

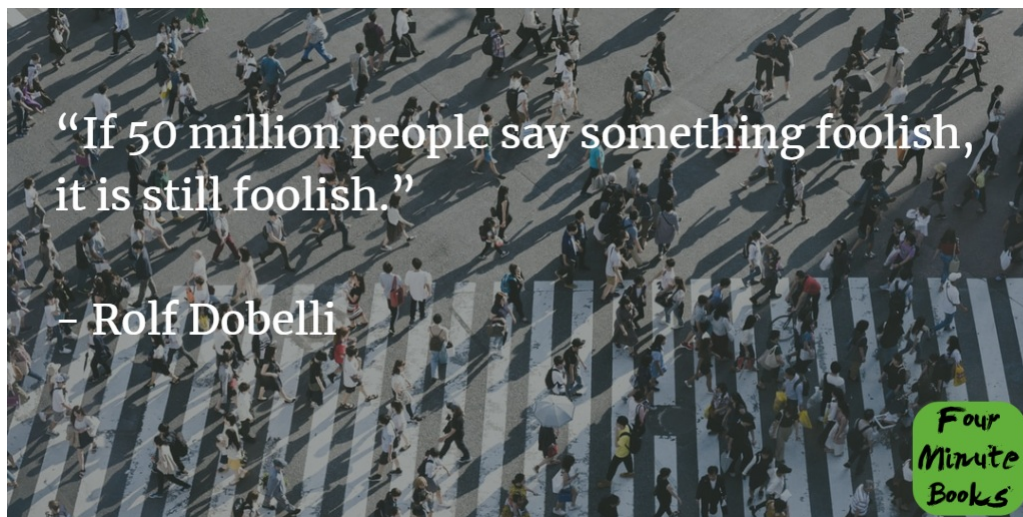
The Art of Thinking Clearly Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *The Art of Thinking Clearly* sheds light on the psychological biases that, although once kept our species alive, now make life harder on us.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



Did you know that 84% of Frenchmen think that they are above-average lovers, even though it's impossible for more than 50% of them to actually be right about that?

Are you aware that most crosswalk buttons and elevator door open buttons don't do anything at all?

And if you've ever tried bringing your prettiest friend to the club with you then chances are you had a hard time getting any attention.

According to research, humans tend to be overconfident. You might think you're good at being rational or assessing your own abilities. But you fall prey to these fallacies and biases, too. This is because your brain is evolutionarily wired with shortcut ways to help you survive. Unfortunately, these psychological tendencies don't serve us well now that we don't have to avoid being eaten by a lion every day.

In *The Art of Thinking Clearly*, author Rolf Dobelli dives deep into a few common psychological biases. With specific examples of these thought patterns, and ways to overcome them, this book is both entertaining and informative. No matter how smart you think you are, this will shed light on some of the weak points in your thinking and make you wiser.

Here are the 3 most interesting psychology lessons from this book:

1. You have much less control over the things that you think you can influence.
2. We're not great at determining value, deferring to availability and comparison to other options instead of facts.
3. Decision-making reduces your strength of will, especially when you have too many options to choose from.

Are you ready to learn how to challenge your inner thought patterns for a healthier mind?
Let's begin!

Lesson 1: You think you can change things that you have no control over.

The *illusion of control* is a bias that describes how we believe our influence extends to things that are impossible to manipulate. We do this because believing that we have the power to change our situation brings us hope. Don't let this get you down, however, because your life isn't fixed, you can improve many aspects of your life. Let's examine some of the inconsequential things that we think we have control over.

One study identified just how much hope the illusion of control can provide. Researchers divided participants into two booths. In each booth, sound increased until the subjects told the researchers to stop. The difference was that one had a red "panic" button that participants could press when the noise became too loud. Even though the button didn't do anything at all, the people with a button in their booth withstood much more noise than those without a button.

Similar, "placebo buttons" are placed throughout our world. If you've ever pushed a button at a crosswalk, most likely it does nothing but change your perception, making it easier for you to wait. Elevator buttons to open and close the doors are the same way.

To combat the illusion of control, be wary of your predictions. **Rather than worrying about what you can't control, focus only on what you know that you can.**

Lesson 2: You use availability and comparison to determine value rather than looking at actual pros and cons.

Taking your more attractive friend to a club with you is a bad idea. Doing this makes you less likely to score a date. This happens because the comparison to your more attractive friend makes you appear less attractive than you really are.

Regardless of what we think, making absolute judgments doesn't come easily to us. Instead, we rely on comparisons to make decisions. **We choose the option that looks better instead of examining real pros and cons.** This is called the contrast-effect and is also why product discounts work so well. If a \$100 item becomes \$70, we see it as better than an item that is normally just \$70 only because of the comparison.

Similarly, companies use the idea of scarcity to get customers to buy. When they use phrases like "today only" or "limited time offer," the brain sees a potential missed opportunity and resorts to making a purchase.

If you want to break through these biases of scarcity and comparison, focus on the value of items. When you see something is 30% off or "only while supplies last," think only about the costs and benefits of purchasing the item.

Lesson 3: Too many options to choose from makes it hard to make choices.

In one experiment, researchers tested a hypothesis by selling 24 different kinds of jelly in a supermarket. The next day, they only displayed six types of jelly for customers to sample and purchase at a discounted price. On that second day, those conducting the study sold ten times the amount of jelly as on day one.

This phenomenon that makes decisions hard when there are many options is known as the paradox of choice. Often, rather than trying to make a choice among many different options, we opt for the easier option to make no choice at all.

Other research confirms that making decisions in general depletes our energy.

Researchers call this called decision fatigue. A study on dating sites examined the effects of the stress that comes with choosing between a large variety of potential partners. Their findings determined that, due to decision fatigue, the male brain singles out physical attractiveness as the only criterion on which to judge their options.

The Art of Thinking Clearly Review

The Art of Thinking Clearly is a very interesting read. I was familiar with many of these psychological biases before, but this book sheds new light on some I didn't know about. I liked that it gave some specific ways to avoid succumbing to these false ways of thinking, but also wanted to hear more of that.

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Who would I recommend The Art of Thinking Clearly summary to?

The 34-year-old mother who wants to learn how to avoid the same mental pitfalls she always falls into, the 45-year-old business executive who is looking for ways to improve her every day decisions, and anyone who is fascinated by human behavior.