

Foundations of Better Thinking

10 Essential Mental Models

01 The Map Is Not the Territory

Every model of reality is a simplification. Don't confuse your map with the actual terrain.

"When was the last time you mistook a simplified version of reality for reality itself?"

02 Circle of Competence

Know what you know, know what you don't know, and stay honest about the boundary.

"How many of your worst decisions happened outside your area of actual expertise?"

03 First Principles Thinking

Break any problem down to its fundamental truths, then build your reasoning up from there.

"What if everything you've been told about this problem is wrong?"

04 Inversion

Instead of asking how to succeed, ask what would guarantee failure — then avoid it.

"What if the fastest way to solve a problem is to flip it upside down?"

05 Second-Order Thinking

Consider not just the immediate consequences of a decision, but the consequences of those consequences.

"You've figured out what happens next — but have you figured out what happens after that?"

06 Probabilistic Thinking

Think in likelihoods, not certainties. Assign probabilities to outcomes instead of assuming binary results.

"Are you treating an uncertain situation as if the outcome is guaranteed?"

07 Occam's Razor

The simplest explanation that fits the evidence is usually the correct one.

"Are you building a complicated theory when a simple one explains the facts just as well?"

08 Hanlon's Razor

Never attribute to malice that which can be adequately explained by ignorance, incompetence, or neglect.

"Are they really out to get you — or did they just not think it through?"

09 Feedback Loops

Every system has outputs that feed back into inputs — reinforcing or balancing the system's behaviour over time.

"Is this situation getting better because it's getting better — or worse because it's getting worse?"

10 Antifragility

Some things don't just survive shocks — they get stronger from them. Position yourself to benefit from disorder.

"Is your plan designed to survive volatility, or to actually gain from it?"