

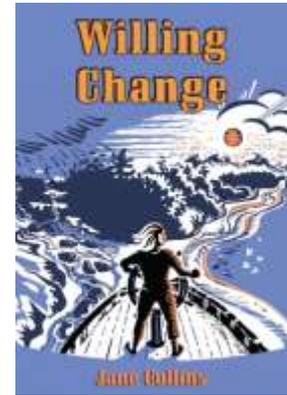
WILLING CHANGE

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CHAPTER 2 – WILLING CHANGE by Jane Collins THE IMPORTANCE OF THOUGHTS

Your original self

When you arrived in this world as a baby, you had no sense of who you were or how you fit into the world. You were free to just feel whatever you felt and to be who you were. You arrived with a mind pre-programmed to learn, explore, discover, and love. Curiosity dominated your early thoughts, and the more you saw, heard, and felt, the more you wanted to learn and experience. Your natural inclination was to grow and to have more of everything. Being free of the influences of other people's experiences, you were without judgment, open to all possibilities, and without any beliefs in limitations.

This original programming was perfect for you to begin life in this world and it served you well during your formative years. As a baby, you developed many skills and you enjoyed every moment. You never complained about the work of learning to roll over, to taste, hold things in your hand, or to walk. You were ready, willing, and able to do what you needed to do. You were certain you were good and capable and it never occurred to you that you should limit what you could do, be, or have. You believed you were perfect, could accomplish anything, knew that it was okay to want what you wanted, and expected to continue to grow and learn.

You also had a view of people and the world that worked well to support your every desire. You saw the world as full of new opportunities to explore, and that help was always available. You were always ready to accomplish any goal.

Consider a baby when she is first determined to transform from crawler to walker and the thought process she uses to accomplish that goal. Although her thought process is in pictures rather than words, it probably goes like this:

- I want to walk over there.
- I will walk no matter what it takes. I can do it.
- I need to:
 - Stand up
 - Turn in that direction
 - Move my feet one in front of the other
 - Keep going until I get there
- I can stand up by holding onto this sofa.
 - I am not moving yet but I did stand up.
- Next, I will let go of the sofa.
 - I fell down when I let go but I will get up again and this time turn around while holding onto the sofa.
- I am standing and facing the right direction.
- I will try letting go again.
- I will keep trying.

Of course, because she is a baby, she will keep trying until she achieves the change she wants. Soon she will be standing, then walking, then running. This thought process perfectly facilitates change. Imagine a baby having a thought process that included these thoughts about transforming into a walker:

- Walking is dangerous. I might get hurt.
- It's too hard.
- I can't do this. I have never done it before, so how can I do it now?
- I should be satisfied with things the way they are. It is good enough.
- I will just try once and if it does not go well I will quit.
- I will be disappointed if I can't do it as well as the others.
- I can't handle the frustration of falling down and failing.
- Maybe I should wait.
- Walking probably will not be as much fun as it looks.
- Maybe I can walk to the door, but there probably isn't anything worth seeing on the other side.
- I might be laughed at if I try to walk, and it is not worth that.
- It is wrong to want to walk.
- Walking can only lead to trouble.
- My relationship with my parents might change when I walk, and I like it the way it is.
- I do not deserve to walk.

How ready would a baby be to make the change from crawler to walker with these doubtful thoughts? Would it be more of a struggle? Is there more effort required when she has to push herself to take action? Of course there is. Any doubting thoughts slow us down when we try to accomplish our goals. Luckily, babies do not have any doubts in place yet to stop them or slow them down. They can change their lives with little effort and they are always ready to take the actions required to live life to the fullest. That is, until they begin to think about it.

We have spent our lifetimes creating and collecting thoughts that block, hinder, slow down, or otherwise prevent us from living the life we want to live. Realizing the importance of the thoughts and mindsets we have developed is the first step in creating the changes we desire and accomplishing them with ease. Our thinking is the key to reclaiming the lives we were meant to live.

The organization of thoughts

We rarely think about thinking. Thinking is something we all do and take for granted without much consideration as to how well we do it. However, as we will see, our thoughts are the most important factors in creating the events, circumstances, situations, and things in our lives, and the quality of our thoughts have great significance. Thoughts determine our desires and the actions we are willing to take to fulfil them. We see the results of those actions daily. Look around you now and notice the environment you have created for yourself. You have chosen your education and your work. You chose to live in this place with these people. Everything and everyone that surrounds you is the result of the thoughts you have had and the actions you have taken as a result. Being aware of your thoughts can provide many clues as to how you got to be where you are now, and how you can get to where you want to be.

Every day our minds are filled with thoughts as we go through daily chores, interact with others, work, and play. In a typical day we have forty-five thoughts per minute, or 65,000 each day; many of them are repetitions of the ones we had earlier in the day. Although we each have unique thoughts, we all commonly engage in two types of conscious thinking: wandering and focused.

Wandering thoughts occur when you have no particular plans, no focus, no intentions, and no specific purpose. You are aware of having wandering thoughts from time to time and often have no idea how they originate. Here is an example:

I like this cup. I don't know why I like this colour so much but it really appeals to me. Maybe that's because it's close to the colour of my bedroom walls when I was growing up. I really liked that room. The sun shone in at sunset and the room felt so cozy when I studied. I hated studying for history exams. The history teacher really didn't like me and marked me so hard. I wonder if he still teaches. I wish I'd had the other history teacher instead because she . . .

This type of thinking fills up the spaces in our minds with incessant chatter.

Focused thinking is used when we have a purpose. When we want to learn something, set a goal, or have a conversation, we purposely focus on a particular subject that will help us to learn or to understand what we need to know. We use focused thinking to organize information, make decisions, and carry out duties that we have selected as important enough to deserve attention. Studying for a test is an obvious example of focused thought, but we also use it in everyday situations such as selecting from a menu or deciding which movie to watch.

Our minds are natural organizers and file our thoughts into categories for possible future use. Because of this organizing feature, we do not have to relearn the same lessons or make the same decisions repeatedly. For instance, when you first learned to ride a bike you focused all your attention on how to balance, steer, and pedal. Once you learned these, you were able to call on that stored information and rarely needed to think about how to ride a bike again. When someone offers you a slice of pie, you do not have to decide whether or not you like pie, because you already decided that long ago. You have been organizing and storing thoughts your whole life. These thoughts become subconscious; that is, they are stored in your mind, but you are not aware they are there unless you bring them into your conscious awareness. All subconscious thoughts were at first conscious, but when no longer required to learn or focus, were relegated to subconscious storage, ready to be called on when required. Therefore, your opinion about pies is stored in your subconscious, and is not brought into your awareness until you need it to choose a dessert.

Sorted and organized collections of thoughts are called mindsets. We use them constantly to carry out normal routines, to socialize, work, and experience life. They interpret and give meaning to whatever we encounter. They are full of judgments about what and whom we like and dislike. They tell us what to expect from ourselves, from other people in our lives, strangers, and the world. We have mindsets about how to behave in each situation in which we expect to find ourselves. We have mindsets about right and wrong, politics, and religion. We have mindsets about how to succeed in life.

Core mindsets

Each day we are constantly bombarded with so many thoughts that they would normally overwhelm us. Instead of seeing, hearing, and feeling everything that is available to us in every moment, we choose to limit our perception in order to manage it more easily. This perception determines the meaning and importance of the information available to us. Mindsets carry out the function of filtering the vast information available to us, show us what we choose to see,

hear, and feel, and prompt us to ignore the rest. It uses your beliefs as your personal information filter. Beliefs are just thoughts you have repeatedly, whether you are aware of them or not. They are formed by personal experiences and observations, or given to you by others. Your belief system is your personal set of thoughts or ideas of what is true. It acts as a personal set of eyeglasses, showing you what to expect when you go out in the world. It not only colours what you do see, it also filters out from your thoughts anything that you do not believe in. You use it to set limits, to judge people and your experiences. It is important to remember that what you believe is not necessarily true, nor is it necessarily what others believe.

Your beliefs form a core mindset that affects your thoughts about everything. In your core mindset, you hold beliefs about yourself, others, the world, and how they fit together and interact. The importance of this core mindset of beliefs (what is true for you) and values (what is important to you) is very significant. It has great influence over your actions, but since it is subconscious, you do not always remember all the thoughts that played a role in creating it.

Values can be the source of your feelings of love, guilt, anger, and hatred. They determine what is important to you and influence the goals you set, your methods of accomplishment, and the quality of the results. They are used in decision making, interacting with others, relationships, and work. They provide your motivations and guide your behaviours. You have values for how to treat yourself and others. You have values about education, money, work, community, and spirituality. Values guide your life daily, in every decision you make and in every thought you have.

Oliver

Oliver wanted to open a new restaurant in the mall two blocks from his home. It was a busy mall with lots of loyal local customers that would appreciate his food and service. He also felt it was close enough to his home that he could spend some of the slower hours with his young family. The only problem he had with the idea was the requirement to be open on Sundays, because he felt very strongly he should devote that day to his family and his religious beliefs.

Oliver's core mindset was holding him back from what he saw as an ideal situation. The strength of his core beliefs and values would determine whether he would allow himself to pursue this goal or not.

Your rules

As part of our subconscious core mindset, our beliefs and values have been organized into a set of unwritten rules that we use to guide how we live our lives daily. We have rules for each of the roles we play and rules of behaviour for those with whom we interact. For instance, we have rules for how a good neighbour behaves and for how far a boss can go in telling us what to do. We usually assume most people would agree with our rules, because they make so much sense to us, and are often surprised or upset when they do not. Experience tells us there are many ways to live our lives, but we still want our rules to be followed anyway. We are not aware of all the rules we have defined, even when we use them.

Tony

Tony grew up in a neighbourhood of small but neat homes filled with children and hard-working parents. He saw families struggling to keep afloat and heard constant complaints

about the cost of living, how there was never enough, and how others had it easy. Tony's parents were proud of how they were able to care for their modest home with little money and lots of hard work, but they made it clear to Tony from a young age that they would never be able to afford to send him to college.

Tony managed to go to college without their help, but incurred a huge debt. Immediately after completing his education, he started a software business that he enjoyed and was soon able to move out on his own and pay his debts easily. His business was so successful he hired several employees and was free to travel two months a year. Whenever he returned to his neighbourhood, he felt embarrassed without knowing why. His parents bragged about his success to the neighbours, but Tony wondered if they resented him for having so much without the struggle they had.

Without knowing it, Tony had formed a rule that to deserve money, you had to work hard. The logic of this rule told him that if he was not working hard and struggling, he did not deserve to make good money. The result was to feel defensive about the money he earned so easily, and he avoided going home without knowing why.

Tony's rule for deserving wealth could be stated as: deserving money = hard work.

Do you have your own rules about deserving wealth or fun? Any time you feel judgment about the behaviours of yourself or others, or against a situation, you are invoking your rules. Make it a habit to notice and remember that they are *your* rules and do not necessarily apply to everyone and in every situation. When your rules often cause you to feel upset or disappointed, evaluate their purpose and usefulness and adjust them to the changing times, circumstances, and people involved.

Let us summarize the organization of your mind.

- All thoughts are originally conscious and either focused or wandering.
- Focused thoughts are organized into conscious mindsets that you use for projects, learning new skills, or making decisions. When these mindsets are no longer needed in the present, they are stored in the subconscious.
- Wandering thoughts may have a use in conscious mindsets, but normally would become part of the subconscious, forming mindsets that you may not be aware you have, or contributing to others already in place.
- As well as mindsets used for specific purposes, you have developed mindsets containing your core beliefs and values. As you go through life, these cause you to have judgment thoughts about what is right or wrong, good or bad, and how to behave. These can be formed consciously or subconsciously and in varying strengths.

Results formula

Three years ago on a sunny September day, I purchased the car I now drive. I signed several documents that put into words my promise to make a monthly payment in exchange for the ownership of the new car. Before signing, I considered all the cars on the lot I might like to

buy, possible features and colours, safety, and gas consumption. Before that, I took my old car to a dealership and discussed the possibilities of trading in the old car and the costs of a new one. Before that, I considered all the reasons for trading in or not trading in the old one, the effects on my finances, and the type of car I wanted to drive. Before that, I had a single thought: *I want a new car*. Without that first single thought, *I want a new car*, none of the actions that followed would have taken place, and I would not be driving the car I have now.

Every result was created through action, and every action was preceded by a thought. It is true for anything you have achieved, purchased, or done.

THOUGHTS >>>>ACTIONS>>>>RESULTS

There is no action you have ever taken that did not begin with a thought. As well, each thought carries with it an emotional feeling/energy that determines the strength of that thought. The desire for a new car can be small or great, and the thought, *I want a new car*, could be easily dismissed if the feeling/energy attached to the thought is weak. The more energetic the feeling of *I want a new car* is, the more likely action will be taken toward the result of a new car. The formula could better be described this way:

THOUGHTS & FEELINGS ENERGY >>>> ACTIONS>>>>RESULTS

When I purchased my car, there were many possible actions and many possible results. The result would have been different if my desire for a new car had been weak. I would not have taken any action at all, and the idea would have faded. The action of choosing the place of purchase would have changed if I had thought the dealership was too far away. I would have gone to a different one and I would have been selecting from a different car lot with different options. If I had had strong thoughts that the colour and style were the most important factors, I might have held out for a car that was not available there. If I'd had thoughts of not wanting to increase my car payments, I might have decided to wait or to purchase a lower-priced car. It was the quality of my actions that led to the quality of my result, and since my actions were determined by my thoughts, the qualities of my thoughts were of the greatest importance.

The results formula I used to buy my car is the same one I have been using since the day I was born, just as it has been for you and everyone else. It is that simple. The difference in how I use it now and how I used it as a baby is in how readily I make choices and go for them. As a baby, I saw, I wanted, and I went for it. Now, I have many mindsets to filter my ideas through before I can go ahead. What holds me back is more often a doubt about whether or not I should, rather than my ability. Doubt, in its many forms, is the major obstacle to achieving goals. In chapter 4, we will examine common doubts, but first we will take a closer look at the thought process.