

## BOOK REVIEW

### THINK AGAIN: THE POWER OF KNOWING WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW

**Author: Adam Grant (2021)**

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Adam Grant is a renowned psychologist, best-selling author, and top-rated professor at the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania. His books, including “Give and Take”, “Originals”, “Option B”, “Power Moves” and “Think Again” have sold millions of copies, been translated into 45 languages, and earned him the #1 spot on the New York Times bestseller list. As one of TED’s most popular speakers, with over 30 million views, Grant’s insights on work and leadership resonate with audiences worldwide. He is recognized as one of the world’s 10 most influential management thinkers and has received prestigious awards for his scientific achievements. Adam Grant continues to inspire individuals and organizations to challenge norms and drive positive change.

“Think Again” by Adam Grant is a book that encourages readers to re-examine their assumptions and beliefs. In his academic career, he has discovered that people tend to think in the most comfortable ways and rarely question or challenge their beliefs. This leads to situations where people hold on to their own opinions, think they are smarter than others, and stay within their echo chambers. In this book, he aims to teach us the methods and importance of ‘rethinking’ by using numerous stories and scientific evidence.

Shifting one’s thinking patterns is something that anyone can accomplish.

The book is divided into three parts. The first part discusses how to update our own views and to have the mindset of a scientist for individual rethinking. The second part focuses on rethinking in interpersonal relationships, discussing how to engage in productive debates, and how to facilitate change in others through active listening. The third part explores ways to rethink collectively, eliminating extreme opinions and fostering dialogue, including changing rigid educational and workplace cultures.

When it comes to thinking, the mindsets of human beings can be categorized into four types: preacher, prosecutor, politician, and scientist. When our cherished beliefs are in danger, we adopt the preacher mode, evangelizing and protecting our ideals. When we find flaws in others’ arguments, we become prosecutors, listing reasons to prove them wrong and hoping to win the case. When seeking popular support, we switch to the politician mode, striving to gain recognition and lobbying for support for our political ideas. The risks of these three thinking modes lie in our strong belief in ourselves, proclaiming our righteousness, accusing those who we believe are wrong, and seeking

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others' support through political actions, to the extent that we forget to rethink our own viewpoints. The author suggests adopting the fourth mindset, that of a scientist, for thinking and discussion. Scientists conduct experiments, test hypotheses, verify information, and discover knowledge. When we adopt the scientist's mindset, we refuse to let our ideas become ideologies. We don't start with answers or solutions but follow the lead of questions. We don't rely on intuition but accept the guidance of evidence. We don't just doubt others' claims but courageously challenge our own arguments.

### **Individual rethinking Updating Our Own Views**

**Cultivate the habit of free thinking:** When we feel ourselves resisting a certain opinion, we should try to be alert and reflective, "Am I becoming a preacher in my thinking?" When thoughts of resistance arise, this is an opportunity for learning. We must consciously switch to the mindset of a scientist and treat our initial intuition as a hypothesis to be tested with evidence. Take it a step further by actively seeking information that contradicts our intuition to practice our ability to rethink. When we realize that our thoughts were mistaken and update our information, it means we have reduced our errors.

**Calibrate our confidence:** When there is a discrepancy between our confidence and actual abilities, two symptoms can arise. When confidence exceeds ability, it is known as the Dunning-Kruger effect. We may have encountered people who watch baseball and confidently share opinions, thinking they know more than the coaches on the sidelines. This is a classic symptom of overconfidence and the illusion of knowledge. On the other hand, there is the imposter syndrome, where one's abilities surpass their confidence. Research shows that when people have a small amount of knowledge about a subject, their confidence skyrockets, leading them to believe they know more than they actually do. It is only when their abilities reach an expert

level that they realize their shortcomings. One way to calibrate our confidence is to test how well we can explain a topic to prevent overconfidence. At the same time, feeling insufficient confidence can be seen as an opportunity for learning, redirecting our focus on improving rather than proving ourselves.

**Invite others to question us:** Actively invite others to point out areas where we should change. Although we tend to avoid conflict with others, shifting the focus of the discussion from the "person" to the task itself can be highly beneficial. Research also shows that when parents engage in conflicts with kindness and constructiveness, children feel more secure emotionally, develop greater empathy, and become more creative as they grow up. Similarly, by inviting constructive criticism, we create an environment that promotes performance improvement.

### **Interpersonal Rethinking - Opening Other People's Minds**

**Pose better questions instead of presenting more evidence:** The other person has their own standpoint, and they likely believe it to be correct. If our aim is simply to win an argument, even if we succeed, the other person may not change their mind. They might only be unable to counter our points without truly internalizing them. Instead, start the conversation with inquiry, show interest, and encourage the other person to express their viewpoint. This approach allows them to let their guard down, clarify their perspective, and helps them reconsider their position. For example, ask questions like "How did you form this opinion in the first place?" or "What kind of evidence could change your perspective?" Many of our beliefs are actually stereotypes, and we often don't know when or why we started believing them. By using questions, we remind them that it's time to rethink. Ask them if they would still hold the same views if they were born in a different era or country. Psychologists have long found that the person most likely to change our mind is ourselves. Therefore, using questions to

persuade others allows them to convince themselves, which is more effective than simply lecturing them.

**Transform the process of persuasion from a battle to a dance:** If persuasion is seen as a battle, both sides become tense, with each party advancing without wanting to retreat. However, if we transform persuasion into a dance, it becomes a mutual act of listening and coordinated movement. Sometimes we advance while the other person retreats, and sometimes it's the opposite. Remember, in the dance of persuasion, start the discussion from common ground. This doesn't weaken our argument; instead, it shows that our positions are actually aligned and can stimulate the other person to consider our points. Sometimes, the reason the other person doesn't consider our arguments is not simply due to stubbornness but because they dislike feeling controlled by others. Offering the other person the ultimate freedom of choice allows them to believe that they made the decision themselves.

### **Collective Rethinking - Creating communities of Lifelong Learners**

**Reduce binary bias:** Whether it's news headlines or recent political debates, people tend to simplify things into two categories. It's either good or bad, right or wrong. This tendency makes it difficult for people to accept opposing views. However, many issues are not black and white; there are countless shades of gray in between. To overcome binary bias, try breaking down an issue into multiple perspectives. Shift the focus from "which side is right" to "how can we solve this problem?" When encountering overly simplified headlines, activate your critical thinking and consider what important information might be missing between the extremes.

**Teach children to rethink:** Research on high-achieving architects found that the most creative architects had an average grade of B when in school, while those who consistently

received A grades were less willing to challenge orthodox theories due to their fear of making mistakes. If we fail to cultivate children's ability to question and reflect during their formative years, it becomes increasingly challenging for them to develop these skills later on. To train children to think critically from a young age, consider having regular family dinners dedicated to debunking myths and engaging in deep discussions on selected topics. Children often enjoy drawing, so encouraging them to create multiple versions of a drawing related to a given theme can help them understand that there isn't just one possibility for any given thing.

**Foster a learning organization:** To cultivate a culture of rethinking within a company, it's crucial to create an environment where individuals feel psychologically safe to question ideas without fear of punishment or being ostracized by colleagues. Ideally, this process should start with top-level executives demonstrating their willingness to embrace new ideas and admitting when their past decisions may have been wrong. However, building trust and psychological safety, takes time and requires consistent demonstrations of humility and curiosity. After observing such behavior from leaders, employees will be motivated to embrace change. Companies should also periodically review existing practices to determine if they are outdated and if there are better alternatives available. Avoid falling into the trap of "we've always done it this way."

The world is changing at a rapid pace, and people's capacity to acquire information and technology is constantly increasing. In a world where progress is accelerating, if we cling to old beliefs, our knowledge will fall behind, and our ability to accept new things will deteriorate. It is crucial for individuals to reevaluate and rethink their situations in order to seek better paths forward. Rethinking is both a skill and a mindset. Only through rethinking can we have the possibility of innovation and find ways to solve problems. The book "Think Again" offers practical

strategies for developing a more open-minded and flexible mindset. Whether you're a business leader, a student, a negotiator or just someone interested in personal growth, this book is sure to inspire you to reconsider your assumptions and beliefs.