

Isn't it likely that you're a logical person? You're obviously also quite adept at evaluating your own talents. Regrettably, this is quite improbable! But really don't worry, you're not alone: we're all considerably less reasonable and far more irrational in our decision-making than we think we are.

Whether we like it or not, our brains are a jumble of shortcuts and guidelines that enabled our forefathers to avoid being eaten by lions and live long enough to pass on these qualities to future generations.

These shortcuts, however, now lead to a slew of misconceptions and prejudices that harm us more than they assist us.

The following chapters will describe some of the most common pitfalls you're likely to fall into on a daily basis, as well as provide you advice on how to avoid them and start thinking clearly.

You'll discover why, if you're hoping to strike it rich, you should never bring your most attractive pal to a nightclub.

You'll also learn why 84 percent of Frenchmen mistakenly feel they are above-average lovers, and how a little sunshine (or lack thereof) may cause stock market booms and busts.

Finally, you'll discover that you shouldn't rely on yourself to detect a gorilla, even if one is right in front of you!

## Chapter 1 - In many aspects of life, we often overestimate our talents.

Do you believe you have a good understanding of your abilities? So, although some may be deluded into exaggerating their skills, you don't? If that's the case, you're not alone: we all have a tendency to see ourselves through rose-colored glasses.

We are overconfident in many areas of life, according to research.

According to surveys, 84 percent of Frenchmen believe they are better lovers than the norm. In actuality, only half of the people may be called "above average," because statistically, half of the people should be higher and the other half should be lower.

Likewise, %93 of US students rated themselves as "above-average" drivers, while %68 of University of Nebraska teachers rated themselves in the highest quartile for teaching skills.

These figures demonstrate that the majority of us place a larger value on our talents than they are.

Not just that, but we often make the error of blaming our triumphs on our own talents while blaming our failures on other circumstances.

Experts even put this to the test by giving a group of people a personality test and then giving them random ratings. When the respondents were later questioned, it was discovered that those who had “good” scores thought the test results accurately reflected their real skills, allowing them to appraise their outstanding personalities.

Those who obtained “bad” results, on the other hand, believed the evaluations were meaningless and that the test itself, rather than their personality, was flawed.

Have you ever had something similar happen to you? You most likely felt accountable for your achievement if you scored an A on a high school exam, for example. If you failed, you probably assumed it wasn't your mistake, that the exam was unfair, or that some other factor contributed to your failure.

As a result, you should be mindful of our proclivity for exaggerating our knowledge and blaming our accomplishments on our own abilities. Invite an honest buddy out for coffee and ask for their honest assessment of your strengths and flaws as a method to overcome this.

## Chapter 2 - In life, we have far less control and predictability than we assume.

Have you ever wondered why gamblers throw their dice harder when they desire a high number and more gently when they need a low amount to win big?

Such gamblers are victims of the illusion of control, which is the notion that we can affect things that we can't.

There's optimism in the illusion of control: if you feel you have some degree of influence over your circumstances, you'll be better equipped to deal with life's challenges.

This was proven in a study when participants were placed in booths to assess their pain acoustic sensitivity. Surprisingly, if the booth included a red "panic" button, they could endure considerably greater noise.

The pushbutton, on the other hand, served no use. Respondents were merely under the impression that they were in charge of the circumstance, allowing them to withstand more discomfort.

For instance, those buttons you touch at a crowded crossroads crosswalk? Most merely offer us the impression that we have some control over our circumstances, making it easier to wait for the lights to change.

The same may be said about certain elevator "door open" and "door close" buttons, which are frequently not even linked to the electrical system!

In addition to having far less impact than we believe, we are also overconfident in our capacity to foresee the future.

Take this ten-year research, which looked at 28,361 forecasts from 284 self-described experts in a variety of areas, including economics. These "professional" forecasts were just slightly better than random forecast generator estimates.

It's thus in your best interests to be skeptical of predictions and to concentrate your efforts on a few key issues that you can actually affect.

## Chapter 3 - We have a tendency to do what the group does, and we'll comply to avoid being ostracized.

It's fairly unusual for someone in the crowd to suddenly break into applause after a particularly gripping performance by a soloist at a concert. Immediately, everyone – including you – joins in the chant. But why is that?

This is due to a phenomenon known as social proof, which helps us believe our actions are correct when they mirror those of others.

In reality, social proof is embedded in our ancestors' DNA, since they mimicked others' actions to guarantee their own survival.

Consider what would happen if you were going with your hunter-gatherer buddies and they all started sprinting at the same time. If you opt to act alone by staying there and wondering if the object looking at you is truly a lion, you'll wind up as lion food and will thus be ejected from the gene pool.

You'll have a higher chance to survive one more day if you stick with your gang without a doubt. Following others was an effective survival technique for our forefathers, and it is still firmly ingrained in us now.

Because of the "herd instinct," the more individuals who subscribe to a certain viewpoint, the more valuable that belief appears to be. This may be seen in anything from fashion and diets to stock market panic and mass suicides.

Furthermore, in order to be a part of the group, we not only do what the group does, but we also alter our minds.

Groupthink is the term for this type of social proof. At work, you can see it when people hold their tongues because they don't want to be the ones to bring out faults in the widely accepted logic and cause division in the group.

When Swissair went out of business, it was a great illustration of how to do this: the company had created such a strong consensus about its success that it repressed even logical doubts, and as a result, they failed to see the warning signals of impending financial peril, which eventually resulted in their death.

## Chapter 4 - We interpret information based on our preconceived notions of who we are and what we believe.

Do you consider yourself an excellent character judge, whose early impressions of individuals typically show to be correct later on? Many individuals believe this about themselves, yet it's more than probable that they're victims of confirmation bias.

Confirmation bias is something we're all prone to, which means we prefer to perceive new information in a way that reinforces our prior beliefs. It's so prevalent that it's been dubbed "the mother of all misunderstandings."

For instance, when we utilize our favorite news sites and blogs to analyze current events, we may be exhibiting confirmation bias by forgetting that our favorite sites reflect our own beliefs.

We eventually discover groups of like-minded people as a result of this, further solidifying our beliefs.

Furthermore, confirmation bias leads us to absorb external information about ourselves that confirms our current self-image while filtering out everything else.

People believe in pseudosciences like astrology and tarot-card reading because of this bias: we can't help but find the numerous applicability to our own lives in their universal explanations.

To investigate this phenomenon, psychologist Bertram Forer created fictitious personality evaluations from a jumble of astrological columns from various publications, which he then distributed to his pupils as unique, individualized assessments. The students were then asked to assess these "personalized" descriptions, and they found them to be 86 percent correct on average!

The Forer effect was named after this study, which showed that we perceive information in ways that match our pre-existing self-image.

In light of the fact that we are impacted by our confirmation bias unwittingly, we should instead seek out opposing viewpoints and facts in order to arrive at more balanced judgments.

## Chapter 5 - We value things depending on their availability and how they compare to others.

Have you ever gone to a bar with a much more gorgeous buddy in the hopes of meeting someone but ended up spending the entire evening alone? What is the reason behind this? Simply put, your acquaintance makes you appear less beautiful than you really are.

We are not particularly adept at making absolute judgments, so we depend on comparisons instead.

The traditional experiment with simply two buckets of water, one filled with lukewarm water and the other with icy water, exemplifies this. If you put one hand in cold water first and then both hands in lukewarm water, the lukewarm water will feel tremendously hot to the hand that was in the frozen water.

This is the contrast effect in action, and it's the reason you look considerably less gorgeous than you really are when standing next to your really attractive buddy.

It's because of this contrast-effect that discounts are so effective in the commercial world. For instance, we consider a product that has been lowered from \$100 to \$70 to be of greater value than one that has always cost \$70, despite the fact that the beginning price has no bearing on the real worth of the product.

Another example of how we overestimate something's worth is when we feel scarcity.

In one experiment utilizing cookies, this tendency was confirmed. In the experiment, participants were split into two groups: one received a full box of cookies, while the other received only two cookies.

They then gave the cookies a rating. The respondents who had only got two gave them a considerably higher rating than the other group.

As a result, companies use scarcity language like "today only" or "just while supplies last" to entice customers to buy their products.

Fortunately, we may avoid these comparison and scarcity biases by evaluating something's worth purely on the basis of its costs and benefits. You'll be able to make far better decisions as a result.

## Chapter 6 - We're drawn to the intriguing, whether it's captivating stories or unusual answers.

Do you have problems recalling the five items on your grocery list that you made just 10 minutes ago, yet have no issue recalling the complex intricacies of the storyline of the movie you saw last week?

This is due to the fact that we require the knowledge to build meaningful tales before it makes sense to us; on the other hand, abstract details repel us.

We see this phenomenon replicated in the media, as critical facts are pushed aside in favor of entertaining stories.

For instance, if a car crashes into a bridge that suddenly falls, we'll almost certainly hear far more about the unfortunate driver than about the bridge's shoddy design. Theoretical information on how the disaster may have been avoided attracts fewer readers than juicy data about the individual, and media outlets reflect this in their reportage.

Furthermore, we enjoy reading unusual – and hence thrilling – stories. In fact, even if ordinary explanations are more likely, we are considerably more prone to trust unusual explanations.

Consider the following headline: “A young guy is fatally injured after being stabbed.”

If the assailant is armed with a battle knife, do you think it will be a white working-class American or a Russian immigrant?

Although most people believe it was a Russian smuggler, there are a million times more middle-class Americans than there are Russian knife smugglers. As a result, the odds of the culprit being an American are far greater. Sadly, we are so drawn to appealing descriptions that we frequently ignore more plausible answers.

In the medical sector, this type of thinking mistake may be deadly. As a result, doctors are instructed not to be fooled into thinking that symptoms are caused by some exotic disease, but rather to look into the most common causes first.

They live by the slogan, "Don't anticipate a zebra when you hear hoofbeats." Even though a zebra is considerably more interesting than a horse.

## Chapter 7 - We have an extremely selective and restricted attention span.

You'd notice if anything odd happened right in front of your eyes, like a gorilla roaming about, right? In reality, if you were concentrating on something else, you probably wouldn't.

It shows that humans have a pretty limited focus and overlook everything that happens outside of it.

Imagine a Harvard research that proved this illusion of attention: participants were instructed to count how many times the players in white T-shirts passed the ball while watching a video of students passing basketballs back and forth. At the conclusion, the participants were asked whether anything unexpected had piqued their interest.

Half of the audience shook their heads, completely oblivious to the fact that in the middle of the movie, a gorilla dressed in a suit strolled into the room, hammered his chest, and then vanished.

This is why we should never talk on the phone while driving. According to studies, drivers' attention spans are too stretched to react to danger - just as sluggish as when they are impaired by drink or drugs.

Furthermore, what we focus on is impacted by external factors: when given a continuous stream of information, we pay considerably greater attention to the information that comes first or last, ignoring everything in between.

Take the following scenario: If you were locked in an elevator with someone, who would you prefer to be with? Allan, who is intelligent, ambitious, attractive, critical, and envious? Or Ben, who is envious, critical, attractive, ambitious, and intelligent?

The majority of individuals choose Allan. We are deceived by the primacy effect, which drives us to focus on early impressions, which subsequently affect our overall evaluations, despite the fact that the descriptions are similar.

The retroactive interference, on the other hand, governs our attention when our impressions are formed in the past: the more recently we got the information, the better we recall it.

If you listened to a lecture a few weeks ago, for example, you'll recall the last point better than the first impression or the stuff in between.

## Chapter 8 - Making decisions can be difficult, especially when there are several options.

In today's society, we have a plethora of product and lifestyle options. Whether you're looking for the greatest wine or the best institution, you're surrounded by choices. For most people, managing this cornucopia is tough, if not impossible.

However, having big choices makes it difficult to make a decision, therefore we often give up.

This dilemma of choice was put to the test at one market, where researchers set up a booth with several jelly samples for consumers to try before purchasing at a discounted price.

The test lasted two days, with 24 different types of jelly on day one and only six on day two.

The results indicated that on day two, they sold 10 times more jelly, showing that having too many options made it difficult for customers to make a decision, and they consequently chose not to buy anything.

The stress of being presented with an enormous range of possible mates drives the male brain to limit the selection to a single criterion: physical beauty, according to a similar study on decisions made while choosing out potential partners on online dating sites.

Moreover, research has revealed that making decisions can be tiring, leading to decision fatigue.

One psychologist put this to the test by giving two sets of people the same objects and asking them to choose which one they liked, while the other group just wrote down their thoughts about the items.

After that, they soaked their hand in icy water for as long as possible. The first group was able to keep their hand immersed in the water for far less time than the second, showing that their willpower had been depleted by the rigorous decision-making.

To avoid falling into these decision-making traps, recognize that achieving the "perfect option" is unachievable, and instead learn to enjoy a "good" choice rather than aiming for the "best."

## Chapter 9 - If someone is beautiful, flattering, or reminds us of ourselves, we like them.

On a daily basis, how many gorgeous, smiling faces do you see splashed on billboards? Companies are well aware that we are all vulnerable to attractiveness and charm.

In reality, a single feature – whether it is attractiveness, social position, age, or any other – generates a favorable or bad impression in us that outweighs all others. The halo effect is the name for this phenomenon.

Beauty has been researched more thoroughly than any of these competitive traits in terms of its disproportionate impact on how we perceive others. We instinctively view good-looking people as more nice, honest, and clever, according to a scientific agreement.

This impact has been observed in both schools and workplaces: beautiful individuals have an easier time in their jobs, while instructors instinctively give good-looking pupils higher grades.



Whereas the halo effect is beneficial to advertising, it may also lead to stereotyping when a country, gender, or ethnicity becomes our primary emphasis. This isn't only a problem for racists and sexists; we all utilize clearly recognizable data to build our judgments.

For instance, if your company's new CEO is a beautiful woman, you could instantly use this knowledge to judge how she obtained the position without considering other considerations. You could believe that her good looks, rather than her excellent education and leadership experience, got her the job.

Furthermore, we are prone to the liking bias, which is defined as individuals who are similar to us and who like us.

One reason salesmen flatter potential consumers is because of this. We are significantly more likely to desire to buy from someone who gives us comments like "you look fantastic in that outfit!" since they make us feel loved and pleased.

Another method used by salesmen is "mirroring," or mimicking the client's actions, facial expressions, and words. This helps the seller seem more like the customer, making him more personable and likely to seal the transaction.

## Chapter 10 - Our emotions influence our decisions more than we realize.

Do you think of yourself as a logical decision-maker? Conduct this activity and see what you come up with: determine right now whether or not you support genetically modified foods.

What factors influenced your decision? A more reasonable method would be to weigh both the benefits and drawbacks of genetically engineered foods separately: first, rank each "positive" in terms of significance, then multiply each by the likelihood that those benefits will be realized. Then repeat the process with each "con."

Hooray! Your response is the total of the advantages minus the disadvantages: if the value is more than zero, there are more advantages, and therefore you support genetically modified foods.

However, if you're like most individuals, you don't have the time or energy to do such a thorough analysis. To put it another way, humans don't make ultra-rational decisions!

Our decisions, on the other hand, are rarely reasonable or well-considered; instead, we rely on mental shortcuts driven by our emotions to make judgments.

When we hear the words "genetically modified," for example, we may have favorable or negative emotional reactions, which influence how we evaluate the concept's dangers and

advantages. So, if you think the notion is terrible, you'll probably overestimate the dangers (e.g., environmental concerns) and underestimate the advantages (e.g., pest resistance).

As a result, we are confined to making judgments based on what comes to mind initially. We are also prohibited from making rational decisions as puppets to our sentiments, which can be troublesome in sectors where reason is highly prized.

Emotions have an impact on the markets, too. A recent study revealed that the quantity of morning light affected daily market performance in 26 major stock exchanges: when the sun shined first thing, the stock market climbed all day, showing that good emotions sparked by sunshine caused billions of dollars worth of money to move around the globe.

## The Art of Thinking Clearly by Rolf Dobelli Book Review

We believe we are better than we are, and we naturally seek information that validates our preconceived notions. We also favor exotic, gorgeous individuals and a limited number of items over a big number of options. We just observe a small portion of what is in front of us and are unable to make definitive judgments. And our choices are influenced by our emotions as well as the behavior of others around us.

### **Obtain an objective opinion about yourself.**

You, like everyone else, exaggerate your skills, whether you like it or not. Asking a friend (or, better yet, an adversary) over for coffee and asking for their honest assessment of your strengths and flaws is an excellent method to fight this inclination.

### **Don't let "limited time only" fool you.**

These sales tactics make use of your natural desire to value goods higher when their availability diminishes. Alternatively, remind yourself that, in this day and age, you can find almost anything on the internet. This will allow you to concentrate on the product's genuine advantages rather than the risk that it would vanish forever.

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