angles and not embracing everything at face value. It is also about being willing and able to change your mind when presented with new evidence. The human brain is unreliable and the best thinkers remain sceptical at all times and understand that their brain is a difficult tool.

**3 ACTION STEPS****1. PAY MORE ATTENTION TO HOW YOU THINK**

To become more effective at thinking, the first step is to think more about thinking! Pay more attention to the mechanisms of your thinking and how they work. Observe what makes you think one thing or another and assess why this is the case.

2. UNLEARN YOUR EARLIEST LESSONS

So much of what is taught at the earliest times in our life is restrictive in the long run. Learn to break past rigid rules and fixed mindsets. Don't rely solely on experts but allow yourself to create your own thoughts and ideas.

3. BE CONFIDENT IN YOUR OWN ABILITY

Remember that you have the capacity for originality and creativity. Don't stop yourself from flights of fancy. Instead, find places that foster creativity and let your imagination fly free.

**1 KEY TAKEAWAY**

The key takeaway of How to Think More Effectively is that you should put more trust in your own mind. While there is no fault in listening to the wisdom of others, be aware that you have wisdom yourself.

Have the confidence to use your own experiences and knowledge to drive you. Being able to think for yourself and make up your own mind is key to more effective thinking.

You have a powerful tool in your head and you can use it! Have faith in yourself and make the effort to restructure your thinking and you will be able to harvest your thoughts rather than get lost foraging for them.



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visit thehopefullinstitute.com

email hello@thehopefullinstitute.com

call +61 2 9943 0350