## 7.1 What Thinking Means

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| Estimated completion time: 8 minutes. |

Thinking is one of those hard-to-pinpoint aspects of life we typically don’t analyze much—like breathing or walking or sleeping. We constantly think, and becoming more attuned to how we think and what we do when we encounter new ideas is an excellent habit to pursue.

**“If you’re going to do anything as much as you think, you might just as well learn about it and hone this skill.”**

You may have read quotes or inspirational slogans that claim *you are what you think.* What does that mean? Can you *think* yourself into a good mood? Can you *think* you have a million dollars in your pocket? Does that mean you are the next music sensation if you often sing at parties? Not necessarily, but consider Jose, for instance. He isn’t a rock and roll star, but Jose spends a lot of his leisure time thinking about music, analyzing performances, memorizing his favorite musicians’ characteristics, buying fan clothing, and even designing a creative means to explain his excitement for music to his friends through a homemade video. Jose certainly could allow his fascination to seep into other aspects of his life. Do you have a hobby or interest you spend a lot of time thinking about?

Many people go to great lengths to attend a concert by a favorite music star. They think creatively about how to save enough money for tickets; they think analytically about scheduling their other obligations to have time off work to attend or how to make up work in their college classes. This much planning involves a great deal of thinking, and not all about music. In the example about Jose, thinking directs the actions of the person doing the thinking. So, in fact, what we think *does* influence who we are and how we act. We have many resources available to be more effective thinkers, and learning about these resources gives us options.

Get Connected

Apps and search engines literally bring thinking to our fingertips. Consider how often you visit Google. The use of this familiar site has become so commonplace as to render the proper name of the company into a verb—*to google* a topic. Basic calculators or word-processing software programs are other simple examples of technology we often use without recognizing them as thinking aids.

While apps, software programs, thinking games, and thought exercises may help you stretch your brain, don’t let their simplicity fool you into thinking that cultivating an inquisitive, thoughtful mind is easy or automatic. Thinking is as complex as it is necessary for our success in life. Some tools you may find useful are applications that provide challenges using mind puzzles are [Peak](https://www.peak.net/) and [Elevate](https://www.elevateapp.com/). These training apps offer brain training that varies from quick matching memory games to more sophisticated thought-processing speed scenarios. You can even use a straightforward tool like a flashcard app, such as [Chegg Prep](https://www.chegg.com/flashcards), to create your own thinking games -- using word associations or pictures to help you connect topics and build your skills.

A familiar element of the thinking apps is a progression tracker to help thinkers improve their focus and memory as well as to learn and practice math and verbal skills over time. Researchers are still investigating the correlation between thought-invoking game playing and the decrease in mental agility, memory, and cognitive vitality. Early studies have produced numerous findings, including a long-term investigation of the onset of Alzheimer’s disease conducted with nuns; you can look up the *Nun Study* to learn more, or go to [this article](https://openstax.org/l/nunstudy).