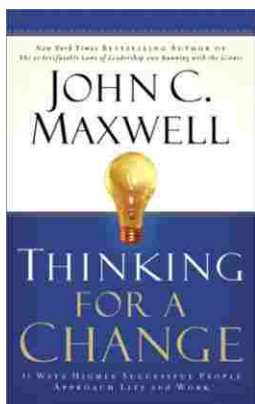




BestSummaries



THINKING FOR A CHANGE

11 Ways Highly Successful People Approach Life and Work

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About the Author



John C. Maxwell.

In 1985, **John Maxwell** founded The INJOY Group, a collection of three distinct companies that employ 200 people and provide resources and services that help people reach their personal and leadership potential. In addition to building a successful organization, John has authored more than thirty books, including the New York Times best sellers **The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership** and **Failing Forward**.

Called the nation's foremost expert on leadership, John was born in central Ohio five and a half decades ago. He credits his excellent leadership instincts and his early leadership training to his father, Melvin Maxwell, whom he followed into the ministry. For over twenty-five years, John led churches in Indiana, Ohio, and California.

John has earned bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees and has also received five honorary doctorates. He lives in Atlanta, Georgia.

Two of John's favorite books are **How to Win Friends & Influence People** by Dale Carnegie, and **As a Man Thinketh** by James Allen.

Wisdom in a Nutshell

The ability to think sets man apart from other living things. By using this power, you can create your own destiny. You can choose to succeed through good, skilled thinking, or be a failure by leaving this potent power untapped.

Of course, great thinking does not happen overnight. It is a long, sometimes arduous process. It has to be cultivated and refined. You can become a great thinker only if you are willing to learn how to do it. But first, you must embrace the idea of good thinking by changing your attitude. A changed thinking habit can lead to a changed life, a better life.

Thinking for a Change by John. C. Maxwell unveils the many benefits of good thinking. It reveals the 11 ways of thinking you can employ to change your life for the better.

The Value of Good Thinking

Good thinking separates the achievers from the failures. You can improve your circumstance by improving the way you think. Good thinking improves your chances at success, for it is the foundation of progress.

The author cites his father, Melville Maxwell, as an example of someone who understood that good thinking can change a man's life. Melville started out a pessimist, but once he noticed that all the successful people he knew thought positively about themselves and others, he worked to change his attitude and soon became an optimist.

It is also important to note that a formal education does not guarantee good thinking because sometimes, schools teach people what to think, not how to think.

Good Thinking Produces Good Ideas

If you planted an apple seed, expect a harvest of apples. In the same way, if you sow the seed of good thinking, you will reap a harvest of progress. But the measure of that progress is commensurate to the quality of the thinking that went with it. Poor thinking yields negative progress, average thinking yields no progress, good thinking yields some progress, and great thinking produces great progress.

Good Thinking Increases Potential

By becoming a better thinker, you expand your abilities and potential. However, that potential will depend on the quality of the idea. Did you employ good thinking or great thinking?

Sam Walton, founder of Wal-Mart, realized that success can be just one idea away. Told that a small town won't be able to sustain a discount store for long, he pursued his idea anyway. Now Wal-Mart is the world's largest retailer, because Walton sought to expand his potential even in the face of opposition.

Good Thinking Leads to More Good Thinking

Once you've started the habit of good thinking, more good thoughts will come. This is the start of your success, for once you've developed this habit you will be capable of creating many good ideas.

Portrait of a Good Thinker

What makes a good thinker?

1. Sees the wisdom of big-picture thinking.
2. Knows the power of focused thinking.
3. Explores the joy of creative thinking.
4. Recognizes the importance of realistic thinking.
5. Releases the power of strategic thinking.
6. Feels the energy of possibility.
7. Embraces reflective thinking.
8. Questions popular thinking.

Good thinking separates the achievers from the failures.

9. Believes in shared thinking.
10. Experiences unselfish thinking
11. Enjoys bottom-line thinking.

The Impact of Changed Thinking

If unsuccessful people can learn to change their thinking, so can those who have achieved some degree of success. This is necessary so that they can achieve the next level of progress.

Mary Kay National Sales Director Karen Ford realized the importance of the above statement when she failed to get the promotion she thought was due her.

As expected, she was crushed with disappointment. Karen, however, did not change her goal - she changed her thinking instead.

Karen decided that she would learn how to lead leaders. With her new set of skilled thinking, she did. In 1998, almost a decade after joining the company, she was named national director.

Changed Thinking is Difficult, But Worth It

Improving or changing your thinking is not automatic. It entails hard work and perseverance because you

have to find ways on how to improve yourself. By improving your ideas, you will soon find out that your mind is a gold mine. Pretty soon, you will be churning out gold nuggets in the form of excellent ideas.

You have to understand that to be able to improve your thinking, you have to change your attitude and

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your beliefs. You have to believe that you can achieve more. By changing your thinking, you also change your expectations. You'll dream bigger, aspire to go higher. This, in turn, will change your behavior and performance. With these changes, you will finally be able to reach the next level.

The Process of Intentional Thinking

Sometimes, ideas don't just happen. They develop in stages. It helps if you have a place to "nurse" these thoughts. Your thinking place can be anywhere - the shower, the park, the garden. This is where you will develop or shape your ideas.

Exposing your idea to the right people can also help you develop it. These people are those who share your vision, those who can stretch or expand an idea, not suppress or kill it. The right people, combined with the right environment, can make you a better thinker.

Absorbing good input, exposure to good thinkers, thinking good thoughts and acting on them are also necessary ingredients for one to become a better thinker.

The 11 Thinking Skills

1. Big-Picture Thinking

Simply put, this means thinking big. A big-picture thinker does not dismiss trivial information as mere trivia. He pans them. Can the ideas be expanded and developed? Big-picture thinkers are never satisfied with what they know. They search for more knowledge in books and in people. These thinkers are learners.

Big-thinkers do not limit themselves by looking at the world through their own eyes. They expand their world, get out of themselves and see the world through the experience of others. They welcome other people's perspectives and accept conflicts. They also listen well.

Big-thinkers are leaders because they can visualize things faster than others. They size things up by taking many ideas into account. Oftentimes, they know where their group or company is headed and how to seize their target. For them, moving forward is as natural as breathing.

2. Focused Thinking

Concentration is sometimes all that is needed to turn a small idea into something great. Focus can do wonders. A small laser beam can drill a hole in the hardest of metals, something that the sun, with all its heat, cannot do. Such is the power of focused thinking.

Focused-thinkers have learned to do away with distractions so that they can think with clarity. They don't waste time or energy on many ideas. Rather, they select one and give it all their concentration.

These types know their priority, their goals. They know their strengths, their skills, and what they do best. Above everything else, focused-thinkers never lose sight of their goals.

3. Creative Thinking

This is probably the best kind of thinking, for it is fun and the possibilities are endless. The key here is imagination, and having lots and lots of ideas. Creative people explore the offbeat, accept oddities and yet are able to connect what could appear as bizarre ideas and make it work.

Creative thinkers are not afraid to experiment. They are not scared of defeat or failure. In fact, creative

thinkers prefer the path not taken. They are not afraid to challenge the status quo, to innovate or try new concepts - no matter how silly or stupid these may be in other people's eyes.

If not for Priscilla Presley's creative thinking, there would be no Graceland today. When Elvis Presley died, he left everything in a trust fund for their daughter, Lisa Marie. Because Elvis sold off the rights of his recordings to make money, and made a deal with his manager giving him half of what he earned, his estate was soon in shambles. Priscilla had to think fast to save Graceland and her daughter's inheritance.

She took what little remaining cash there was and invested it in developing Graceland. Instead of selling it, she made the mansion a tourist attraction. Next, she dismissed Tom Parker, Elvis' manager. Next she made Elvis a brand. Her ideas paid off. Graceland became a money-making venture.

4. Realistic Thinking

Those who practice realistic thinking are down-to-earth thinkers who are bolted to reality. They have a target and a game plan. Furthermore, realistic thinkers know, or pretty much have an idea, of the consequences of whatever action they will take.

Realistic thinking does not deal with hopes or wishes. Rather, it involves truth and cold facts. Realistic thinkers are practical people who have analyzed all available data and calculated the risks before making a decision or starting a project.

Through realistic thinking, game plans are simplified because they have been whittled down to the barest necessity. Risks are reduced to a minimum. The certainty of success is high because realistic thinkers always have contingency plans to fall back on.

Realistic thinkers appreciate truth, do their homework, weigh the pros and cons, picture the worst-case scenario and take action accordingly.

5. Strategic Thinking

Just as the term suggests, this involves planning. It is through strategic thinking that armies defeat their enemies, companies win bids or juicy contracts, and

groups or individuals achieve their goals. It involves calculating risks and taking into account the resources at hand.

Strategic thinking sharpens the mind. It develops planning skills, simplifies things and brings a person closer to his objective through the shortest route. Error is reduced because strategic thinkers have aligned their ideas to their goals. In other words, strategic thinkers have a precise plan to fit every conceivable circumstance.

Steps to Strategic Thinking

1. An issue should be broken down into smaller, more manageable bits.
2. The real issue or objective should be identified.
3. Explore solutions.
4. Review resources.
5. Develop a plan.

Although a strategy may fail or backfire, this does not deter strategic thinkers. Failure only makes strategic thinkers repeat the process, and start planning again.

6. Possibility Thinking

If creative thinkers have imagination, possibility thinkers have vision. However, the latter believe with a passion that their ideas can work. No amount of discouragement can stop them. They never give up because they believe their dream is possible.

Because of his unshakeable belief in his dream, George Lucas was able to make a movie the world has never seen before. Even when experts told him that his vision of creating scenes of spaceships zooming into space cannot be done, he doggedly pursued his dream. Even after being told that what he wanted was technically impossible, Lucas persisted. Soon he found someone who shared his belief, John Dykstra, a young filmmaker. Dykstra also did not know how it can be done, but he was willing to pursue the idea.

Dykstra gathered a team of technicians. They designed and built a studio and began assembling the technology needed to make the movie. It took them two years of patience and hard work, of trial and error, to create Lucas' film. The result: Star Wars. The rest, as they say, is history.

Possibility thinking opens up more possibilities, enables people to dream big, and helps them rise above the average.

How do you become a possibility thinker? Believe in your vision. Don't be a pessimist, and stay away from people who say you can't. Look for possibilities in every situation. Always dream big. Question the status quo. And find inspiration from great achievers.

7. Reflective Thinking

Reflective thinking helps put things in their proper perspective. It is a slow waltz of the mind because reflection can never be hurried. Pondering on a brewing idea or problem will enable you to grasp the value, or the real context, of an issue.

Investing time on reflective thinking pays off

There are many reasons why popular thinking should be questioned. After all, if people don't think differently, there will be no inventions or innovations.

because it enhances confidence, thus improving decision-making abilities. Doubts are erased because examining an idea or situation clarifies the picture.

Reflective thinking is thinking with understanding. It allows you to mentally examine every aspect of your life. Lessons can be learned, or wisdom can be gleaned by reflecting on the life or experiences of other people, especially of those who have achieved much.

8. Alternative Thinking

Sometimes, in order to come out with new ideas, you have to think differently. This means going against the accepted norm or belief, or challenging standard procedure.

There may be safety and security in accepting popular thinking, but the benefits of "unpopular" thinking can change lives. Paul Ridker, a cardiologist and associate professor of medicine in Harvard University, proved this when he took a different direction in the treatment of heart disease.

For years, doctors believed that the best predictor of a heart attack was the presence of high cholesterol level in the blood. Ridker, however, discovered that heart attacks occur even in people with normal blood cholesterol. This prompted him to review materials to find out why.

He soon found out that inflammation of the arteries could have triggered these heart attacks. He began gathering data to prove his theory. Many doctors said the kind of inflammation he wanted to track could not be detected. But Ridker persisted. He soon learned that a substance called C-reactive protein is present in the blood of those who face a high risk of heart attack. This was a better predictor than high levels of bad cholesterol. Furthermore, tracking this substance was as cheap as checking cholesterol.

There are many reasons why popular thinking should be questioned. If people don't think differently, there would be no new inventions or innovations.

9. Shared Thinking

They say that two heads, or three, or even more; are better than one. Great thinkers acknowledge this. Shared thinking makes for faster thinking as more ideas are floated. A problem is easier solved when it is tackled by a group of good thinkers.

Thinking solo has its rewards, but there is greater mental power in shared thinking. Marie and Pierre Curie shared ideas, so did the Beatles - and the world still reaps the fruits of their collaboration.

Shared thinking leads to greater thinking. A group of good thinkers working as a team is a force to reckon with. Whatever the goal, the job is half as easy, and finishing it is twice as fast.

Shared thinking works best in an organization,

company, department or team. More inputs are gathered when minds work together. Success is certain when the power of great minds is unleashed as one.

10. Unselfish Thinking

Thinking to help others can bring far greater rewards than the other types of thinking. It elevates the mental process to a higher plane because it does not seek personal reward or fulfillment.

George Washington Carver is a good example of an unselfish thinker. Denied admission in college (he was black and it was 1885), he turned to farming. His desire, however, to have a college education did not dim. In 1890, he enrolled at Simpson College and was accepted. In 1890, he transferred to Iowa State College. Although he excelled in the arts, he changed his major to agriculture. Asked why, Carver said he wanted to help his race, noting that art "would not do his people as much good."

He also excelled in botany and agriculture, prompting his mentors to urge him to stay on and earn his master's degree. He did, and went on to develop expertise in plant pathology and mycology. He was also the first African-American faculty member at Iowa State College.

Carver's agricultural research helped improved farming. Carver especially helped poor, black farmers, earning him the respect of Thomas Edison and Henry Ford. To Carver, service measures success. He reached self-fulfillment by improving the life of others, and in the process, he left a legacy.

11. Bottom-Line Thinking

Bottom-line thinking is goal-oriented. It means measuring the result, or outcome, of an idea or venture. It provides clarity because it enables you to assess the situation and come up with the best decision in achieving that goal.

Thinking on the bottom-line helps you make better decisions. If you know your bottom-line and never lose sight of it, you'll know what action to take to pursue your goal with focus.

The important questions to ask are: what are you after? What is your goal? What do you want to achieve? Once you've identified the real bottom-line, create a strategy on how to achieve it. Successful companies employ this technique. They identify their bottom-line, allocate resources, hire competent people, and structure their organization to achieve their goals.

The possibilities are endless when you employ good thinking. Good thinking will not only change your life, it will also have impact on other people's lives. Good thinking can be your greatest tool to shape a better life.