

# 20/20 Mind Sight

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REFOCUS, REIGNITE & REINVENT YOUR LIFE FROM THE INSIDE OUT

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## INTRODUCTION

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# *"I Should Have Been More Specific"*

"People are idiots" is one of Phil's most common riffs. As pejorative as it sounds, he always meant it to suggest that people should think for themselves and take the advice and opinions of others with a huge grain of salt. So you can imagine his delight when Soledad O'Brien, the CNN journalist, gave the same bit of advice to the Harvard University Class of 2013. Her exact phrasing was, "People are idiots and you shouldn't listen."

It's such simple advice and yet so difficult for most people to follow. We've been taught to listen to our elders and "do as I say." And while most advice is offered with the genuine desire to be helpful, it's usually without context or a full understanding of the life, skills, and aspirations of the receiving party. We each see life through our own filters, so the advice we offer flows through those same filters.

The only advice that truly matters is the advice we provide ourselves. The effectiveness of that advice is contingent on our degree of self-knowledge and is in direct proportion to the amount of time and energy we devote to personal reflection. We can't know what advice is appropriate for ourselves until we truly know who we are and what we hold most important.

The only advice Ms. O'Brien provided the Harvard graduates was to develop a personal mindset that will lead to personal fulfillment: "Figure out

your dream and be brave enough to go and live it. Otherwise, someone will hire you to go ahead and help them with their dream.”

## **Have You Thought Today?**

An MBA student recounted this job-hunting story as part of a “Personal Assessment” assignment:

*I had strong interviews with the CFO and controller. They both assured me that I would be hired. The final interview with the CEO seemed a mere formality. However, the CEO challenged me with questions I had never been asked before: what my personal brand was, what specific skills differentiated me from my peers, where I envisioned myself professionally in the short and long-term, and how I planned to achieve those goals. Fumbling over my words and regurgitating my professional strengths, I could sense that I was unable to adequately answer these basic questions. I found out three days later that I didn't get the job. While I was heartbroken, I found myself more troubled by the fact that not only could I not articulate my personal and professional brand, I had not even thought of it.*

This student's story is a common one. Very few people give a moment's thought to who they are, what they believe, what they stand for, how they're perceived, and what they want to achieve.

It's easy to blame the educational system and its focus on the regurgitation of facts and figures rather than a reflection of the interplay of all the components of modern life. Similarly, it's easy to blame the business world for training employees to do as told and play nice in the corporate sandbox. And it's equally easy to point a finger at parents who preached, “You can be whatever you want to be” but never gave their children the time or insight to figure out exactly what that might be. The focus in school, in business, and at home has long been on the endgame – i.e., an impressive-sounding response to the common cocktail party query: “So what do you do?”

The response to “What do you do?” pales in comparison to such queries as “Who are you?” “What do you want to do with your life?” And “Why do you want to do it?” Unfortunately, few people ask the latter type of

questions. The blame for that falls squarely on the individual. Yes, your parents, teachers, and bosses may have avoided the subject for a thousand different reasons; but you ignore it at your own peril. You ignore it at the risk of living a life that is not just unfulfilling but, far worse, is a shallow and meaningless lie.

The simplest solution is to think for oneself. Thinking, after all, is what truly distinguishes humans from every other species. Why then do so few of us do it? And yes, we are suggesting that the majority of people spend little time actually thinking in the fullest sense of the word. Thinking does not mean wondering, evaluating, choosing, affirming, or denying. It often comprises some or all of those activities, but true thinking goes much deeper and does not content itself with superficial musings.

Thinking is simple, but it's also one of the hardest – and sometimes most terrifying – things we do. Understanding the factors that make it so hard is a key theme throughout the book. If you question why thinking is so important, consider this quote from the Irish author George Bernard Shaw: “Few people think more than two or three times a year. I’ve made an international reputation for myself by thinking once or twice a week.”

## **Welcome To 20/20 Mind Sight**

*20/20 Mind Sight* has grown out of our combined experiences as corporate executives, consultants, educators, coaches, and thought leaders. We’ve written the kind of book we wish we could have read when we first started out in our adult lives and a book we would still find useful today after achieving far more than we could ever have envisioned. We attribute our success and worldview to an education and a mindset steeped in reflection – both internal and external. It’s a mindset that should be far more common, and a mindset that can help transform “hammer heads” who view everything as a nail into “monkey wrenches” who are not afraid to ask probing questions in order to discover the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

The book combines real-life examples (both contemporary and historical), anecdotes, worksheets, questionnaires, and online tools designed to help identify and create a distinctive mindset that can lead to new levels of personal satisfaction and success. That mindset has been bowdlerized and

watered down in literally hundreds of books promoting quick-fix paths to leadership, wealth, power, love, influence, career success, and powerful personal brands. The problem is that most of the “tips” are focused on *doing* rather than *thinking*. Indeed, in many cases, what’s delivered is a crass and manipulative message that fails to inspire breakthrough insights or affect the reader’s life in any meaningful way. That’s the key differentiator of our book.

Think about it from this perspective. Most people fall into jobs that turn into careers that turn into a lifetime of work that’s unchallenging, unfulfilling and, in far too many cases, unsuited to the individual’s strengths, interests, and aspirations. The key question is how could this happen in an age of total transparency when information on any topic is easily accessible in any language and at any time of day or night. The reason is that far too much time and energy are focused on job titles, career ladders, and the holy grail of capitalism: a big paycheck that’s the envy of family, friends, and foes. Conversely, far too little time is spent thinking about what’s truly important to the individual. More specifically and most importantly, almost no time is spent considering what is of critical importance to the innermost character and passion of the individual. Lily Tomlin said, “I always wanted to be somebody, but I should have been more specific.” Her remark speaks to the primary benefit of building a 20/20 mindset.

## **From Theory to Practice: 20/20 Sight Lines**

To make the content as engaging and long-lasting as possible, we’re introducing a wide range of tools, surveys, and questionnaires to help the reader gauge his or her mastery of the issue. In some cases an in-text questionnaire is included, and in others the reader will be referred to a web link (usually hosted by an educational entity or a non-profit organization). These tools include:

- Johari Window
- Nohari Window
- Jungian Typology
- Implicit Association Test
- Satisfaction with Life Scale



- The Grit Survey
- Locus of Control

***“The privilege of a lifetime is being who you are.”***

## **Every Journey Starts Somewhere**

While not designed specifically to help the reader climb the corporate ladder or generate wealth beyond anyone’s wildest dreams, the process of building a 20/20 mindset will unquestionably lead to new heights and distant places.

Joseph Campbell, the American mythologist, observed that, “The privilege of a lifetime is being who you are.” Campbell understood that life is both a process of continual discovery and an ever-changing destination. We trust *20/20 Mind Sight* will help readers begin the journey.