

THINK FOR YOURSELF

ACTION GUIDE

Part I: Understanding Our Inner Psychology

I. Desire to belong

Give three past or current examples that show you're trying to belong rather than thinking for yourself.

Example 1:

Example 2:

Example 3:

Reflect on the following:

Have I ever blindly followed an authority figure when I should have thought for myself instead?

Have I ever conformed due to social pressure when I had a different opinion or wanted to act differently? Have I ever lost myself in some kind of role, only realizing it went against my better judgment afterward?

2. Desire to be right

How are you trying to be right? Give two to three examples from your own life.

Example 1:

Example 2:

Example 3:

In what ways are you seeking to confirm what you already believe?

If you only cared about learning and building an accurate perception of the world, what would you do differently?

What excuses are you making to escape the harsh truth that you must make changes?

3. Desire to feel special

Answer the questions below:

How are you trying to be special?

Is it making your life better or worse?

What's one conspiracy theory you believe in or did believe in in the past?

Why do you think you fell for it?

Do you still think it's true?

What unconventional beliefs do you hold?

What would you say is the likelihood that they are correct?

Now, how could you use your desire to feel special in a more constructive way?

4. Need for congruence

How are you seeking congruence in your life?

Come up with at least two examples. You can refer to the list on the page as a reminder.

- **Cognitive dissonance.** Holding two or more conflicting beliefs, values, or attitudes at the same time, or acting in ways that go against our beliefs or values.
- **Rationalization.** Justifying your actions after the fact.
- **Sunk cost fallacy.** Continuing to invest time, money, or energy into because you don't want your investments to go to waste.
- **The foot-in-the-door technique.** Going further down a path after being nudged.
- **The commitment bias.** Letting small commitments turning into bigger commitments
- **Emotional reasoning.** Letting our feelings dictate our actions.

Part II. Separating facts from feelings

I. Assessing the “factualness” of data

The hierarchy of “facts”

- A. Laws of physics
- B. Verifiable facts
- C. Observations/Personal experiences
- D. Assumptions/hypotheses
- E. Logical reasoning

2. Assessing the reliability of various sources of information

A. Articles

Using fact-checking websites and LLMs, fact-check the following claims:

"Elon Musk’s claim that President Joe Biden’s immigration policy was “a giant voter importation scam.”

Sources checked:

Findings:

“Raising the federal minimum wage to \$15/hour would lift millions of Americans out of poverty.”

Sources checked:

Findings:

“The Earth’s average surface temperature has increased by approximately 1.1°C (2°F) since the late 19th century.”

Sources checked:

Findings:

B. Research papers

Using what you've learned in the section, try to find answers to the questions below:

- Does a high LDL cholesterol level increase the risk of cardiovascular diseases?
- Does a vegan diet produce better health outcomes long-term—i.e., lower risk of chronic diseases and mortality?
- Which is better for long-term health, resistance training or cardiovascular training? And should you do both?

Remember to do the following:

1. Start with systematic reviews or meta-analyses using the following websites:

- PubMed: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/> —> Filter for “review,” “meta-analysis,” or “randomized controlled trials”
- Google Scholar: <https://scholar.google.com/> —> Search: “meta-analysis,” “systematic review,” OR “randomized controlled trial” + your topic

2. Use aggregators like <https://scispace.com/> as needed. Or use ChatGPT or other LLMs. Here are some examples of prompts:

- “Summarize the key findings of the most cited papers on [specific medical condition] in the last five years.”
- “What are the limits of [insert specific research paper cited by your favorite influencers]?”
- “Give me a list of meta-analyses or randomized controlled trials on [insert topic of your choice].”

3. Make sure to be as neutral as possible when writing prompts.

Does a high LDL cholesterol level increase the risk of cardiovascular diseases?

Your answer:

Does a vegan diet produce better health outcomes long-term—i.e., lower risk of chronic diseases and mortality?

Your answer:

Which is better for long-term health, resistance training or cardiovascular training? And should you do both?

Your answer:

C. Books

Do some research on the following books. For instance, look for the author’s credentials, their political leaning, and their main arguments. Use Google, ChatGPT or other similar tools as needed.

The 1619 Project, A New American Origin Story, Nikole Hannah-Jones

Credentials:

Political leaning:

Main arguments:

The War on the West, Douglas Murray

Credentials:

Political leaning:

Main arguments:

These Truths: A History of the United States, Jill Lepore

Credentials:

Political leaning:

Main arguments:

D. YouTube content

Criticize at least one of the following Youtube videos below by answering the questions below. Feel free to use ChatGPT, Google, or similar tools to help you with the fact-checking.

The Middle East Problem by Dennis Prager

You Will NEVER Eat Bread Again after Watching This by Dr. Eric Berg

Bill Maher & Candace Owens Debate on the Moon Landing

The Middle East Problem, by Dennis Prager:

What are the facts, and what are their opinions or claims?

Are they citing verifiable sources?

Whats their expertise on the topic?

Are they reasonable, or do they exaggerate, oversimplify, or polarize?

What do they emphasize, and what do they omit?

What are the main ideas of the content creator?

You Will NEVER Eat Bread Again after Watching This, by Dr. Eric Berg:

What are the facts, and what are their opinions or claims?

Are they citing verifiable sources?

Whats their expertise on the topic?

Are they reasonable, or do they exaggerate, oversimplify, or polarize?

What do they emphasize, and what do they omit?

Using the table below, make a list of the people you're spending the most time with. Then, write down what they believe in and who they're following.

[illegible]

3. Differentiating facts from interpretations

Look at the facts below and write down possible explanations

Fact A: In the US, women's life expectancy is 80.2, however for men it's 74.8 (according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as of 2022).

Possible explanations:

Fact B: Car accidents occur mostly near home.

Possible explanations:

Fact C: In Hong Kong, people consume a lot of meat, however they live to 85.8 on average.

Possible explanations:

4. Avoid knee-Jerk thinking

Come up with one example of knee-jerk thinking you may engage in.

Example:

Then, investigate the following claims to see whether they are true.

- The Great Wall of China is visible from space.
- Goldfish have a three-second memory.
- You only use ten percent of your brain.

Part III. Looking at data objectively

I. Information overload

For twenty-four hours, write down all the information you consume (YouTube videos, articles, books, podcasts, etc.). Next to each piece of each information write down whether it is signal (S) or noise (N).

Information you consume	Signal (S) or noise (N)?

Now, reflect on the following:

How much of the information you consumed is signal versus noise?

Are there times during the day when noise is more present?

How does noise affect your mood or ability to focus?

Finally, take actions to reduce noise and increase signal:

Allocate specific times during the day to check emails or social media.

Time when I will check my emails/social media accounts:

Block time during your day to engage with content that aligns with your goals.

Time when I will engage with content that align with my goals:

Remember to only subscribe to newsletters or follow accounts that provide useful information. Make sure to unsubscribe/unfollow from the rest.

2. Escaping echo chambers and challenging confirmation bias

Write down below the main topics you watched on YouTube or other algorithm-dependent platforms:

Now, for each topic, go watch a video that contradicts it. Observe how you feel. Are you easily convinced by their argument? If so, it means that you have the tendency to believe others. Or, inversely, do you think that what they say is nonsense? If so, perhaps you're too entrenched in a particular set of beliefs. Write down any remark below:

Think of the people you're hanging out with. Do they have similar beliefs as you? If so, how exactly? How are their beliefs affecting you? Write your answer below:

3. Protecting yourself against ideologies

Write down below a belief you hold strongly.

My belief:

Reflect on how you adopted this particular belief. What sources influenced you (e.g., parents, teachers, media)?

How I adopted it:

Actively search for reliable information that challenges your belief. Read

articles, watch videos, or listen to podcasts offering different views. Note any valid points that seem to contradict your belief.

Points that seem to contradict my beliefs:

Observe how you react when encountering opposing views. Do you feel defensive, angry, or stressed out?

Your reaction to opposing views:

Finally, assess whether your belief still holds.

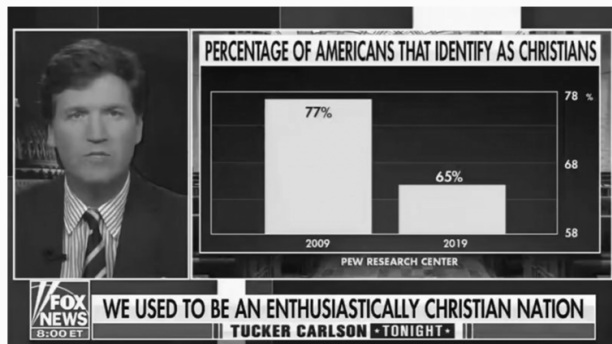
Do your belief still hold?

4. Avoiding being misled by statistics

Colgate once advertised that “80 percent of dentists recommend Colgate.”

While not a lie per se, this is misleading. Why could that be? Write your thoughts below:

Look at the pictures below. Why are the graphs misleading?



These graphs are misleading because:

Then, watch the YouTube video "[Misleading Graphs Real Life Examples](#)" by Prof. Essa that shows real-life examples of misleading graphs.

5. Think in terms of probabilities

Think of two or three past decisions that didn't turn out the way you had hoped for. Then forget about the results and assess whether the decisions themselves were good for you at the time.

Past decisions	What happened	Good or bad?

Read the case studies “The Matrix is after me”. Then write down what you think are the probabilities (in percentage) that the following statements are true:

Statements	%
There is a group of powerful people that controls the world (the Matrix)	
Andrew Tate has enough power to threaten them	
He did nothing wrong and all allegations are totally unjustified	

Part IV. Protecting yourself against manipulations

1. Protecting yourself against false experts

Whenever you listen to an alleged expert notice whether they're doing some of the things below.

- Cherry-picking of data. Selecting data that fit your narrative vs. looking at the data objectively.
- Anecdotes. Giving personal examples or telling stories to influence people rather than rely on facts, data and what research studies say.
- Illusion of expertise. Using their credentials to venture beyond their field of expertise and appear credible.
- Doubt mongering. Using their influence to make controversial statements that go against a well-established consensus
- False analogies. Making erroneous comparisons to distort the truth and manipulate people.
- Oversimplification. Making you believe there are simple solutions to complex problems.
- Appeal to authorities. Using testimonials or citing famous people to make their claims appear more legit.

2. Understanding the mechanism used by conspiracy theorists and gurus.

Think a time when you went down the rabbit hole of a conspiracy theory, fell under the influence of a guru, or joined (or consider joining) a cult of some sort. Then, remember what your situation was at the time and how you felt. Were you in a vulnerable situation? Did you have issues at work or in your personal life? Did you feel lost?

Write your answer below:

3. Evaluation conspiracy theories

Try to confirm or invalid one of the conspiracy theories below using what you learned in the book:

- QAnon
- Chemtrails
- 9/11 Inside Job
- Vaccines and Autism
- 5G and mind Control

Write your findings in the table below.

[illegible]

4. Exploring MLMs

Watch the following one-minute video from the MLM company Herbalife at the following URL: <https://www.herbalife.com/en-us/business-opportunity>.

Then fill in the table below:

key promises/emotional appeals	How you feel when watching	Problems with this type of business

5. Various scams and why we fall for them

Think of a time when you encountered a scam. If you can't recall one, search for a current scam online (e.g., law of attraction coaching, crypto pump-and-dumps, “make \$10K/month online” courses). For instance, research the ponzi scheme, OneCoin.

Answer the following questions using the table below:

- What was promised? (e.g., easy money, fast results, no effort required)
- What emotional trigger was used? (e.g., fear, greed, urgency, exclusivity)
- What tactic made it seem legitimate? (e.g., professional design, testimonials, use of authority figures)
- What part of you was it targeting? (e.g., greed, laziness, naivety, ignorance)

Promise	Emotional trigger	Tactics used	Targeted part of you

Then, answer the following questions:

What would a skeptic notice right away?

What were the red flags?

Finally, write down one or two rules you will follow from now on. Below are some examples:

- “If I feel like it seems too good to be true, I walk away.”
- “I never spend money after the first pitch. I wait for at least 48 hours.”
- “I research at least three independent sources before committing to anything.”

Your personal rules to protect yourself against scams:

Part V. Identifying patterns

I. Continuity bias

List three assumptions you have about the future. For instance:

- “I’ll keep the same job for the next 10 years.”
- “Real estate will always go up.”
- “AI won’t affect my industry.”

For each assumption, imagine one disruptive scenario that could radically change that future and write them down. Here are some examples:

- A new technology automates your job.
- Real estate collapses because of population decrease.
- AI offers your service at 10 percent of the cost.

For each disruption, identify one positive opportunity that could emerge if that change were to happen.

Assumption	disruptive scenario	Opportunity

Finally, think of a time in your life when something you believed impossible or unlikely did happen. What lessons can you learn from that experience?

What “impossible” thing happened:

Lessons you can learn from it:

2. Exponential growth

Imagine a pond with one lily pad. Every day, the number of lily pads doubles. In thirty days, the pond will be completely covered.

Now, answer the following questions: on which day will the pond be half-covered?

Using the table on the next page, list three areas where you might be thinking linearly (examples: technology adoption, career progression, investing, skill-building, health, etc.). Then for each, ask:

“If this were to follow an exponential curve, how would things look $2X$, $4X$, or $10X$ further down the line?”

Now, how likely is it to follow an exponential curve?

Area	What exponential could look like	How likely is it?

Think of what industry or technology will likely grow exponentially in the next five to ten years. Write your comments below:

Then reflect on what could be the implications for society and for you personally. Some of the implications will be:

3. Looking at trends and predictions

Choose one of the failed predictions mentioned in this chapter or find one yourself (use a search like “failed tech predictions” or “inaccurate climate predictions”).

Example: “We’ll run out of oil in the next ten years.”

Failed prediction:

Then, answer the following:

What exactly was the prediction?

When was it made? Who made it?

What assumptions did they rely on?

What actually happened?

What lesson can you draw from this case?

Think of one thing you believe will happen in the next ten to twenty years

One thing I believe will happen in the next ten to twenty years:

Then answer the questions below:

What trends am I basing this prediction on?

What assumptions am I making about human behavior, innovation, or resource availability?

How might I be wrong? What could surprise me?
