



Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking
By Malcolm Gladwell

Do you ever have a “gut feeling” about something? Maybe a decision that just “feels” wrong, but you aren’t able to articulate the reasons why? We all have, and this book explains why.

Sometimes, we need to analyze every angle and come up with a clear and well articulated reason for our decision. Other times, we may not know the reason why a decision “feels” wrong and we need give ourself the permission to make those decisions without being paralyzed by our fear of not being able to explain ourself. This book explains how our brain functions so that you can make those decisions with more certainty.

Snap & Deliberate Decisions:

Our brain has the ability to make quick, snap decisions and also slow, deliberate decisions. *“When we leap to a decision or have a hunch, our unconscious is...sifting through the situation in front of us, throwing out all that is irrelevant while we zero in on what really matters. And the truth is that our unconscious is really good at this, to the point where thin-slicing often delivers a better answer than more deliberate and exhaustive ways of thinking.”* (pg. 56) But for us *“to improve the quality of the decisions we make, we need to accept the mysterious nature of our snap judgments. We need to respect the fact that it is possible to know without knowing why we know.”* (pg. 88)

Some decisions do need deliberation, but even then we must be careful not to drown in the details. *“We live in a world saturated with information. We have virtually unlimited amounts of data at our fingertips at all times, and we’re well versed in the arguments about the dangers of not knowing enough and not doing our homework. But what I have sensed is an enormous frustration with the unexpected costs of knowing too much, of being inundated with information. We have come to confuse information with understanding.”* (pg. 444)

“Thin-Slicing” To Improving Our Snap Decisions:

Have you ever been paralyzed by a decision? The issues seem so complex and the endless stream of information and variables makes your head spin. Many times we get caught up analyzing every single variable and take forever to make a decision. However, most of the time *“all that extra information isn’t actually an advantage at all; that, in fact, you need to know very little to find the underlying signature of a complex phenomenon.”* (pg. 234)

To make good snap decisions, we need to focus on the essentials. Thin slicing is the ability of our unconscious mind to find patterns and meaning in the information it takes in and then discard the rest. We actually only need about 40-70% of the available information to make a good decision. The thousands of minor variables are not enough to sway a decision if the

essentials lean one way or another. Focus on the essentials and you are headed in the right direction. *“In good decision making, frugality matters.”* (pg. 243)

If you are making a decision about renting an apartment, you really only need the essential details: price, location, size, quality. Details like where plugs are and if it has grey or white tile aren't essential. The smaller details will not help you make a better decision, they will cloud the decision.

Barriers To Faster Decisions:

Sometimes, we get stuck in “analysis paralysis” because in our gut we know the *right* decision, but we want to make it based on logic so we can explain our logical reasons to others. Another book, “Thinking Fast And Slow” highlights how our brain stores information in our unconscious mind. Our unconscious mind can't often articulate the reasons why a decision “feels” right or wrong, but it does remember the feeling and the trigger. When we face a similar situation, it triggers the same emotion and we “feel” that a decision is right or wrong.

Is our unconscious mind wrong sometimes? Absolutely! But it is also right many times. That is why we should learn to use snap decisions as PART of our decision making toolbox depending on the decision.

Key take-away:

“Truly successful decision-making relies on a balance between deliberate and instinctive thinking.” Part of the deliberate thinking should include thinking about principles of how we will respond to certain situations. This helps us to thin-slice circumstances better because we can more quickly identify the essential elements of a decision.

“The key to good decision making is not knowledge. It is understanding. We are swimming in the former. We are desperately lacking in the latter.” (pg. 444)