



Eight Minutes, Not Eight Hours



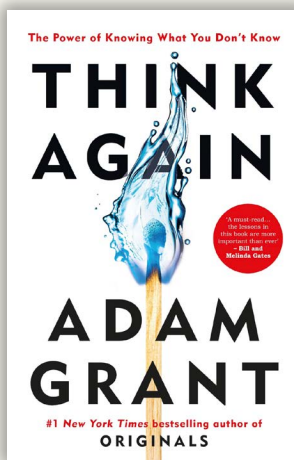
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Think Again

The Power of Knowing What You Don't Know

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Organizational psychologist Adam Grant discusses how creating the habit of rethinking can improve a person's interpersonal skills, resulting in a better world. **Think Again**, teaches us the value of being open-minded, curious, and even confused while offering the communication tools needed to pass on the information. Touching on the topics of individual, interpersonal, and collective rethinking, Grant explains that the act of being wrong can be a joyous occasion that offers the opportunity to learn and grow with each discussion.

Key Quote

"...one of the hallmarks for an open mind is responding to confusion with curiosity and interest... Confusion can be a cue that there's new territory to be explored or a fresh puzzle to be solved."

KEY POINTS AND CONCEPTS

Individual Rethinking

Thinking and talking can be broken down into 4 mindsets: the prosecutor, preacher, politician, and scientist. "We go into preacher mode when our sacred beliefs are in jeopardy... We enter prosecutor mode when we recognize flaws in other people's reasoning... We shift into politician mode when we're seeking to win over an audience..." (pp. 18-19).

Scientist mode is a way of thinking that requires an individual to remove the emotional ties linked to a belief. "We move into scientist mode when we're searching for the truth: we run experiments to test hypotheses and discover knowledge." (p. 20).

Of the four mindsets, Grant suggests that the scientist mode is the most accurate frame of thinking to pursue when communicating, for it encourages expanding knowledge rather than proving a point. “After all, the purpose of learning isn’t to affirm our beliefs; it’s to evolve our beliefs.” (p. 26).

Knowledge and opinions are riddled with blind spots, which can prevent rethinking unless one is made aware. Grant uses the example of learning to drive a car. One of the most important lessons taught to a new driver is to be aware of your blind spots, once aware the driver will periodically check those spots before making any decisions. “In life... we need to learn to recognize our cognitive blind spots and revise our thinking accordingly.” (p. 35).

Recognizing one’s cognitive blind spots, however, means admitting wrong. “Every time we encounter new information, we have a choice. We can attach our opinions to our identities... Or we can operate more like scientists, defining ourselves as people committed to the pursuit of truth—even if it means proving our own views wrong.” (p. 76).

“Starting a disagreement by asking, ‘Can we debate?’ sends a message that you want to think like a scientist, not a preacher or prosecutor—and encourages the other person to think that way, too.” (p. 92).

Interpersonal Thinking

‘Let’s agree to disagree.’ shouldn’t end a discussion. It should start a new conversation, with a focus on understanding and learning rather than arguing and persuading.” (p. 116).

Daryl Davis, an African American pianist, not only faced a member of the KKK in a calm and collected manner but was able to hold a conversation with the man through the goggles of a scientist. By actively listening and showing genuine interest in the man’s perspective, Davis was able to take a “agree to disagree” discussion and turn it into a thoughtful and meaningful debate. The interaction ended with the member leaving the KKK and forming a lifelong bond with Davis. (pp. 123-142).

“The central premise is that we can rarely motivate someone else to change. We’re better off helping them find their own motivation to change.” (p. 146.)

An excellent example of how the right kind of listening can motivate people to change is the concept of motivational interviewing. Bill Miller, a clinical psychologist, demonstrated motivational interviewing by asking his patients questions and listening to their answers rather than regurgitating statistic-based information. In the instance of Marie-Hélène Étienne-Rousseau, a mother of 4—actively against vaccinations, Miller was able to motivate Marie-Hélène to vaccinate all her children, which then went on to start a new wave of vaccinated children in her community. (p. 143-160).



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“We go into preacher mode when our sacred beliefs are in jeopardy... We enter prosecutor mode when we recognize flaws in other people’s reasoning...”



Collective Rethinking

“To paraphrase the humorist, Robert Benchley, there are two kinds of people: those who divide the world into two kinds of people, and those who don’t.” (p.165).

Grant goes on to explain that complexity is good in conversation and thinking. It disrupts the cycle of over-confidence, leaving room for humility and doubt, two necessary emotions that trigger the process of rethinking. To refer to the example of Marie-Hélène, Marie-Hélène felt that the medical experts who had spoken to her prior to Miller were preaching and prosecuting her. She felt that she was being made into a bad mother and that her decisions were simply wrong. The previous practitioners were looking at the concept of vaccinations as a black and white controversy. By Miller choosing to interview rather than prosecute, he gave Marie-Hélène her freedom back, helping her to understand the complexity of vaccinations. (pp. 143-166).



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“...one of the hallmarks for an open mind is responding to confusion with curiosity and interest... Confusion can be a cue that there’s new territory to be explored or a fresh puzzle to be solved.” (p. 199).

Confusion is typically frowned-upon and looked at as an inconvenience that needs immediate resolution. Grant argues that confusion is necessary, it forces the process of rethinking and should be treated as an opportunity to learn thoughtfully. (pp. 185-203).

What dictates how confusion will be treated within a community depends on whether the community has a performance or learning culture. Performance cultures tend to prioritize results, whereas the core value within a learning culture is growth. “In learning cultures, the norm is for people to know what they don’t know, doubt their existing practices, and stay curious about new routines to try out.” (p. 208).

Conclusion: Escaping Tunnel Vision

“Our identities are open systems, and so are our lives. We don’t have to stay tethered to old images of where we want to go or who we want to be. The simplest way to start rethinking our options is to question what we do daily. (p. 243).

When thinking of changing an answer on a test, in a debate about abortion rights, or contemplating a career change, rethinking is a vital tool. It is designed to open the mind and introduce various perspectives. Beliefs and opinions are not engraved into the DNA of an individual, the option to change one’s mind lies in the art of communication.

On Leadership and Communication

“Brad wasn’t ready to give up. He sought out the biggest misfits at Pixar for his project—people who were disagreeable, disgruntled, and dissatisfied... When Brad rounded them up, he warned them that no one believed they could pull off the project. Just four years later, his team didn’t only succeed in releasing Pixar’s most complex film ever; they actually managed to lower the cost of production per minute.” (p. 83).

Brad Bird started as a new director at Pixar in 2000, where in 4 short years, he demonstrated outstanding signs of leadership and communication. He revealed his ability to rethink his career by pitching an entirely fresh style of film. Even after his pitch was shut down for budget and complexity, he did not give up. He proved to have leadership qualities by challenging the way things are done within the company, recognizing he needed a team behind him, and choosing to pursue his idea with little support from the company. Brad showed excellent communication skills by verbally recognizing the obstacles presented going into the project.

“It wasn’t the first time Halla had felt like an imposter.” (p. 36). “While other candidates were content to rely on the usual media coverage, Halla’s uncertainty about her tools made her eager to rethink the way campaigns were run... instead of prosecuting her opponents, she ran a positive campaign.” (p. 53).

One major way Halla Tòmasdóttir demonstrated leadership qualities was by simply choosing to overcome imposter syndrome. Imposter syndrome can be a draining condition of constant self-doubt and mental exhaustion. Rather than allowing those feelings to dictate her decision in running for the presidency of Iceland, Halla chose to overcome them.

At the same time, Halla rethought her condition of imposter syndrome by using it to her advantage throughout the campaign. Her ability to reassess the culture of campaigns showed that she is daring and willing to take risks to gain success.

“Having been the target of racism since childhood, Daryl had a lifetime of legitimate reasons to harbor animosity towards white people. He was still willing to approach white supremacists with an open mind and give them the opportunity to rethink their views.” (p. 141).

Daryl Davis presented countless acts of leadership and excellent communication skills. Most notable is Daryl’s active listening skills. With each passage regarding a conversation Daryl had with a white supremacist, he leads his interactions with active listening. By making the act of listening a priority, Daryl was able to make the receiver feel respected and understood. Toward the end of the chapter, Daryl displayed leadership qualities by noting that his goal was never to solely change one’s opinion, instead he aimed to plant a seed of doubt in one’s belief to open their mind to other perspectives.

Grant. A. (2021). **Think Again: The Power of Knowing What You Don’t Know**, Penguin Random House.



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