

This summary will give you the ability of

Not fearing of failure. You will be a fearless person that does compelling activities on your own. Such that, when you fail what you do, you will use it in favor of yourself. Those failures that you would have will be your way of learning new things.

Being an inquisitive and critical thinker. You'll start to ask more questions than ever and become more curious about the things happening around. Your way of understanding will change and you will find yourself in a different place.

Thinking outside-the-box. With the help of this ability, you will see the aspects that most of the people don't see in a situation. Thanks to the solutions that you would put forward, your ability to cope with the problems will become better.

Earth: When you master the basics, you will gain true mastery.

How do you develop your understanding of something? Do you learn as much as possible about that subject or do you learn the basics first?

Most probably, the answer will be the second one. If you want to develop your true understanding of a subject, you have to master the basics first. Without the basics, in other words, core, a foundation cannot stay still.

Think about the buildings, if they lack the core materials inside of them, would they be safe? No. Just like the element Earth, it represents the core of the world which we step on. Without the ground, we wouldn't be safe.

People mostly are under the illusion that to be an expert on something, complex theories and models should be learned. For instance, a lazy student, who doesn't care about the lesson at all, studies the complex methods before the exam and fails at the exam. If he had studied the basics and had a true understanding, he would have passed the exam.

Mastering the basics is not a myth, it is approved by the true experts. They think that the key to a true understanding is the continuous and perpetual study of basics.

There is a sample case for the experts' thought. Anthony Plog, who is a virtuoso trumpet player, once gave lessons to the proficient soloists. One day he requested them to play one of the most challenging virtuosic pieces that they practiced before. Of course, all of them played amazingly well.

Right after their performance, soloists were waiting for the corrections of their mistakes or tips to improve their performances. However, Plog wanted them to do something unusual. He asked them to play a beginner's exercise. They played well, but they weren't influential. Normally, they would be expected to play impressively seeing their experience, right?

In response, Plog played that beginner's exercise and showed his students how a "basic" piece was played. His students saw their mistakes and felt embarrassed.

Why did he do that? Because he was aware of the importance of mastering the basics. A soloist should grasp the idea of the basics and give constant attention to it. Otherwise, his / her improvement wouldn't be easy.

Let's turn back to coping with issues. When you have a challenging task, don't try to cope with it unthinkingly. What you need to do first is thinking of the basic elements of the task and deal with them one by one.

In 1969, two American astronauts landed on the moon and became the first humans to walk on the lunar surface. Now, let's consider how the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) handled this momentous mission.

Needless to say, the agency succeeded this goal not by shooting people into space right away. Firstly they sent an unmanned rocket to the moon for discovery. When NASA had enough knowledge — basics — about the place, they sent the spacecraft that first landed humans on the Moon.

Earth: If you want to find the core of a problem, look at the problem and divide it into two: what you can and can't see.

How do winged animals fly? For decades, people looked observed them and came into conclusion that the key for the flying was flapping their wings! But, how do airplanes fly? Do they flap their wings like animals? Of course, no! So, the conclusion of the key for flying was wrong. We frequently think that what is obvious is the answer, but that's not always the case.

To find an explanation for a problem, you need to unearth the core by putting the irrelevant details aside. As we mentioned before, the element of Earth represents the problem's core.

Let's get to the bottom of flying. Planes and the animals don't fly in the same way. People understood that flapping wings was not the answer to flying. That's why they got to the core of the wings by studying the mechanisms of flight more closely. In the end, they got an answer: The unique curve of a wing.

Therefore, to get to the core of a situation or a problem, what we should do is looking at only what we can see. In other words, we should ignore what we might expect to see or have been taught to see.

Unearthing the core of a situation or a problem is not easy, because our expectations affect the vision we have. They make us less inquisitive and we try to find the easy way to solve the problem quickly.

Do you know Aristotle's theory that heavier objects fall faster than lighter objects? People believed that theory for centuries. Then, some inquisitive individuals, who lived in the 1600s, didn't agree with Aristotle by claiming that he was wrong. They made experiments and proved that heavier objects not always fall faster than lighter objects.

To find the core of the problem, you may try looking for what's missing. Then, you'll most likely find what you are looking for.

Look at the old photographs that you have or you could find on the internet. They are in black and white colors. In those times, black and white photos were simply known as

photographs. With the invention of color film, people started to describe them as black and white photos.

At first, they were the only colors present, that's why people agreed to have their photos like that. Then, the color film was invented and people realize that what they know as a photograph, was the black and white version of the real photograph. In other words, with the invention of color films, people's common understanding of photograph changed.

Fire: You need to learn from your failures so that you can develop yourself and be successful.

How do your behaviors change when you have a bad day? Do you get mad or stay calm through the day? Every one of us has bad days in our lives. Even well-known philosophers go through them. The difference between average people and philosophers is that they know how to react to the failures they had. We mostly struggle to handle them.

This is the message: Whenever you make a mistake, observe it thoroughly and get a lesson from that.

Think about your accomplishments in life. You have succeeded because you had learned what to do to be successful. And also, you should get lessons from the mistakes you had. Of course, no one likes making mistakes, as no one likes to get burned. The element Fire shows us the importance of uneasy mistakes: we must accept them to learn things better.

So the procedure goes on like this: after you make a mistake, rather than feeling down and doing nothing, you should understand the mistake you made and examine why it was wrong. The more you understand the layers of the mistake, the more you'll get a lesson from it. Thereby, you'll have better insight into the possible mistakes in the future.

Thomas Edison had understood the core of the Fire element. One day he said that "Genius is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration." What he meant by this sentence is that having a creative idea is easy, however, turning into a reality takes a level of patience and dedication. In other words, his approach was to experiment, observe the mistakes, learn from them and try again.

After he invented the lightbulb, one of his friends asked him: "Isn't it a shame that with the tremendous amount of work you have done, you haven't been able to get any results?"

He answered with a smile: "Results! Why, man, I have gotten lots of results! I know several thousand things that won't work!"

Surely, one failed attempt to a problem could be the perfect solution for another problem. For instance, in 1970 a scientist who works for 3M Laboratories attempted to create a strong adhesive. However, his attempt was a failure: he created a weak adhesive that could be peeled of any surface, leaving no trace. Then, he gave up on his project.

After that project, three years went past and another scientist wanted to create a bookmark that would stay still and wouldn't damage the pages. Do you know what he did? He created the same adhesive that "failed" 3 years ago! That invention made it to one of 3M's most successful and omnipresent products: the Post-it note.

Long story short, before deciding whether your attempt is insufficient or a failure, you should take your time and think about another problem to use your output as a perfect solution.

Fire: Never afraid of failing, otherwise, you won't ever succeed.

Lost of people afraid of failing. They think that as long as they fail, they will never succeed in anything. However, they skip one thing: failing underlies the core of success. These people don't ever try new things just because they scared of failing.

If you want to be creative, you should never let fear stop you. Remember that fear is your first enemy.

What happens when you fail at something? If you observe it, you see your mistakes. Then, you can get a lesson from it and thrive for going beyond yourself. So, why fear? Embrace failing. As the element Fire shows us: we should see the positive in negative to be successful.

Seeing the positive in negative is not always easy. But, you can always learn, right? There are some ways to help you learn how to see in that way.

First of all, you have to make sure that you'll not succeed in the first attempt. You will fail a lot!

No matter what you attempt to create, whether inventing a device or making a sculpture, you will fail at least 10 times! If you give up every time you fail, you will never succeed. Just relax your brain, see your mistakes and don't make them again. This is the plan.

Secondly, solve your problems such that correctness doesn't matter.

Don't care about the correctness of your ideas when you are creating solutions for a problem. They might be right or wrong, it doesn't matter. When you don't care about the rights and wrongs, the number of your ideas increase and they become more clear. You can categorize them later, not while.

Lastly, guess the potential problems, exaggerate them to create mistakes deliberately, then fix them.

When you know the possible problems that you would come across. You can use them in your favor beforehand. The idea is to create extreme problems and fixing them. This technique is used by most of the manufacturers in the world. They use stress tests to measure their products, by doing so, they see the powerful and weak sides of their products.

Moreover, well-known companies work with hackers to attempt to hack their systems, thereby they can see what is missing in their system and create solutions for them.

Consequently, when you are having a hard time on a task, don't let the fear of failing to affect your performance. If you fail, don't give up. Get strength from your failures!

Air: Asking a lot of questions is the key to deeper knowledge.

Did you realize how children ask a lot of questions? They always ask about something, why this and why that. Naturally, we often find those questions annoying. But, they are just very curious individuals that want to learn more. We should change our reactions when they ask questions. Because the more they question, the more they get to the knowledge they need.

How can we change our reactions to their naive questions? As the element Air suggests: asking questions is like a breath of fresh air, it clears the way to deeper knowledge.

Firstly, think of yourself as a teacher. Assume that you understood all the details of a specific subject or the solution to a problem. How would you teach that subject or solution to someone else? Possibly, you would prepare a lecture, gather your thoughts and make it as clear as possible.

While preparing your lecture, you will find yourself considering questions for solidation. Surprisingly, those questions might be the ones that you haven't thought before. And also, you will have to use small details in your lecture to let your student or colleague understand the topic. Likewise, those small details will help you to realize the gaps you have in your information.

When you finish preparing the lecture, create an exam to evaluate what have you prepared. Concerning your lecture subjects, think about the questions you would ask and more importantly, think about the accurate answers you would give.

Secondly, never stop being curious and always have a critical approach.

If you are curious about a subject, ask the essential questions. Don't tire yourself with all the information about that subject. Learn what you need to satisfy your curiosity.

Edward Burger and Michael Starbird -authors of this book- used this approach in their lectures. What they did was that they would randomly choose a student to be the "questioner" who had to ask at least 2 questions during the lecture. Those questions were

totally up to the students, that's why different questions about the same lecture increased gradually.

Years went by with this method and the authors realized that the students that they randomly selected to be the questioners usually understood the subjects better than any other student in the lecture. Why? Because their inquisitive sides were sparked in the lectures and they became more curious about the subjects.

Air: Asking the right questions saves the day.

Two men are walking in the forest when suddenly an angry bear starts to chase them. Both break into a sprint. While they're running, one asks the other if he thinks they can outrun the bear and survive. The other says, "I don't need to outrun the bear. The question is: Can I outrun you?"

This is an example story from the book that shows the importance of asking the right question. The message is: asking the right question, could save you from the bad situation you are in. So, how can someone ask the right question?

First of all, the question should be effective. Also, they should lead to solutions for the problems and new perspectives.

If you vaguely form your question or make it too obvious, it would lead to action, that's why that question would be an ineffective one. The question of "How can I learn a new language?" is one of the most general questions you could ever hear. The answer to this question is too general, therefore it is not an effective one.

To classify a question as effective, it should have enough focusing and clarity. The questions like, "How can I write an application form?" or "How can I manage my classroom?" are effective questions. Because they state what has been focused and they are crystal clear.

And, occasionally being a good questioner necessitates you to question your questions.

For example, think of the last time you were waiting for your turn in the hospital. Most probably, you had a stressful and tiring waiting, possibly in pain. Meanwhile, you mumbled, “I wish there were more doctors in this hospital or more clinics.”

However, your suggestions are not beneficial to anyone. You know why? Because people in the same hospital don't care about your solutions and they probably didn't even listen to any of them. Now, question yourself, did you ask the right question in the first place?

It begins with accepting that you are stuck in the hospital. For instance, in this case, you could say “If I'm stuck in this hospital, how can I use my time here effectively?” Or you could say, “Instead of expostulating about the situation, why don't I do something useful for me?” See, you can formulate better questions by questioning your original question.

Another example of the right question is the one that has a philosophical view in it. For example, in the hospital scenario, you could say: “What is the reason for me being here?” If you question yourself before doing something, you can find what you could gain from it.

Water: Ideas have their backgrounds, they don't just come out of nowhere.

Do you remember the light bulb metaphor in cartoons? The character thinks of an idea and when he finds, suddenly we see a switched on the light bulb over his head. It is a well-known metaphor, however, it is not like that in real life.

The reason why is that because every idea has a background. They don't just come out of nowhere. They are already in the person's brain as information pieces. As the element Water, ideas flow too, from the past to the present.

For instance, in the seventeenth century, Isaac Newton and Gottfried von Leibniz formulated calculus, which is a crucial branch of mathematics, independently. Leibniz is known as the Father of Calculus. However, with a little research on the history, it appears that all the essential parts of calculus had been formulated by other mathematicians.

Long story short, Newton and Leibniz took a crucial step forward in mathematics, thanks to the ideas that had been put forward.

Of course, the story of calculus didn't end there. After Leibniz published their 6 pages long theory, hundreds of mathematicians added their ideas into the calculus. Now, there are more than 1,300 pages of documents on calculus. Who knows, maybe soon, that number goes higher with the help of the new generations of mathematicians.

So what do we get from here about our ideas?

When you need to develop an idea, think about your past and get help from there. Tons of ideas are waiting for you to discover and mix it up with your idea. All the thinkers' brains work like this. Past experiences trigger new ideas, don't forget this and develop your ideas accordingly.

After learning to do that, you'll realize that the light bulb metaphor is not accurate. When you accept this, you'll get to your goals sooner than you know. Just let your thoughts flow like the water.

Water: Create new ideas and solutions. Not only it will end problems, but also it will become a source for the new solutions.

American mathematician R. H. Bing says: "The time to work on a problem is after you have solved it." The point he tries to make is that you should always create new ideas when you finding a solution for a problem doesn't necessarily mean that the work is done. You need to keep on thinking about how to develop.

When we look into the lives of great thinkers, we see that they had always come up with new ideas in their time. They never stop thinking and producing. The result is obvious.

Let's think about one of the greatest inventions of Einstein's: light bulb. The purpose of the light bulb was to lighten the darkroom in the first place. However, that invention paves the way for much bigger projects like television, electric heater and even the computer.

The light bulb was not only a solution to one problem. It became one of the inspirational inventions that helped people to put forward new ideas.

As the element Water suggests: Let your ideas flow and never build a dam before your ideas. It would only make you less creative. Use every idea you come up with as a new source of creating other ideas. One leads to another, and in the end, you will have lots of ideas waiting for you to take action.

No idea doesn't lead to another idea, all of them do. So, the question arises: "Do you know how to find those new ideas?" The answer is asking another question to yourself, and that is: "What's next?" This question means that you are ready to take the next challenge. Let's see how you do it.

If you are brave enough to change your lifestyle, you can easily implement the four elements of thinking in your life.

Are you happy with your life right now? If not, then why don't you change your lifestyle? In the earlier chapters, you learned what you can do, so change the way you live!

First of all, you need to be truly eager to change your lifestyle. Generally, people think that it is too difficult to handle. That's why, they choose to stay the same, hoping that everything will be okay sooner or later.

However, that's not always the solution. If you want to be happy in your life, then there are some things that you need to change. It seems scary, but it's not. You learned all the elements of effective thinking with this summary. Therefore, you have nothing to scare of.

Of course, there are risks. But, you need to take those risk for the sake of your happiness!

Also, you need to aware of the fact that it's not a one time change, it is constant. If you want to improve yourself, you need it all the time.

It is pretty much same with renovating a place. It's not a one-time thing, everything happens in order. At the first change, lots of people will see the change, but it's not enough. You need to keep those changes.

When you think that you've finished the change, don't stop! Go back to the first thing that you changed. Make sure that it is still there, safe and sound. Then check the other things in order.

You have learned the 5 elements that will help you in this way. The Earth will center your ideas. The Fire will boost your confidence. Air will give you pure thoughts. Water will help your ideas flow from one to another. The change will lead you to success.

The 5 Elements of Effective Thinking by Edward B. Burger, Michael Starbird Book Review

The difference between extraordinary people and ordinary people is the way of their thinking. Extraordinary people use effective thinking methods which are proven to be working. Now that you learned those methods, you might be the next extraordinary person.

Don't get afraid of making mistakes, do it on purpose and get a lesson from it.

When you have a problem and don't know what to do, don't let your fear stop you from what you need to do. Take the risk, if you are meant to fail, fail. But then, you need to learn from your mistakes.

Know your weaknesses so you can test yourself.

To measure how much you know about something, write down whatever you know about it on a blank sheet of paper. Then, check what you wrote with an authentic source. By doing that, you'll realize your weaknesses. You should work on them until you can't find any mistake in your paper. This is the key to get rid of your weaknesses.

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