

THREE ESSENTIAL KEYS TO SOLVE PROBLEMS,  
INNOVATE, AND GET THINGS DONE

# smart thinking



ART MARKMAN, PHD

Foreword by Craig B. Wynett  
and Dr. Mehmet Oz

## Smart Thinking: Three Essential Keys to Solve Problems, Innovate, and Get Things Done

*Art Markman*

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# Smart Thinking: Three Essential Keys to Solve Problems, Innovate, and Get Things Done

Art Markman

**Smart Thinking: Three Essential Keys to Solve Problems, Innovate, and Get Things Done** Art Markman

**When you understand how the mind works, you can think smarter—and act smarter.**

Based on the precepts of cognitive science and drawing on a half century of interdisciplinary studies, Smart Thinking is the first book to reveal a three-part formula that distinguishes Smart Thinking from innate intelligence and shows how memory works, how to learn effectively, and how to use knowledge when you need to get things done.

Beginning with defining the difference between Smart Thinking and innate or raw intelligence, cognitive psychologist Art Markman demonstrates how it is possible to learn Smart Thinking that you can apply to the real world.

This engaging and practical book introduces a three-part formula for Smart Thinking, which demonstrates how anyone can:

- ? Develop **Smart Habits**
- ? Acquire **High-Quality Knowledge**
- ? Use **High-Quality Knowledge** when needed

Smart Thinking explores each part of the *Smart Thinking* formula and provides:

- ? An understanding of how the mind works and the means to replace self-limiting habits with those that foster Smart Thinking
- ? Insights into how memory functions and how to improve the quality of what you learn
- ? Ways to present new information effectively
- ? Specific techniques for improving your understanding of how the world works
- ? The ability to define and solve problems by finding the relevant knowledge from any area of expertise and applying it effectively

Drawing on multiple research disciplines, including psychology, artificial intelligence, philosophy, neuroscience, learning sciences, linguistics, anthropology, sociology, and education, Markman provides insights into the functioning of the mind and synthesizes this understanding into practical tools and exercises that develop new skills and achieve personal goals. The book culminates in tips for creating a Culture of Smart to make everyone in an organization more effective.

## Smart Thinking: Three Essential Keys to Solve Problems, Innovate, and Get Things Done Details

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## **From Reader Review Smart Thinking: Three Essential Keys to Solve Problems, Innovate, and Get Things Done for online ebook**

### **Lori says**

I reviewed this book for Psych Central -- it's a great book! here's the review.

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### **Doc Opp says**

Because this book is marketed as a self help book, potential readers might overlook the fact that this is an excellent treatise on cognitive psychology. In fact, Markman is one of the best in the business at synthesizing and communicating what cognitive psychologists have learned about how the mind works, and that's on display here.

While there was little 'new' content-wise for me here, as I teach cognitive psychology for a living, I nonetheless appreciated just how cleverly and clearly Markman explains and applies various concepts. I found myself thinking that many of his examples, and the logic with which he lays out various principles were better ways of doing it than I've done in some of my lectures, and as such expect that having read the book will make me more effective at teaching Cognition. For folks who aren't as versed in the Cognitive Science literature, this will be a groundbreaking read, and folks like me who are already expert will still find much of value.

I was particularly enamored by his point that the nation's high school science curriculum (biology, chemistry, and physics) was set before Cognitive Science even existed. Because of inertia in curriculum, those same basic sciences continue to be taught, and cognitive science has never been added to the canon despite being really important for educated adults to know. This book makes nice strides towards filling that gap, and is an all around engaging and informative read.

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### **Max Read says**

“A snoozer of a composition”

“Smart Thinking” was composed by Art Markman, PHD and claims to reach into the underlying ability to think, reason, make decisions, communicate, and take action all based in leading-edge science with news you can use. The composition never rises to the occasion. It rehashes innate intuitive human ability in a recipe type of layout as though the things that make people different are simply a matter of learning a new skill. Markman implies that with a bit of training anyone can invent a ‘Dyson Vacuum’; hardly! It is after all, a plainly decisive matter that some people are “thinkers” and others are not. If it weren’t so, the world would be overburdened with vacuum cleaners, or swim suits or other ingenious devices. The problem lies in the fact that, whether you are capable of learning thinking traits, putting them to use requires something altogether different. I have known many a superior thinker, who quite capably explained the blueprints of a spectacular idea, only to acknowledge he had no further idea of what to do with it. Reverse engineering the success of

someone like James Dyson generally yields a plethora of traits that subtly suggest that such success can be learned; and it may well be, but learned by someone without the imagination to create something it will fall helplessly on a dunce.

In short, I found nothing profound about Markman's work; no light bulb flashed on and I took away nothing from the recitation of traits that were intuitively clear to begin with. I thought that possibly, the book would have been better had it tried to discern what made Dyson different; not how to emulate what Markman thinks motivated Dyson in the first place for that belongs solely to Dyson.

In the end, I didn't find anything remarkable about the information that Markman tries to instill in his narrative. It was after all, well, boring and in my opinion, useless; as it failed to even recognize that imagination, the motor of intelligence, is derived from substance that is rarely duplicated by training.

All and all I didn't think that the composition was useful and was probably not going to be of value to anyone in changing anything that defines their motivation or imagination; certainly not their success. I highly recommend that you spend your money elsewhere as this work will be a disappointment.

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### **Nikka Calindas says**

For a book about 'smart thinking', the author is not so smart in presenting his case. With outrageous examples that can confound a simple man to oblivion, this is not a book recommended for people like me who is genuinely interested to know how one can make a serious effort in thinking smart.

Take his examples in dealing with analogies, of all the things that he can use as a base for an analogy, he settles for proverbs. And it's not a simple thinking of what the underlying meaning in a proverb but its relationship with whatever your current situation. That would have been ok if he did not suggested that the reader should memorize a bunch of proverbs and find a distinct link between the memorized proverb and the current situation to promote 'smart-thinking'. I don't know about you, but if you make something too complicated when a simple analysis will do, then clearly, one is not doing the smart thing.

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### **Olivier Gourment says**

Wow. It's been 4 years since I ordered and devoured the book. I now have the audiobook, the kindle book and the print edition. I find myself still going back to it, even though it's extremely well organized and contains very few key ideas. But those few ideas are profound and very well explained. This book is a gem. One of the best book I've read on the topic of thinking, together with, maybe, David Rock's Your Brain At Work and Succeed by Heidi Grant Halvorson. Thank you, Dr Markman!

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### **Deejay Nicke says**

This book is written by a PhD who has spent more than 20 years studying cognitive science. He isn't telling us what to think, but rather HOW to think, and think smarter!

Good health requires learning about the body, eating right, and exercising. Mental health requires learning about the mind, feeding your mind with quality knowledge, and forming smart habits that make you more effective.

Reading this book will set you on the path to Smart Thinking!

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### **Frank Spencer says**

I'm impressed. There are many hints for becoming a better thinker, which can be used. Some areas covered are writing summaries after reading or being in a meeting, using the rule of 3 (derive the 3 main points from anything), how to make connections and see similarities, improving your memory, using habits effectively, using your feelings or intuition when making decisions, and helping those around you to be better thinkers. Using proverbs is mentioned, as is knowing whether you decide too quickly or slowly. I listened to this one on Audible, and was able to get quite a lot out of it.

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### **Susan Visser says**

I seem to be on a trend of reading books about how the mind works! This one was the lightest weight of the books I've read, but it gave many very practical ways to simplify life by understanding how the brain works and to work with it, rather than against.

The brain has evolved to off-load as much work as possible from the conscious part to the amygdala. Think of the amygdala as the part of the brain that automates much of what you do everyday: breathe, blink, even drive to work. To simplify your life, you should follow routines and smart habits to free up the higher functioning part of the brain.

An example that was covered in the book explains it well: most mornings you get up and follow routines to wash up, get dressed, and get to work. You may even forget the details, but it all gets done, easily. Contrast this to the times you are traveling and staying in a hotel. You can no longer go into automatic mode when you get up in the morning... you need to find what you need to wash up, look for light switches, and drive a car that is unfamiliar to you to a location that is not part of your normal routine. Your brain will need to work much harder to deal with all these decisions that must be made and you may become mentally exhausted by the effort.

Make life easier for yourself and incorporate as many routines and smart habits into your life as possible. Keep your brain power for more important decisions.

Your brain has also evolved to group things into categories and to create assumptions about the characteristics of the things that belong in the group. This makes sense if you consider our ancestors had many dangers in their world and they needed to make instant decisions in order to survive. So, if they encountered a bear or other similar large animal, they'd know how to deal with it instantly. Such categories are useful but they can lead to discrimination and stereotyping in our current world. Use this knowledge of how your brain works to challenge your beliefs when making a decision to ensure that you are not letting confirmation biases cloud your judgement.

These are just some of the examples of what you'll learn in the book. It is one that I'll listen to again to make

sure I pick up all the great tips offered in the book.

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### **Igor Putina says**

Great stuff, easy to put into good use.

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### **Dave says**

Something between self-improvement and a primer on cognitive psychology. I liked it and will listen again and read a paper version.

There was an interval in the audio book when the narrator/reader mispronounced causal as casual, which should have been caught by a proof listener and corrected before release.

I recommend this book as informational reading for educators and engineers. Those who have read more than a few books on cognitive psychology are not likely to find anything new, but may appreciate the author's approach.

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### **Pierre says**

This book came up on my Amazon account as a book that I would potentially like. I must compliment Amazon's algorithm as it turned out to be a great read and good match for me. Overall, it's a crisp and clear book that gives actionable recommendations (behaviors and thinking habits) to achieve a high standard of problem solving ability.

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### **Lance says**

I found this tome in the bookstore, and I truly believe that I was led to this book the same way I have been led to other books that I have needed. I was looking for some help in devising an integrated system so that I can get more out of what I read. Reading is great, and if you are reading this you likely agree. I don't know many people with a Goodreads account who don't like to read.

But I wanted to get more out of what I read, and I have for years. The system I developed had worked sufficiently, but I wondered if I could make it more effective or even efficient. To do that I would need to learn more about learning and how the mind works.

That's where this book comes in, and it didn't disappoint. Dr. Markman is clearly an expert in his field, but he doesn't flash a bunch of data in a way that leaves the reader befuddled and confused. He writes in a way that seemingly complex concepts are easy to understand. And the ideas he presents explain pretty clearly how the mind works.

What I love is the way he boils it all down into about 3 ideas in each chapter. He does this because his own

research shows that this practice aids learning retention. How much better would our own presentations be if we all followed Markman's Rule of 3? The whole book is just like that, filled with practical ideas that we can all use and are based on sound scientific research.

This book was an absolute joy to read, and I am so fascinated with it that I will be combing over it again in greater detail to learn more about the way my mind works and to incorporate as many of the ideas presented into my own system for getting more out of what I read. If you are looking to understand more about the way the mind works, you can't go wrong with this tome. I highly recommend it.

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### **Burke Ruder says**

Would not recommend this book. Main ideas are made and then you are dragged on for another 25 pages. Read the chapter titles and main tips directly under the chapter title and send Markman 3 bucks. Save 12.

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### **Becky says**

I listened to this book while driving to a business meeting (that never happened) and then back home. There's some very useful stuff in here, it's just that, unfortunately, this book doesn't really lend itself well to audio format. I say that not because the reader was bad (he wasn't), but more because this book is one that requires you to participate, and audio is a passive medium.

There are a lot of little activities and quizzes in this book, meant to gauge how you think about problems, that are next to impossible to do if you're listening to this, unless you have a lightning fast pause finger. Which I don't. My process: Wake up phone, unlock, access app, press pause... press pause again when the stupid touchscreen doesn't react -- GRRRR! This takes anywhere between 5-20 seconds depending on how sullen my phone is being at any given time. Not exactly conducive to participating in activities the book tells me to do. My phone is a jerk that doesn't want me to learn!

Anyway... There is a lot of good stuff in here, regarding tips for being more focused on learning new things, recapping them to yourself, taking overview notes, teaching yourself what you're learning, and learning to think abstractly and analogously about problems, all of which I found useful and will work into my life in varying degrees based on how relevant they are to me.

On the other hand, much of the 'causal knowledge' stuff doesn't really seem practical in everyday life.

Now, I'm all for learning and having a broad knowledge-base, but my brain doesn't always cooperate with me, and most of the time it feels like new info coming in pushes other info out. Do I need to know how a toilet works? I'm sure it's useful if I need to fix one, but in my day-job, it's not going to help me. I don't frequently (or... ever, to my knowledge) run into problems that would be solved by knowing how a toilet works. Or a lightbulb. Or a grain mill. And there's the crux of the major issue that I had with this book. It doesn't really advocate learning relevant or comparative info or skills based on what you're trying to do. In fact, this book clearly goes to lengths to show how someone trying to solve problem A is going to be much better able to do so by having specific knowledge of completely unrelated item/process/workings of thing B, and the ability to see the connection and relationship between the two.

For example, one of the quizzes given in the back half of the book describes a problem (paraphrasing here): A man has a tumor which is most likely malignant, but due to the location of the tumor in his stomach, surgery is impossible. The only option is radiation therapy to kill the tumor, but the same radiation will kill healthy cells around it. How you do treat the man?

The answer is to use a low level radiation beam specifically aimed at the tumor, which is apparently the same kind of solution used to fix light bulb filaments. The book then gloats that only 1 out of 10 people would get this solution on their own, but that most people would get it if the lightbulb filament fix situation was fresh in someone's mind - in this case the tumor test was in chapter 8 (I think) while the filament thing was in chapter 4.

If you're wondering, I actually did think of aiming radiation treatments specifically at the tumor, but NOT because of the filament thing, but because that seems like the most common sense thing to do.

So, what this book seems to be getting at is: You never know what you may need to know in the future to form a mental analogy between completely unrelated problems. So know all the things.

That's not gonna happen. Not for me, anyway. I have enough trouble remembering the 8 million different tools, systems, processes, and concepts I may need in the course of my workday without trying to tack on how jet engines work in case I need to redesign a bidet in 10 years.

Still there are some good takeaways, and some things I already (sorta) do without realizing it, so for that, 3 stars. I think I probably would recommend this (if the reader doesn't mind a bit of repetitiveness), but I'd suggest the print version over the audio.

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### **Sue Smith says**

Welllllll. I can pretty much sum up this book in a few points - using the rule of '3' as this oh-so-helpful book suggests. Let's see ...

#### Reason's for Wanting to Read this Book.

1. Looking for clever ways to help yourself become a better \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in whatever here - astronaut, scientist, zombie).
2. Looking for smart ways to get past annoying, self depreciating behaviors (in 3 easy steps).
3. Looking for clear and concise ways of defining said problems, and solving them in an intelligent fashion.

#### What You Will Find in this Book.

1. Lots of fancy lingo
2. Lots of examples of other really smart people and their smart thinking
3. One chapter - that equates to 23 pages - with any added value. And that's pushing it.

#### What I Got Out of this Book.

1. Very little - other than a sense of wonder that Art Markman, Phd has made money on this.
2. The sad feeling that I was duped. It doesn't feel smart. Although I'm wonderously thankful that I borrowed this from the library.
3. I am much smarter than this book makes me feel.

### What I Can Give to You as Smart Advice

1. Don't read this book.
2. Don't let anyone else read this book.
3. Use this book as a paperweight. On all your smart stuff.

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