

## Top Three Secrets To Becoming A Better Thinker

by: Maya Talisman Frost We all know there are ways to become a better thinker. We should read more books. We ought to go to lectures and concerts. We need to visit exhibits and appreciate art. We can take classes and expand our horizons through travel. Blah, blah, blah. Those are the easy answers. If we really want to become better thinkers, there are three ways to do it that are guaranteed to get you tuned in to your brain and everything going on in it. Ready? Here are the top three secrets to becoming a better thinker: #1 Interrupt yourself. That's right. The next time you find yourself talking for any period of time, or even thinking about something for more than a few minutes, simply stop. Ask yourself: "Where did this thought start?" "Have I had this thought before?" "Have I already examined this concept at length?" We tend to reiterate our opinions. We repeat ourselves (like I did right there). Imagine all the time we spend on thoughts that just aren't taking us anywhere new and interesting. How many times have you had the same conversation? Make a habit of stopping yourself to check in. Steer your thoughts or your conversation in new directions. Make room for new ideas by recognizing and interrupting repetitive thoughts, and you'll make huge strides toward becoming a more excellent thinker. #2 Appreciate lulls. You know when you're talking to someone, and there's a moment of silence before anyone says anything? Our tendency is to jump in, even if what we have to say is pointless. We talk for the sake of filling up that few seconds of silence to keep that pause from becoming uncomfortable. Next time you find yourself with an unexpected moment of silence, try this: Smile and nod. You'll look thoughtful, and you won't fill the air with silly-sounding expressions of agreement. Once you get good at the smile-and-nod routine, you'll find that you'll use that moment as a way to be open to new thoughts that wouldn't normally have room to sprout through your typical "uh-huh, that is so true" or "yeah, I totally agree with that" comments. Appreciate those moments during the day when you have no choice but to be silent and patient. Waiting for your email to download? Standing in line at the checkout? Riding in an elevator? Fill the lull with observations. Look around. Notice scents. Pay attention to lighting. Listen. Think of these pauses as opportunities to sharpen your senses. Enjoy a Da Vinci moment. #3 Define Your Life Philosophy. Quite frankly, I don't understand how this one gets so neglected in our culture. We do a whole lot of talking about being authentic, honoring our individuality, and finding our true passion. Well, how can anyone be true to themselves if they haven't taken the time to figure out who they are? If you don't know your values and beliefs, you're never going to get to where you think you ought to be. A defined life philosophy serves as a road map. It gives you landmarks to recognize, navigation tools to guide you, and a clear destination. Just like the greatest road trips, you may end up going in a completely new direction that's nowhere on that original map. That's okay. But knowing your starting point is the most crucial part of any journey. Fate, birth, death, love, freedom, responsibility, morality, faith, destiny--these are the concepts we need to explore in order to develop and define our own unique life philosophy. Thinking about these ideas is the coolest thing we can do. We feel alive and connected whenever we dig deep into the Real Stuff. Don't shy away from delving deeply. It's the only way to develop as a thinker and as a human. Take these three secrets--interrupting yourself, appreciating lulls, and defining your life philosophy--and run with them. Pick one as a New Year's resolution and commit yourself to mastering it. Vow to become a better thinker in 2004. It may be your most meaningful--and enjoyable--resolution ever!

## About the Author

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