

THINKING FOR YOURSELF

Quick Reference Guide

What Thinking for Yourself *IS* and *IS NOT*

- It's making conscious decisions about what you learn and believe.
- It's setting aside fears, prejudice, bias, social pressure, and disregarding authority, as appropriate.
- You DON'T entirely dismiss everything that anyone else says, however.

Why Think for Yourself?

- You will feel a lot more confident and communicate more clearly.
- You will be able to focus on your goals and achieve more in life personally and professionally.
- You will be able to be more assertive.
- It makes you more attractive to other people.

Avoid Social Proof

- Social Proof is a fallacy. You must minimize its influence on your beliefs and decision making.
- According to Wikipedia.org, it's a psychological phenomenon where people assume the actions of others in an attempt to reflect correct behavior for a given situation.
- Be very skeptical of people, marketers or politicians who refer to the number of people who appear to support their positions. It's possible that thousands or millions of people can be wrong. You should rely on facts and evidence, and perhaps your own intuition, to determine what's trustworthy or not.
- Many Internet and social media sites manipulate social proof to make you think a lot of other people are already doing the thing that the sites want to get you to do. Ratings are inflated, fake accounts are set up, people are paid for favorable product reviews, etc. You should always be very suspicious of deceptive Online influences.

Reduce Fear's Influence

- Fear is another threat to effectively thinking for yourself. When you sense a real or imaginary threat, things happen on a neurological and biochemical level in your body to shut down your rational thinking process. This primordial effect is often referred to as your "lizard brain."
- Many people like reporters, politicians, and activists of one opinion or another try to make you afraid, in an effort to manipulate you.
- A major step in learning to think more independently is to recognize when fear is hijacking your thought process. Simply learning to recognize this is the most important part of resisting it.
- You should be deeply suspicious of any organization or movement that relies primarily on fear to promote their agendas.
- You should list what fears are keeping you from thinking for yourself and then determine what you can do to dismiss those fears.

Identify & Resist Persuasion

- As you work to become a more independent thinker, you need to learn to recognize and resist forms of persuasion people may attempt to use on you.
- One of the most important strategies to take, when learning to resist persuasion, is by simply recognizing manipulative tricks when someone tries to use them on you.
- Some of the persuasive techniques people may use on you include creating a sense of urgency or scarcity, trying to overcome your objections, and manipulating your desire to be consistent.
- When you realize they're trying to persuade you, an effective way to disarm the tactic is to simply call them on it. For example, ask them if they are trying to make you think you're going to miss out on the opportunity if you don't decide to do it now. Ask them if they were trained to make someone afraid of missing out in order to get them to buy or commit to what they're asking.

Question to Increase Your Independence

- To learn to think for yourself you must learn to ask effective, even life-changing questions.
- There's no better way to start improving your ability to think for yourself than by asking more questions; more effective questions, the types of questions that most people are too afraid or too lazy to ask.
- The best questions to ask begin with why, how, and what because they usually require more explanation to answer them (open-ended questions).
- Although asking questions temporarily reveals our ignorance to others, or forces us to admit it to ourselves, it's an essential habit we need to develop for success in the long run.
- Asking effective questions can reveal the bias and motivation of other people and protect you from being brainwashed by their thinking and their agendas.
- Distrust anyone who suggests that you ask too many questions!

THINKING FOR YOURSELF-EXERCISES

Why Think for Yourself?



1. What are some of the most significant achievements in the world, and how did they come from people who thought for themselves? I mentioned Albert Einstein, Joan of Arc, Rosa Parks, and Steve Jobs as just a few examples. Who else can you think of that made major changes in the world because he or she was an independent thinker?

2. Next, list some personal benefits you can get from improving your ability to think for yourself. We already listed more self-confidence, a better ability to solve problems, and distinguishing yourself from the crowd as another. I also mentioned the ability to resist persuasion. As you become a more independent thinker, how will your life and career improve? Write down your thoughts.

3. Finally, in order to communicate how important it is to learn to think for yourself, list some of the **consequences** you will face if you **do not** become an independent thinker. What will happen to your hopes and dreams if you only listen to what everyone else tells you to do? What will happen to you if you care too much for what others might think?

THINKING FOR YOURSELF-EXERCISES

Avoiding “Social Proof”

1. Identify how social proof may be adversely affecting your beliefs and decisions, then identify steps you should take to reduce those influences.

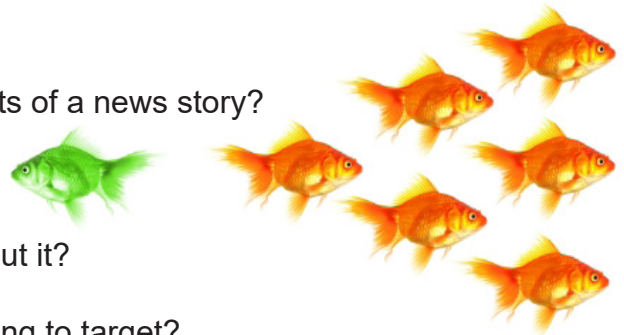
<i>Sources of “Social Proof” which may be damaging your life or professional opportunities:</i>	<i>How you can eliminate or reduce those influences:</i>

2. Look up a book you would like to buy on Amazon.com (even if you don’t have the money for it). Now, scroll down through and read the reviews for that book. Answer these questions:

- Are these reviews legitimate?
- Were the reviewers people who actually purchased the book?
- Do any of these reviews look like they came from people the publisher hired to leave favorable reviews?
- Are there reviews that appear to be from people who didn’t even read the book, but are just criticizing it to get attention or kill the author’s hopes of having a bestseller?

3. Go to a news website you don’t normally visit. Answer these questions:

- Is it obvious that this news site leans one way or the other politically?
- What do they want you to believe?
- Do any of the headlines try to bias you and twist the facts of a news story?
- Can you tell what the publisher’s agenda is?
- What do the types of advertisers on the site tell you about it?
- How would you characterize the audience the site is trying to target?



THINKING FOR YOURSELF-EXERCISES

Reduce Fear's Influence



1. First, list what fears are keeping you from thinking for yourself and then, determine what you can do to dismiss those fears.

<i>List some fears which may be preventing you from thinking for yourself:</i>	<i>List some ideas of how you can eliminate those fears to become a more independent thinker:</i>

2. Next answer these questions...

- What people/organizations try to make you afraid and surrender your independent thinking?

- How can you keep those other people and organizations from making you afraid (in an attempt to control your thinking)?

3. Finally, visit a few news sites and identify headlines of articles which try to activate fear. Then read through the articles themselves and see if the facts of the story are really as bad as the headlines make them appear.

THINKING FOR YOURSELF-EXERCISES

Identify & Resist Persuasion

1. What types of persuasion have other people tried to use on you recently? How did it make you feel? What were the results of their persuasive attempts? Knowing what you know now, about persuasion, would you have reacted differently that you did? Why or why not?

2. Watch commercial TV for a few hours, but instead of trying to avoid commercials, pay special attention to them. What is each commercial trying to get you to do? What problems are they claiming to solve? What persuasive approaches are they using to get you to act in some way?

3. What do you plan to do to keep other people's persuasive attempts from influencing your thoughts and beliefs?



THINKING FOR YOURSELF-EXERCISES

Independence Through Questions

1. Rebel *with* a Cause! Think of (and write down) 10 questions, which, if you could find the answers to, might change the world for the better:

1 -
2 -
3 -
4 -
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6 -
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9 -
10 -

2. Agitating! Assume you could ask a political, business, or religious leader 5 questions that he or she had to answer truthfully. Who would that person be and what would you ask him or her?

3. Your Own Work and Income Situation. What questions could you ask (and find answers to) that would improve your job or business opportunities? Think of as many questions as you can, and write them down. The more effective questions you ask about your current job or business situation, the more likely you'll be to find a path to better work and income. A few examples are provided to help start you off:

- Why am I not making as much income as I want?
- How can I make more money?
- What type of job would I enjoy?
- How can I learn the skills required for a higher paying job?
- What would I need to do to start my own business?
- Which businesses are doing well these days?

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