



# Conscious Spiritual Thinking

Living and thinking  
in the present moment.

Dennis J. Heindl

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# Introduction

*The biggest problem facing the world today is not ... pollution, war, poverty or climate change ... but inadequate thinking.*

Edward de Bono

## Handbook Purpose

Our world is getting interconnected faster, and technology is helping to produce change more quickly than civilization's ability to understand and guide its development. We are witnessing long standing practices crumble in the wake of world-wide change.

To better deal with change, we try harder and harder to make traditional *routine* problem solving and scientific ways of thinking work, with progressively poorer results. It can be a real shock when we start to realize just how automatic our lives and thinking are ... and how the lack of the right thinking skills is increasingly putting our world at risk.

The challenge we face as individuals, organizations and society is to improve our "*Conscious Spiritual Thinking*" abilities. Today, most of us spend more time *thinking* about keeping our car running well, dressing well or playing sports well ... than the time we spend self examining if we are *thinking well*.

## Spirituality Defined

The word spirituality has many different meanings, so some definition is in order. Searching the internet found over 15 million hits on the term "Religious Spirituality." The next most was 2 million hits for "Mystical Spirituality." These terms were commonly defined to be:

Religious spirituality is defined as: "An honored scriptural path for knowing God and for guiding human thinking and actions."

- Mystical spirituality is defined as: “The pursuit of truth and communion with God (Higher Being) through an understanding that transcends normal human consciousness and thinking.”

### **Conscious “Real Life” Spirituality Defined**

In addition to the above, Google found terms like: Integral spirituality, Practical spirituality, Evolutionary spirituality and Effective spirituality. In general, these terms were similarly defined as: “Taking notice of real world realities by living in-the-moment and then applying intentional thinking for the good of humankind.”

For this handbook, the term *Conscious Spiritual Thinking* best encompassed all the above “real life” spirituality terms.

Note: While this handbook is about conscious spiritual thinking, the ideal is for everyone to think in all ways Spiritual. See Appendix for a more detailed description of Religious and Mystical Spiritual thinking.

### **Conscious Spiritual Thinking Synopsis**

Conscious spiritual thinking is based on the principle of connectedness, the defining feature and organizing principle of the universe. It guides our thinking within each of the following three levels of conscious spirituality.

1. **Awareness:** Connect to our own inner wisdom and use our personal talents to their fullest.
2. **Oneness:** Connect to the wisdom of others to blend talents and create a sum greater than the individual parts.
3. **Wholeness:** Connect to the wisdom of systems that enables comprehensive understanding and the application of shared talents for the betterment of humankind.

### **Learning and the limitation of human memory**

While this handbook could have been a 500-page monster ... that old traditional way of publishing information no longer works very well.

The reality is, and studies have shown, the average person only remembers 2-4% of what they read or have been taught! Reading any kind of book, including this one, is not a very productive way to learn anything. *So, what's the solution?*

### **Conscious spiritual thinking software**

Instead of relying on human memory, today's new facilitated thinking software technology functions as if you were being directly guided by a human teacher, expert consultant, or spiritual leader.

The software empowers you with the right questions to ask and tools to use, called thinklets. On demand it helps you think through change and make the best intentional actions.

See Part 4 for a complete description.

## **Part 1: What is Conscious Spiritual Thinking?**

Conscious Spiritual Thinking addresses our innate sense of connectedness that urges building relationships and growing through collaborative behavior. Its purpose is to guide actions and behavior through a real world consciousness with ourselves, others and God.

It focuses on three real life spiritual thinking abilities that provide an "Us" or "Connectedness" way of thinking. This leads to win/win, and/both, and us/together actions. It contrasts to current egocentric "I" thinking that leads to win/lose, either/or, and us-versus-them actions.

### Real Life Spiritual Thinking Abilities

- **Awareness:** Connecting to our own inner wisdom.
- **Oneness:** Connecting to the wisdom of others.
- **Wholeness:** Connecting to the wisdom of systems.

Note: While this handbook focuses on an “us” way of thinking, it does not mean “*groupthink*.” Conscious spiritual thinking primarily focuses on each one of us taking responsibility for our own actions and using our talents to their fullest.

## **Awareness: Connect to inner wisdom**

*What is this?* Most people do not consciously acknowledge the majority of their thoughts. We do unconscious “scripted” thinking that limits us. When we fail to consciously choose our thoughts, we allow others to mold our lives by literally accepting their beliefs before our own ... it’s the easy way of thinking. However, when you become self aware and connect to your inner self, you ensure using your own best thinking in every possible situation.

*How does it work?* Spiritual thinking starts with making an intentional decision to become self aware of: “How am I thinking while I am in the process of thinking.” To make this happen, develop your self-awareness skills through tools like Mindfulness, Flow, and Contemplation. See page 13 for a descriptions.

*Example: Symphony orchestra analogy of awareness:* Becoming a symphony musician starts with a egocentric desire to become a great musician. This healthy and good type of ego leads individuals to take lessons and practice-practice-practice to become the best musician possible.

But, while a person may acquire all the technical skills of music, becoming a symphony musician requires an inner knowing of music that transcends technical competency. It is our inner wisdom, free of logic obstructions, that creates a certain “flow” of music ... much like being in a sports “zone”.

## **Oneness: Connect to wisdom of others**

*What is this?* Connectedness to others means that teams, groups, organizations and entire communities can think and act as one living system. It means leveraging collective knowledge, ideas, and wisdom to produce results that could not be achieved by any one person alone.

*How does it work?* Connectedness to others is about collaboration. It works by developing purposeful relationships in which all parties choose to cooperate to accomplish a shared outcome.

It means using the power of the internet and social networks to facilitate people to self organize in positive ways. It means creating trust to build relationships. It means acquiring skills like questioning and collaboration as described on page 15.

*Example: Symphony orchestra analogy of oneness:* While each musician brings their unique musical gifts, the orchestra goal is to create **oneness** (e.g. every violinist blends their music to sound like one instrument). Symphony musicians must now lose their egocentric self and harmonize with their section. Anyone who plays like a soloist (unless asked to do so) will not be a symphony musician for long.

## **Wholeness: Connect to wisdom of systems**

*What is this?* This is about Big Picture thinking. It's about making the next leap in consciousness to holistic "systems" thinking ...to seeing whole patterns. In contrast to egocentric linear thinking, this kind of god like viewpoint sees everything as interconnected and interdependent.

*How does this work?* When you understand the complexity of a situation, you are better able to think and act in ways that produce desired results without causing harmful side effects.

Using systems and futures thinking tools in a spiritual way avoids creating a solution in one area that causes a problem in another. Work to acquire the skills of Holistic Seeing, Futures Thinking and Synthesis as described on page 16.

*Example - Symphony orchestra analogy of wholeness:* The Symphony conductor brings a **wholeness** and balance to the orchestra. The visionary conductor brings together a complex composition ... with a diverse group of instruments ... among unique musicians ... to produce an even more beautiful symphonic sound.

## Part 2: Need for Conscious Spiritual Thinking

Right about now you may be asking yourself:  
"Why do I need to know this? I never needed to before. Why now?"

### Change-adept thinkers wanted

Over 2500 years ago, the Greek philosopher Heraclitus said:  
**"Change ... is the only constant."**

So why after 25 centuries aren't we as individuals, organizations and even societies better prepared to adapt to change? Why is there a need to even talk about it? What is the real problem here?

The answer is quite simple. Until recently the human condition changed so slowly that we could use egocentric, problem solving and scientific thinking to successfully deal with change as it occurred. BUT NO LONGER ... and here's why.



### **Information: The raw material of “Change”**

The major driver of change is information.

- The faster information becomes available.
- The faster people get information into their minds.
- The faster information gets analyzed and recombined.
- The faster people create new ideas and more information.
- The faster change occurs.

The evolution of information can be directly related to these three workforce eras in civilization.

1. **Farming workforce era:** 5,000 years ago the plow was invented. But because information was shared by word of mouth, it took 1,000 yrs for it to circle the globe and benefit all mankind. In this era, change was virtually non-existent.
2. **Industrial workforce era:** 500 yrs ago the printing press was invented. Information became much more readily available and led to the industrial-age. But change was still slow enough that society could adapt to change as it occurred.
3. **Knowledge era:** 30 yrs ago the internet was invented and marked the third time that humankind has faced a dramatic workforce change. We all know how fast information can get into people’s minds today. The result is we have now entered an era of hyper-change

### **Era of Hyper-change has started**

Our earth is now home to about 7 billion people. The internet and social networking technologies are enabling billions of people to collaborate and develop “team” breakthroughs and changes.

Futurist Ray Kurzweil says: Compared to the past 100 years, change over the next 100 years will be 1,000 times greater. *So if you think change has been fast ... you haven’t seen anything yet.*

**But wait ... Most of us Hate Change**

Most people like to hang on to the past and the predictability of routine. We get entrenched in certain ways of doing things ... and don't like change.

**Personal change:** For many of us, change is a chilling thought. Change represents breaking habits and lifestyle routines, losing predictability and control, as well as the potential loss of work skills and knowledge.

**Organizational change:** Change for most organizations is even more difficult. Organizations by their nature are not predisposed to change. In fact, a primary purpose of organizational structures is to produce predictable behaviors and results ... NOT CHANGE!

**Societal change:** Technology is producing change faster than our ability to understand and guide its development. Our earth may be at risk because we lack the foresight to see the impacts of change.

## Change-or-Die Mindset

It's time ... to accept ongoing change as a central part of our lives. Once you do, you will continue growing mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

Instead of resisting change and looking at change as a problem, a *change-adept (spiritual) mindset* embraces change. It enables you to be proactive, not reactive. You will not only seek the opportunities of constant change, but cause change to happen in positive ways.

**What if I decide not to change?** Three perspectives:

- **Scientific perspective:** Associated with change is an irrefutable law of nature; all species must adapt to constant change ... or die.

- **Religious perspective:** Scripture of all faiths tell us to turn away from evil and “change our ways” to justice, love and truth ... or die.
- **Business perspective:** Businesses and virtually all organizations now realize that survival is based on adapting to continuous change through the use of innovation. As business guru Tom Peters says: “Innovate ...or die.”

### IT'S TIME FOR CHANGE-ADEPT “SPIRITUAL” THINKERS

**Society must now develop cognitive tools and thinking processes that better help people “Think” their way through change ... at the exact moment that change occurs.**

### Machine vs. People oriented thinking.

Our changing world is emerging not according to any plan, but from large amounts of diverse activities happening simultaneously around the world. We don't know how to deal with it yet because we are still using industrial-era “machine” thinking.

#### What is Industrial age “machine” thinking?

Industrial age thinking has the following three ways of thinking:

**1. Scientific “machine” oriented thinking process:** In general, this is a binary thinking process that works exceptionally well for mathematics, logic and science.

It's a dualistic (on/off, either/or, true/false, I/O) thinking process that deals very effectively with static machines, computers, inanimate systems and procedural processes.

This type of thinking process has served humankind well, and obviously, for scientific and industrial reasons, needs to continue.

**2. Egocentric “I” thinking process:** This way of thinking comes from having a mindset of living in either the past, present or future. There are two types of “I” thinking processes, one good (self-confident thinking) and the other bad (self-centered thinking).

- **Egocentric Self-centered thinker.** This type of thinker says: “one of us is wrong”, and “it surely is not me.” This person is convinced of the *absolute truth* of his/her understanding.

Self-centered people tend to either live in the “past” because the ego does not want change and lose of material things. Or, they live in anticipation of the “future” because of the ego’s incessant desire to acquire more material things. The ego says ...when I get this I’ll be happy.

- **Egocentric Self-confident thinker.** Self-confident people, however, live in the “present” and deal with the world “as it is.” They are consciously aware of their thinking and seek **truth** by considering opposing viewpoints. They tend to evaluate their own thinking first for flaws and do not rule-out being wrong.

**3. Problem solving thinking process:** During the Industrial era there was a lot of emphasis on fixing broken machines. Even today, tools like Six-sigma are extremely valuable for improving business quality to near perfection (less than four errors per million).

For the most part the problem solving process reacts to change. It analyzes existing data with the purpose of restoring the problem to either a past condition or accepting the changed condition.

**The need for Conscious Spiritual Thinking**

As good as Industrial age thinking is for dealing with science and machine problems, this very logical (either/or) way of thinking is not very effective for interacting with living systems and humans.

Unfortunately, the industrial age by-product of self-centered egotistical thinking is now causing many of the world’s ills. It produces a win/lose and us/them mentality that leads to development of false alternatives like:

- Either universal healthcare ... Or a balanced budget ... Not both.
- Either a high standard of living ...Or a healthy world ecosystem ... Not both.

In short ...

***IT’S TIME FOR ... CONSCIOUS SPIRITUAL THINKING***

Note: The following is a brief skills comparison. Remember, skills are not either/or they are **AND/BOTH**.

<b>Industrial-age skills</b> Problem Solving “Machine” Oriented Thinking	<b>Knowledge-age skills</b> Conscious Spiritual “People” Oriented Thinking
Breaks problems into pieces to work on them separately.	Examines relationships and works to resolve the whole.
Finds answers	Asks questions
Analyzes the past and <b>already existing</b> data.	Anticipates the future and <b>not yet existing</b> data.
Rational, scientific and “ <b>either/or</b> ” thinking.	Systems, futures, and “ <b>both/and</b> ” thinking.
Identifies actions to return problems to a known past.	Identifies actions to prepare for an unknown future.

Short-term thinking.	Long-term thinking
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## Part 3: Spiritual Thinking Skills

You don't have to be a spiritual giant to gain the benefits of conscious spiritual thinking. But like anything, it is a skill to be learned. Here are the basic skills:

- *Awareness skills: Mindfulness, Flow, Contemplation*
- *Oneness skills: Collaboration, Questioning Attitude*
- *Wholeness skills: Holistic Seeing, Futures Thinking, Synthesis*

### Awareness skills

#### Mindfulness

Mindfulness is having a consciousness of what we are doing, while we are doing it. It can be seen as the practice of "being in the moment". In other words it helps us pay attention "on purpose."

Example: The power of mindfulness is shown by the following two questions. (Note: If we all could develop the habit of asking them, it might put the diet industry out of business.)

1. Before eating make yourself mindful by asking yourself: ***Am I really hungry?***
2. Then when you are 75% done with your meal, stop eating for 2 minutes and then ask yourself: ***Am I full?***

If you have ever lost weight on a diet, it's largely because you became mindful of what you were eating (e.g., writing down points for everything you ate). If you gained the weight back after the diet,

it's because you lost your mindfulness of eating. Knowing that you are eating is not the same as eating mindfully.

### **Flow**

“Flow” is being in a state of awareness where everything you do comes naturally and with the highest level of perfection. This state of flow happens when a person becomes perfectly “in-the-present-moment.” It is where you are totally focused on what you are doing without being distracted about the past or future.

As Ram Dass said of flow: *“Don't think about the future. Just be here now. Don't think about the past. Just be here now.”*

Example: This state is most easily recognized in athletes who are in a “groove” or “zone.” It's where a baseball player is on a torrid hitting streak, or a pitcher throwing a perfect game, or a basketball player making all his shots.

An opposite example is called a Golf Putter Yips. It's when golfers consistently miss easy 2-3 foot putts. While books have been written to fix this problem, they all failed to understand the real reason this occurs. It's because the golfer is not fully in-the-present moment of his/her putt. Their minds are conditioned to think about *Past* missed putts... causing them to miss their *Present* putt.

### **Contemplation**

The dictionary defines contemplation as: thoughtful observation. And while it's an important part of Plato's philosophy, I think it is best described in Richard Rohr's Book: [The Naked Now](#):

*“Contemplation is keeping your mind open long enough for your thinking to understand the situation you are facing.”*

Contemplation is transformative because it promotes a critical assessment of everything you do, including finding yourself at fault. Contemplation takes intellectual strength and loss of ego to look at every situation and understand how you are connected to it.

Example: At meal times, many people give thanks to God. Next time, in addition to this, contemplate for a moment on what you are eating. Consciously give thanks to everyone in the food chain ... even thank any animal that gave their life for you.

## Oneness skills

### Collaboration

Collaborative Thinking practices are becoming essential to the sustained performance of all organizations. The ability to work and think collaboratively enables knowledge workers to leverage their collective knowledge, ideas, and wisdom.

The cornerstone of collaboration is “TRUST.” It is very unlikely that effective collaboration will occur without it.

Example: A key element for building trust comes from being an empathetic listener. This is the ability to put yourself into the personality of another person. And, a key to becoming an empathetic listener is using the dialogue process. See demo on page 18.

### Questioning Attitude

A spiritual thinking mind is a questioning mind. Questions give the mind the best chance to find the right answers, ideas, and actions. When we ask the right questions, we succeed as effective thinkers.

Regrettably, while we were really good at asking questions as a young children, by the time we reached high school, many of us became fearful and stopped asking questions. If you take nothing else away from this handbook, give yourself a questioning attitude and simply *start asking questions*. Supporting quotes:

Einstein once said about himself: *"What's different about me? It's my ability to ask the right questions clearly and cleanly."*

Chinese proverb: *"He who asks a question may appear a fool for a minute, but he who does not ask a question remains a fool for life."*



## Wholeness skills

### Holistic “Systems” Seeing

Holistic Seeing is another key to conscious spiritual thinking because once we understand the dynamics of larger living wholes, we become more aware of what is emerging. And once we see what’s emerging, our thinking and actions will dramatically improve.

Example: Holistic health is a good example as it emphasizes looking at the whole person, including systems analysis of physical, nutritional, social, emotional, environmental and lifestyle values.

### Futures thinking

The future can no longer be ignored. We need to consciously determine what actions need to be taken today to manage change instead of reacting to change. Example: The economic crisis could have been avoided, see appendix for description.

### Synthesis

Synthesis is another powerful spiritual thinking skill. It is the ability to combine separate elements or parts into a whole.

Example: Creative brainstorming sessions readily produce lots of ideas. The hard part, however, is synthesis that turns creative ideas into innovations and something of value. Creative thinking is easy.

## Part 4: Spiritual Thinking Software

Putting the words “spiritual thinking” and “software” together is a paradox. This seemingly contradictory statement becomes true, however, when tools like *Facilitated Thinking Technology* software

applications are developed that guide our thinking as if a human were directly working with us.

### **The natural evolution of tools**

The invention of “tools” has been one way of marking humankind’s progress. Today, just as physical tools improved industrial age manual labor productivity ... cognitive tools need to be invented to improve thinking productivity. Supporting quotes:

*“If you want to teach people a new way of thinking, give them tools”*  
- Buckminster Fuller

*It is "tools" that make us smart, the cognitive artifacts that allow human beings to overcome the limitations of human memory. “*  
- Don Norman

### **What is Facilitated Thinking Software Technology**

In a sense Facilitated Thinking Software is like an assembly line for your mind. It works because people rarely can bring to mind all the right mental tools and questions to ask at the moment of need.

Instead of relying on human memory, Facilitated Thinking Software takes a different approach. Its goal is to provide cognitive tools, called *thinklets*, which function as if the human consultant, expert or professor were working right with you and providing intellectual direction to help you find your own best ideas.

### **Thinklets - Tools for the mind.**

Facilitated Thinking Software is built on the premise that using thinking tools follows the same principle that underlies the selection of any manual tool ... *choose one appropriate for the task at hand.*

Thinklets can be viewed as mental triggers or “thought switches” that activate thinking patterns not commonly used. In its purest sense a Thinklet is simply ... *asking the right question at the right time.*

For a detailed description get the white paper “Facilitated Thinking Technology: A fifty-fold increase in thinking productivity” at: [www.nthdegreesoft.com/wpftt.html](http://www.nthdegreesoft.com/wpftt.html)

## **Spiritual thinking software overview**

For a demo go to: [www.nthdegreesoft.com/cstdemo.html](http://www.nthdegreesoft.com/cstdemo.html)

### **Thinking Emulation Grid**

At the heart of this software is something called the Thinking Emulation Grid™. In some respects this grid functions the way Google does. But instead of using key words to find the right information, the software uses thinklets to help your mind find and use its most effective thinking.

The grid works by organizing the following thinking components (Process, Tasks, Thinklets) into a smoothly coordinated and integrated system to facilitate better thinking.

### **Thinking Process & Tasks**

Thinking Processes are the mental structures or frameworks (practices, processes or procedures) in which thought occurs. Processes guide thinking with the goal of helping people focus on what is important by prompting them on how to think through situations more creatively and effectively.

Within each Thinking Process are Thinking Tasks, the basic building blocks of thinking. Understanding the sequence of tasks within a process significantly influences our thinking abilities. Skipping or missing a task can lead to ineffective thinking.

**Conscious Spiritual Thinking Tasks**

<b>Steps (Tasks)</b>	<b>Description</b>
1: Self Awareness	Be the wisdom you already are.
2: Mindfulness	Be in the present moment.
3: Contemplation	Look around with thoughtful observation.
4: Knowledge	Understand the wholeness of everything.
5: Ideate	Turn creative ideas into valuable innovations.
6: Make Decisions	Predict consequences and decide on actions.
7: Taking Actions	Implement decisions and evaluate results.

**Task 1: Self Awareness.** Becoming more aware of how you think empowers you to build on your areas of strength as well as finding areas where you might like to make improvements. So, if you want to develop your spiritual thinking abilities, a critical first step is to become aware of how you currently think. See quiz in Appendix.

**Task 2: Mindfulness.** Mindfulness is about getting yourself in the present moment so you can spend a few minutes observing and contemplating what’s happening. Putting yourself in the present gives you a different level of awareness and frees you to take conscious actions rather than simply making an emotional response.

**Task 3: Contemplation.** Most of us don’t pay much attention to our thinking patterns. Instead of making a deliberate effort to direct the mental traffic in our heads, we pretty much leave it to chance and autopilot thinking.

Contemplation is about stopping at any given moment and taking a quick reading of your current reality. This gives your mind the mental input and time needed to engage consciously and thoughtfully as the current event unfolds.

**Task 4: Knowledge.** All thinking, including spiritual, is based on acquiring a good understanding of the facts. Your thinking will do little good if the data and information you have is incomplete, inaccurate, distorted, misunderstood or completely false.

There is a positive correlation between people who develop more and better ideas/solutions with those who have obtained relevant and accurate background knowledge.

**Task 5: Ideate.** Typically when we develop ideas and solutions, we tend to take the first idea that comes along ... that's the ego way. Since spiritual thinking looks at the whole, this task overcomes that tendency and develops a large pool of ideas to consider. The chances of finding a creative idea are dramatically increased by this approach.

**Task 6: Make Decisions.** As with all tasks, being conscious of your decision-making habits is essential. It does little good if the best idea/solution is discarded because fixed decision-making habits take over your thinking. Remember, a decision is only good if it can be implemented without creating more damage than it solves.

**Task 7: Taking Actions.** For many people taking action is the hardest part of any kind of thinking. A spiritual thinker does not fear imperfect solutions and knows that all solutions can and will be continuously revised and improved.

### **Tools (Thinklets)**

Here are a few examples of the spiritual thinking tools that are included in the software. To review them go to the demo.

- **Finding Your Inner Wisdom:** Find and use the patterns of success in your life that you already have.
- **Personal Visioning:** Uncover personal desires that might not be fully obvious.
- **Finding Your Core Beliefs:** Understand how your beliefs impact your thinking.

- **Conscious Thinking House Cleaning:** Un-clutter your conscious mind to improve your spiritual thinking abilities.
- **Put Your Team in Flow:** Put your team into a high performance spiritual thinking zone.
- **Empathetic Listening & Dialogue Process:** A way of listening to improve trust, collaboration and understanding.

Note: The ultimate goal of this software is for you to reach a point of automatically asking the right spiritual questions and no longer needing to use it.

## **Putting spiritual thinking into practice**

Conscious spiritual thinking offers you a different perspective for thinking about our real world. Here are a few examples:

### **Business Innovation as spiritual thinking**

From a business standpoint, the name of the game today is INNOVATION. Companies can no longer simply rely on past successes and practices to stay in business. They need innovative thinking employees who not only adapt to constant change but thrive on it.

There are lots of similarities between innovative and conscious spiritual thinkers. For example, innovative thinkers are constantly **aware** and ask questions about how to improve their own jobs. They walk in their customers' shoes to create a type of **oneness** with them. They use a **wholeness** framework to understand how their job, company, industry and society are connected in a sustainable way.

Consequently, all the conscious spiritual thinking skills you learn here are applicable to innovative thinking. And, businesses are hungry for innovative thinking people ... like YOU!

### **The “Spiritual” Innovation Process**

Most of us have been taught problem solving and scientific processes. But, how many of us have been taught an Innovation process? The answer is NONE. The reason ... until recently no formal innovation process existed.

In lieu of having an innovation process, people have been and still use Alex Osborn’s CPS (Creative Problem Solving) process that he developed in the 1950s. But remember ... innovation is **NOT** about solving problems but about embracing change.

For information on how to improve your own, team’s or organization’s innovation go to:

[www.nthdegreesoft.com/bhandbook.html](http://www.nthdegreesoft.com/bhandbook.html)

### **Community Building as a spiritual thinking**

Community building and transformation projects are at best challenging and historically have had dubious success. The reason is good hearted people have been using the traditional problem solving approach to community building. The focus was to go into “needy and deficient” neighborhoods and fix (solve) problems.

As well intentioned as this approach was and still remains ... it actually created a bigger problem. It made most neighborhoods dependent on outside help. Many people came to believe they were incapable of taking charge of their lives. And even believe they lacked the ability to acquire skills and talents to be successful on their own.

A conscious spiritual thinking approach to community building starts **within** the community and gets people:

To become “*aware*” of their own gifts and talents.

- To blend skills and work together in “*oneness*” within the community to accomplish things no individual alone could accomplish.
- To take a “*wholeness*” approach on how community institutions contribute to the well being of the larger and global community.

This connectedness approach leads to better utilizing local and neighborhood resources in ways that multiply their power and effectiveness. Everyone within the community takes ownership and pride in rebuilding their own neighborhood.

## Appendix

### Holistic Thinking Quiz

While this handbook focuses on a connectedness and “us” way of thinking ... it does not mean “*groupthink*.” In groupthink members try to minimize conflict and reach consensus without consciously analyzing anything. Individual creativity and independent thinking are lost in the pursuit of group cohesiveness.

As important as conscious spiritual thinking is ... the best thinkers are holistic. Holistic thinking is a blend of self-confident egocentric thinking and spiritual thinking. Holistic thinking starts with each of us taking responsibility for developing our personal thinking skills to their fullest.

Use the following quiz to self assess your thinking. Next to each statement, rate yourself from 1 to 10 with 1 = Strongly disagree and 10 = Strongly agree. Total the scores and do your self-analysis.



<b>Egocentric thinking</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>Spiritual thinking</b>	<b>#</b>
I am always honest with myself.		I am always honest with others.	
I see things as "either/or."		I see things as "and/both."	
I hate being wrong.		I like consensus.	
I blame others for my mistakes.		Sharing knowledge is very important.	
I rarely make snap judgments and decisions.		I ask lots of questions.	
I rarely ask for others viewpoints.		I am an empathetic listener.	
Defending my ideas is very important.		I readily admit and correct my mistakes.	
I like having people come to me for their information.		I look to understand the Big picture.	
Truth is defined by the group I am a member of.		Finding the real truth is very important to me.	
I don't really look at my beliefs.		I am always seeking advice.	
<b>Total</b>		<b>Total</b>	

**What is a Holistic thinker?** A holistic thinker makes a meaningful effort to ensure their thinking is correct. A holistic thinker challenges their thinking first and looks for ways they could have made a mistake. Only then will holistic thinkers apply good thinking techniques to come to conclusions and take action.

## **Religious and Mystical Spiritual Thinking Defined**

### **Religious spiritual thinking**

I was born, raised and feel blessed to be Christian. While I have not studied other religions, I do believe that the following five levels of religious thinking apply to all faiths:

**Level 1: Authority “trust-it” thinking:** This is faith-based thinking. People listen to trusted religious leaders for instruction and directives for how to follow God and live life.

**Level 2: Content “read-it” thinking:** This level expands upon your instructional learning with reading of Scripture (Bible, Qur’an, Torah). Since effective thinking of any kind is based on acquiring good content, reading Scripture becomes the foundation for advanced religious spiritual thinking.

Reading and memorizing Scripture provides lessons that intrinsically guide people’s thinking to make correct judgments and take appropriate actions.

**Level 3: Contemplative “know-it” thinking:** After reading Scripture, the next level of religious thinking comes from contemplating on the meaning. By reflecting and turning over in your mind what the Words mean, you are developing a knowledge-based way of thinking.

In this way, you begin to perceive the importance and subtle meaning of each Word that’s found its way from God to you. It’s at this level of thinking that people are better able to consider what Scripture means against a changing backdrop of real life.

**Level 4: Wisdom “do-it” thinking:** This level of thinking is wisdom-based and oriented toward “How to think.” People with bumper stickers like (What Would Jesus Do (WWJD) or (WWBD) What Would Buddha Do) manifest this kind of thinking

With this type of thinking, you put yourself into the shoes of the people in Scripture. Once you begin to think like them, you will be able to apply their wisdom to correctly think through and deal with modern day issues.

Mother Teresa got this level of thinking right when she told her sisters not to proselytize Jesus, but, Simply to BE like Jesus!

**Level 5: Holy Spirit thinking:** This is the highest level of religious spiritual thinking. It's where the Holy Spirit directly communicates with us for the purpose of making our path more clearly revealed and understood. For Christians this is living in the "present moment" and in the presence of God.

For some people, this level is discernible because they have the gift of "tongues." This gift allows the Holy Spirit to deliver messages through a divine language.

### **Mystical spiritual thinking**

There are four types of mystical spiritual thinking:

**1. Meditative thinking:** This is most recognized form of mystical thinking. It is the practice that allows you to connect to your subconscious mind. It works by quieting your conscious mind so that your subconscious and spiritual thoughts can be heard.

For example; Have you ever tried for days to figure out a problem, but can't? Then all of a sudden, maybe driving or taking a shower, your mind comes up with the answer or solution. You have just experienced how meditation works.

Tapping into your subconscious (or super conscious) using meditation and incubation is a very powerful way of thinking.

**2. Spiritual guides and intermediaries:** While I have not experienced this, some of my loved ones have. It is the ability to connect with Angels, Saints or Spirit Guides who provide guidance to life's decisions and direction.

**3. Energy Healing:** Our physical bodies, Nature and the entire Universe are made from energy and work best when everything is in balance.

Our minds use energy to make connections that facilitate our thinking. So, if our energy fields are blocked or distorted or not

functioning as they should, our mind and thinking will not function properly either.

Energy healers understand how all our energy centers must be aligned and working properly. Once energy is flowing freely through our body, the mind and physical benefits become apparent.

**4. Spiritual thinking and Nature:** Our Native Americans know how to think this way. And today, many people regardless of beliefs discover God through nature.

Connecting with nature helps nurture spiritual thinking. It brings forth an understanding of holistic thinking and belonging to the whole. It fosters understanding that in nature there is no waste; every by-product of one natural system is a nutrient for another.

When we learn to think this way, we will develop products that live in harmony with nature.

## **Destructive egocentric thinking examples**

### **Current Economic Crisis**

We've all heard these reasons for the economic crisis: individual greed, lack of government oversight, Wall Street market manipulation, the Fed artificially lowering interest rates, and bad business practices. Another reason, and maybe the real underlying cause, is simply bad thinking.

As a nation, we are exceptionally good "short-term" thinkers who fix problems after they occur but are not exceptionally good "long-term" thinkers who prevent problems before they happen.

Fundamentally, spiritual thinking helps us understand the impacts of change and any potential future problems that might occur based on the actions we take today. Unfortunately, many people believe it is impossible to think or know anything about the future ... so the future can be ignored.

However, almost every crisis results from failures to see the obvious and anticipate likely possibilities. And in retrospect, we often recognize that the crisis was preventable. For example, here are some impacts of poor thinking on the economic crisis

- ***Destructive Creativity:*** Deregulation allowed banks to be creative in developing new financial instruments such as “credit default swaps.” But developing creative ideas is actually easy; what’s hard is turning creative ideas into innovative ideas that really work and have value.
- ***Complexity:*** Making things complex is also easy; making things simple can be very difficult. So instead of developing financial products easy to understand, complex products were developed that even the smartest people had a hard time understanding.
- ***Foresight:*** It’s easy for people to use hindsight and analyze existing data and believe that future results will be the same as the past. It is very difficult to anticipate future data and predict future consequences of actions taken today.

### **Current Political Thinking**

Most politicians are not bad people; they are just trapped into bad “socio-centric” thinking. Socio-centric thinking is essentially the same as ego-centric “I” thinking, except politicians believe the political party they belong to has absolute truth.

Historically, when change was slow this kind of political thinking wasn’t a problem. The political alternatives (changes) that conservatives and liberals put forth were close enough that bi-partisanship could resolve differences.

However, in today's hyper-changing world, the old ways and new ways of doing things are creating vastly different alternatives. The result is the following growing gap between ultra-conservative and ultra-liberal political thinking.

- Self-centered egocentric conservative politicians dwell on the past and take actions to prevent change and preserve the status quo. However, what worked in the past may not work well today.
- Self-centered egocentric liberal politicians dwell on the future and naively believe all change is good. However, promoting changes without understanding their impacts ... is risky.

The problem for America with this kind of political thinking is no one is looking at the BIG PICTURE. Even worse, narrow minded partisan politicians produce "*false alternatives*" that force choosing between very bad alternatives ... and the American people lose.

It's time our politicians to acquire a conscious spiritual thinking approach and realize that while they need to learn from the past and anticipate the future ... they don't want to live in either place ... they need to live in the present ... they need to ...

***"FACE THE WORLD AS IT IS."***

The Beginning



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## Dennis J. Heindl - About the Author

**Personal:** Blessed with wonderful friends, relatives, a loving wife, three beautiful daughters and six amazing grandchildren. Received undergraduate degree from Marquette University and graduate degree from Univ. Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

**Career:** Founded Nth Degree Software, Inc. in 1999 on the vision that software technology could enhance natural human thinking abilities. Worked 30 years at AT&T in systems analysis & design, project management, strategic planning, and internet architecture.

**Expertise:** The internet now allows anyone to become an expert. Instead of expensive specialized education and training, someone with the right volition and focus can quickly gather expert information. For example, over the past 10 years I have extensively researched expert thinking in the fields of Problem Solving, Systems, Futures, Design, Scientific, Planning, Creativity, Decision making, Intuition, Subconscious, Meditative and much more. Compared to traditional research practices, the internet allowed me to acquire probably more than 100 years worth of information and knowledge in 10 years.

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