



Think Again by Adam Grant

Think you might want to read this book?

An organizational psychologist and professor at Wharton, Adam Grant is the perfect researcher for educators to follow because he has one foot in the teaching world and his other foot in the world of organizational psychology. In *Think Again*, Grant advocates for the power of rethinking. Instead of prosecuting, preaching, or politicking, Grant proposes we think more like scientists, having values and standards but also allowing curiosity to drive our thinking rather than remaining fixed in rigid beliefs. He devotes an entire chapter to rethinking in education: "Rewriting the textbook: Teaching Students to Question Knowledge." Every educator could benefit from reading that chapter and possibly the whole book to "think again" about education.

What would Socrates ask?

- What if we taught students how to rethink and relearn?
- What if we modeled "confident humility" and taught students how to cultivate it?
- Are schools learning cultures that encourage rethinking and growth?
- What tacit messages are we sending kids when we ask them "What do you want to be when you grow up?"

Research

- "Research reveals that the higher you score on an IQ test, the more likely you are to fall for stereotypes, because you're faster at recognizing patterns. And recent experiments suggest that the smarter you are, the more you might struggle to update your beliefs."
- "In a meta-analysis of ninety-five studies involving over a hundred thousand people, women typically underestimated their leadership skills, while men overestimated their skills."
- "In a classic paper, sociologist Murray Davis argued that when ideas survive, it's not because they're true--it's because they're interesting."
- As one research team concluded, "The absence of conflict is not harmony, it's apathy."
- "A meta-analysis compared the effects of lecturing and active learning on students' mastery of the material, cumulating 225 studies with over 46,000 undergraduates in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM)...On average, students scored half a letter grade worse under traditional lecturing than through active learning--and students were 1.55 times more likely to fail in classes with traditional lecturing."
- "It turns out that although perfectionists are more likely than their peers to ace school, they don't perform any better than their colleagues at work. This tracks with evidence that, across a wide range of industries, grades are not a strong predictor of job performance."

Concepts

- First-instinct fallacy: test prep often teaches to not doubt your original answers on tests, but research shows that “those who do rethink their first answers rather than staying anchored to them end up improving their scores.”
- Preachers, Prosecutors, and Politicians: As we think and talk, we often slip into the mindsets of three different professions:
 - Preachers: We go into preacher mode when our sacred beliefs are in jeopardy: we deliver sermons to protect and promote our ideals.
 - Prosecutors: We enter prosecutor mode when we recognize flaws in other people’s reasoning: we marshal arguments to prove them wrong and win our case.
 - Politicians: We shift into politician mode when we’re seeking to win over an audience: we campaign and lobby for the approval of our constituents.
- “Confirmation Bias: seeing what we expect to see.”
- “Desirability Bias: seeing what we want to see.”
- “What set great presidents apart was their intellectual curiosity and openness.”
- Challenge Network: “a group of people we trust to point out our blind spots and help us overcome our weaknesses.”
- Inverse charisma: a term that “captures the magnetic quality of a great listener.”

Quotes from the author

- “Intelligence is traditionally viewed as the ability to think and learn. Yet in a turbulent world, there’s another set of cognitive skills that might matter more: to rethink and unlearn.”
- “I can’t think of a more vital time for rethinking. As the coronavirus pandemic unfolded, many leaders around the world were slow to rethink their assumptions--first that the virus wouldn’t affect their countries, next that it would be no deadlier than the flu, and then that it could only be transmitted by people with visible symptoms. The cost of human life is still being tallied.”
- “After all, the purpose of learning isn’t to affirm our beliefs; it’s to evolve our beliefs.”
- “Who you are should be a question of what you value, not what you believe.”
- “Listening is a way of offering others our scarcest, most precious gift: our attention.”
- “With so much emphasis placed on imparting knowledge and building confidence, many teachers don’t do enough to encourage their students to question themselves and one another.”
- “Ultimately, education is more than the information we accumulate in our heads. It’s the habits we develop as we keep revising our drafts and the skills we build to keep learning.”
- “When I was involved in a study at Google to identify the factors that distinguish teams with high performance and well-being, the most important differentiator wasn’t who was on the team or even how meaningful their work was. What mattered most was psychological safety.”

- “How do you know? It’s a question we need to ask more often, both of ourselves and of others. The power lies in its frankness. It’s nonjudgmental--a straightforward expression of doubt and curiosity that doesn’t put people on the defensive.”
- “Instead of searching for the job where we’ll be the happiest, we might be better off pursuing the job where we expect to learn and contribute the most.”

Quotes from others

- “Presented with someone else's argument, we’re quite adept at spotting the weaknesses...but the positions we’re blind about are our own.” - Elizabeth Kolbert
- “Racist and antiracist are not fixed identities. We can be a racist one minute and an antiracist the next.” - Ibram X. Kendi

Implement tomorrow?

- When you give critical feedback to a student or colleague, attach a note that says “I’m giving you these comments because I have very high expectations, and I know that you can reach them.” Research shows that people were at least 40 percent more receptive to criticism when it was given with this framing.
- Show students old textbooks and discuss how knowledge has evolved over time.
- Do a career checkup twice a year by adding these questions to your calendar:
 1. When did you form the aspirations you're currently pursuing, and how have you changed since then?
 2. Have you reached a learning plateau in your role or your workplace, and is it time to consider a pivot?

Organizations/schools working on answers

- [EL Education](#)
- [Difficult Conversations Lab](#)

Referenced books with the potential to impact leading and learning in education

Author(s) Last Name	Title
Maclean	Young Men and Fire
Csikszentmihalyi	Flow



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