

Optimal Thinking

How to Be Your Best Self

Rosalene Glickman, Ph.D.



John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Optimal Thinking

How to Be Your Best Self

Rosalene Glickman, Ph.D.



John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

In memory of my beloved parents,
Sarah and Joe Glickman.
Thank you for your unconditional love and support.

Copyright © 2002 by Rosalene Glickman, Ph.D. All rights reserved

Optimal Thinking® is a registered trademark of The World Academy of Personal Development Inc.

Published by John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York

Design and production by Navta Associates, Inc.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise, except as permitted under Section 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act., without either the prior written permission of the Publisher, or authorization through payment of the appropriate per-copy fee to the Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923, (978) 750-8400, fax (978) 750-4744. Requests to the Publisher for permission should be addressed to the Permissions Department, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158-0012, (212) 850-6011, fax (212) 850-6008, e-mail: PERMREQ@WILEY.COM.

This publication is designed to provide accurate and authoritative information in regard to the subject matter covered. It is sold with the understanding that the publisher is not engaged in rendering professional services. If professional advice or other expert assistance is required, the services of a competent professional person should be sought.

This title is also available in print as ISBN 0-471-41464-6. Some content that appears in the print version of this book may not be available in this electronic edition.

For more information about Wiley products, visit our web site at www.Wiley.com

Contents

Acknowledgments	vii
Optimal Principles	1
Part One: Help Yourself to Optimal Thinking	3
Rate Your Level of Thinking	4
Chapter 1. Optimal Thinking: The Next Step Beyond Positive Thinking	7
Suboptimal Thinking	8
What Is Optimal Thinking?	11
Who Thinks Optimally?	13
Take the Quantum Leap!	16
Why Positive Thinking Falls Short	18
Optimal Questions	32
Optimal Action Steps	33
Chapter 2. What Does “Optimal” Mean to You?	34
Use Your Whole Brain	34
Left-Brain Decisions	35
Right-Brain Decisions	39
What Does “Optimal” Really Mean?	40
The Key to the Optimal Answer Is the Optimal Question	42
Design Your Optimal Life	44
Five Optimal Questions to Start Your Day	46
Optimal Action Steps	46
Chapter 3. How to Use Optimal Thinking Consistently	47
Using Optimal Thinking Consistently Is a Process	47

Consciously Choose Optimal Thinking	48
Monitor Yourself	49
Overcome Your Limiting Core Beliefs	51
Norma's Story	75
Optimal Questions	76
Optimal Action Steps	76
Part Two: Optimize Yourself	79
Rate Your Self-Esteem, Purpose, and Goals	80
Chapter 4. Achieve Optimal Self-Esteem	83
Self-Esteem: What's It All About?	83
Our Internal Voices	85
How Do You Value and Rate Yourself Now?	88
Your Best Self	92
Marry Your Best Self	100
Optimal Questions	101
Optimal Action Steps	101
Chapter 5. Discover Your Ultimate Direction	103
The Value of a Life Purpose	103
Identify Your Life Purpose	105
The Value of a Purposeful Career	110
Identify Your Career Purpose	112
Ready to Commit?	115
Optimal Questions	116
Optimal Action Steps	116
Chapter 6. Plan Your Best Life	117
Set SUPREME Goals	117
Why Plan Optimally?	119
Write Down Your SUPREME Goals	120
Modes of Optimal Planning	120
Alternative Plans of Action	131
Make the Best Use of a Calendar	132
Optimal Questions	135
Optimal Action Steps	135
Chapter 7. Optimize Your Feelings	136
The Value of Emotions	136
Overpowered by Emotions?	137
How to Master Disturbing Feelings	139
Optimization Signals	144

How Do You Relate to Your Feelings?	163
How to Optimize Your Feelings	165
Optimal Questions	171
Optimal Action Steps	172
Part Three: Optimize Others	173
Rate Your Communications and Work	174
Chapter 8. Maximize Your Communications	177
Suboptimal Communication	177
Optimal Communication	179
Listen for Optimal Communication	182
Nonverbal Communication	186
Optimal Verbal Communication	189
Optimal Verbal Assertion	190
Conflict Is a Part of Life	193
How Well Do You Communicate?	195
Optimal Questions	197
Optimal Action Steps	197
Chapter 9. Optimal Thinking at Work	198
A New Optimal Paradigm	199
AnyBiz versus OptiBiz	200
Optimal Leaders and Optimal Visions	208
Optimal Leaders and Reality	210
Motivating Others to Do Their Best	212
Characteristics of Optimal Leaders	215
Optimal Questions	218
Optimal Action Steps	218
Epilogue	219
Optimal Exercises	220
Optimal Affirmations	225
Optimal Questions	229
Bibliography	232
Optimal Thinking Seminars, Programs, and Products	237
Index	239

Acknowledgments

It is my greatest pleasure to acknowledge my agent, Lynn Franklin, for her commitment and professionalism. The first time I spoke with Lynn, I knew she was the right person to represent Optimal Thinking. She has validated that decision all along the way!

When I met Tom Miller at Wiley, I felt privileged to have the ear of the consummate professional. Thank you Tom for pinpointing the issues and leading me in the right direction.

Howard Baller, thank you for everything.

My dear friend Halina Margan has lovingly supported me through life's challenges for thirty years. Thank you Halina.

To Marvin Wolf, my mentor and friend, thank you for your personal and professional guidance.

Bill Hughes deserves the highest praise for cutting through to the heart of issues and for his timely support during the toughest times.

I am also most appreciative of the encouragement and feedback I have received from Daniall and Julie Wong, Patricia Rust, and Eilleen Steinberg.

To Fred Plotke, Iris Weithorn, MFT, Howard Baller, Ph.D., Halina Margan, Ph.D., Elliot Goldstein, and James Buckley, thank you for your contributions to the manuscript.

My corporate clients, seminar participants, and personal clients deserve my gratitude. Without you, Optimal Thinking would not have been tried, tested, and proven.

Acclaim for *Optimal Thinking*

“*Optimal Thinking* beautifully convinces and illustrates why ‘the enemy of the best is the good.’ Insightfully, it blends and synthesizes idealistic and realistic thinking, left- and right-brain cognition, analysis and creative intuition, acceptance and optimism. A superb treatment of the idea of Personal Best.”

—Dr. Stephen R. Covey, author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*

“*Optimal Thinking* has a little bit for everyone and will help people be the best self they can be.”

—Kenneth Blanchard, Ph.D., coauthor of *The One Minute Manager*

“To fast create an optimal life, lifestyle, and future, read, digest, and use *Optimal Thinking*.”

—Mark Victor Hansen, cocreator of the *New York Times* bestselling series *Chicken Soup for the Soul*

“This powerful, practical, most inspiring book gives you the ideas and tools you need to become an optimally productive and powerful person in every area of your life.”

—Brian Tracy, author of *Focal Point* and *Maximum Achievement*

“A lucid, well-reasoned, and eminently practical guide to raising the quality of one’s thinking and thereby the quality of one’s life.”

—Nathaniel Branden, Ph.D., author of *The Six Pillars of Self-Esteem*

Optimal Principles

Every thought is creative.

Make the choice to be your highest and best self,
regardless of the circumstances.

The language of your highest and best self is
Optimal Thinking.

Accept what is out of your control, and optimize what
is within your control.

Ask the best questions to invite the best answers.

Choose the best, then put the issue to rest.

Optimal thinking is the basis of Optimal results
(sense of completion).

Function at your peak by thinking Optimally.

Create your best life with Optimal Thinking.

PART ONE

Help Yourself to Optimal Thinking

"The highest first."
—Maharishi Mahesh Yogi

Rate Your Level of Thinking

The following questionnaire will help you identify your dominant level of thinking. You may choose to write your answers in the book itself. If you'd rather write your answers on a separate piece of paper, this may be the perfect time to start your Optimal Journal. You might like to view this book and your journal entries as a private conversation between you and me. As you read through *Optimal Thinking*, you will optimize your thinking and behavior. You can record your Optimal Action Steps, design your best life, and monitor your progress in your Optimal Journal.

For each statement below, circle the number that best describes your thoughts about yourself, about others, and about your current situation. Then add your score.

3 = *Always*

1 = *Reasonably or sometimes*

2 = *Usually or often*

0 = *Rarely or never*

- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I am responsible for making the most of my life. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 2. I am in control of my life. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 3. I like myself. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4. I get along well with people. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 5. I deserve to have what I want. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 6. I deserve the best in life. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 7. I can have the best in life. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 8. I am comfortable with success. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 9. I view failure as a learning opportunity. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 10. I accept what is out of my control, and optimize what is in my control. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 11. I can handle rejection. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 12. I can handle pain. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 13. I am happy to be alive. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 14. I do my best. I give life my best shot. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 15. I embrace negativity as a natural part of life. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 16. I have realistic expectations of myself, of others, and of life. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 17. I bring out the best in others. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |

- | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 18. I handle conflict effectively. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 19. I accomplish my most important goals. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 20. I am comfortable with all my feelings. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 21. I am happy about my career prospects. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 22. My financial situation satisfies my needs. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 23. I consider the worst event scenario and the best contingency plan when evaluating risks. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 24. I make the most of whatever crosses my path. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 25. I am where I need to be in my life right now. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |

If your score is 70–75, you are already using Optimal Thinking consistently. This book will validate your thinking and provide you with many new ways to optimize your thinking and your life.

If your score is 46–70, your thinking is extraordinary, but not in your best interest. Optimal Thinking will empower you to maximize your talents, resources, and time. You will acquire the mental software to be your best in every situation.

If your score is 16–45, your dominant thinking level is mediocre. You think in moderate, middle-of-the-road terms. With Optimal Thinking, you will gain the mental tool to support your best interests. You will then be equipped to make the wisest choices in every situation, and make the most of your life.

If your score is 0–15, your dominant thinking level is negative. You are probably feeling distressed right now and may be wondering if it is possible to get your life on track. I often see people like you in my practice. I want to assure you that this book will provide you with the mental tool to be your best and empower you to create your best life. Optimal Thinking is simple, immediately applicable, and does not require a leap of faith. You are on the right path.

CHAPTER 1

Optimal Thinking: The Next Step Beyond Positive Thinking

Do you enjoy the best life has to offer or are you stuck with a life of compromise and substitutes?

Optimal Thinking is for all who want to be their best and enjoy the best in life. If you are willing to optimize your life by making the most of your thinking, *Optimal Thinking* is for you!

Many people would love to experience the ultimate relationship but find themselves settling for second best. Some people want to make the most of their professional lives, but are making only limited progress. They dream of all the rewards of financial success, yet are restricted by tight budgets. Others are overworked, trapped in the wrong jobs, and unfulfilled at home.

Optimal Thinking is not just another self-improvement book. It is your definitive guide for self-optimization—a quantum leap! This book does not make assumptions about what is important to you, but instead offers an approach to empower you to discover your highest priorities and create your own best solutions. You'll learn how to ask yourself and others the best questions to make the most of everyday situations. You'll learn a style of thinking that provides the best chance of creating anything and everything you will ever want.

So where do we start? Let's explore the various levels of sub-optimal thinking and then compare the results with those you can experience with *Optimal Thinking*.

Suboptimal Thinking

You have, I'm sure, practiced a wide variety of thinking before you decided to read this book. You may have noticed that your thinking is not always in your own best interest. Are you aware of your current thought mix? How much do you identify with the following thinking styles?

Negative Thinking

Do you sometimes find yourself thinking negatively about yourself, about others, or about circumstances? Is your focus on what's wrong, on limitations, or on destructive viewpoints? Although negative thinking is often detrimental and scorned by many in society today, *it is valuable*. Negative thinking enables us to define and express our vulnerability, integrate trauma, and grieve the meaningful losses in our lives. It also warns us of imminent danger. Negative thinking cautions us against investing our hard-earned money in fraudulent get-rich-quick schemes, or against diving into deep water when we don't know how to swim. It is necessary in any design process to anticipate flaws in products, services, and projects so that they can be rectified.

We all think negatively from time to time. Do you experience worry, depression, or blame? Do you complain, criticize, or use words like "can't" and "won't"? Are you ever unreasonable? Do you direct your anger at people who have nothing to do with its cause or solution? Negative thinking can be very *destructive*. Negative thinkers often waste valuable ideas and opportunities for success by dwelling on why things can't be done. They anticipate failure in their endeavors and use their losses to validate their pessimistic perspective. They see life as a series of problems, focus on what they don't have, and are usually unhappy.

All of us experience varying degrees of negativity. Sometimes we have a few doubts about the workability of a situation, while at other times we are convinced that it *can't* work—under any circumstances. When we believe that what we want is unattainable or that whatever we do won't make any difference, we feel helpless. Here are some examples:

Craig, a real estate agent, has been divorced twice. During each marriage he created havoc because he couldn't control his temper. Now, lonely and disillusioned, he is afraid of intimacy and sabotages relationships with women. He doesn't believe that he can make a committed relationship work.

Miles sold his chiropractic practice after he broke his arm. He then invested in several unsuccessful business ventures where he was misguided and defrauded. He now feels hopeless, and believes that the grass will turn brown even where he waters it.

Some people have a slightly negative disposition whereas others are extraordinarily negative. How much of *your* time is spent thinking negatively? _____%

Positive Thinking

Are you a positive thinker? Are you confident and self-assured? Is your thinking constructive and productive? When evaluating a situation, do you focus on the bright side? Do you think in terms of victory and success? Positive thinkers see themselves as good, loving, productive, competent, and worthy of life's favorable offerings. They concentrate on the value in themselves, in others, and in the world. They focus on how things *can* be done—and make them happen. They approach life with a “can do” and “will do” attitude, believing that the grass will turn green where they water it.

Consider Heather, a positive thinker. As an aspiring actress in her early forties, Heather believed that her age would help rather than hinder her. She took acting lessons from well-regarded teachers and zealously refined her craft. She approached each day enthusiastically and auditioned for roles whenever she could. For Heather, each audition provided an opportunity to display her talent. Believing that success would soon be hers, she persisted through numerous temporary setbacks and developed confidence as an actress. One day she was offered an important role in a high-budget film. She excelled in that role and went on to become a successful actress.

We all know that positive thinking can motivate us to be productive, efficient, and successful. But there are varying shades of positive thinking. Let's examine some of them.

Mediocre Thinking

You may be a positive thinker, yet your thinking could, in fact, be mediocre. Do you think you're quite good at your job? Are you a pretty good family person, friend, or athlete? Is your thinking rarely unusual? Do you feel comfortable being one of the crowd? American business writer Lou Vickery believes: “Nothing average ever stood as a monument to progress. When progress is looking for a partner it doesn't turn to those who believe that they are only average. It turns instead to those who are forever searching and striving to become the best they possibly can. If we seek the average level, we

cannot hope to achieve a higher level of success. Our only hope is to avoid being a failure.”

Here is a typical example of such a mediocre thinker:

Mary, a good-hearted woman, owns a modest home, drives an ordinary car, and lives a reasonably comfortable life. She doesn't aspire to the best things in life because she doesn't believe she could ever have them. Although she has some worthwhile goals, she is not excited about achieving them. She gets along quite well with others because she avoids conflict and does not make waves. Mary's mediocre thinking began early in life because, sadly, her parents constantly denigrated her intellect, behavior, and aspirations. She was continually told that she couldn't have what she wanted and that she must compromise. To this day Mary avoids taking actions that might evoke disapproval from others. Having settled for second best all her life, at forty-four she has not overcome her early restrictive conditioning.

Are you a mediocre thinker? When people ask you how you are, do you automatically respond with “not bad,” “okay,” or “pretty good”? Many people are in the habit of responding in mediocre terms instead of considering their options and figuring out a reply that is in their best interest. Best-selling author Stephen Covey suggests: “You have to decide what your highest priorities are and have the courage—pleasantly, smilingly, non-apologetically—to say ‘no’ to other things. And the way you do that is by having a bigger ‘yes’ burning inside. The enemy of the ‘best’ is often the ‘good.’”

Mediocre thinkers are regular people who feel comfortable being considered average in their thinking and actions. Their style of thinking is generally moderate and conservative. American actor and critic Uta Hagen believes: “We must overcome the notion that we must be regular. It robs us of the chance to be extraordinary and leads us to the mediocre.”

Most people are committed to this middle-of-the-road form of thinking. Others simply tinker with it. How much of your time do you devote to mediocre thinking? _____%

Extraordinary Thinking

Does extraordinary thinking describe you? Do you think in terms of being more than ordinary, unusually great, exceptional? Do you prefer to think beyond the realms of mediocrity? Do you like to challenge the limited thinking of most people? Do words like “remarkable,” “brilliant,” “outstanding,” “great,” and “high achiever” describe you?

Extraordinary thinkers achieve exceptional results in all walks of life because they don't settle for the ordinary. Former NASA astronaut Dr. Mae Jemison was the first African American woman to venture into space. She admits: "My mission is to make unique contributions." Well-known real estate developer Donald Trump claims: "As long as you're going to be thinking anyway, think big." According to former Soviet and Russian political leader Boris Yeltsin, "It is especially important to encourage unorthodox thinking when the situation is critical: At such moments every new word and fresh thought is more precious than gold."

By listening carefully, you can identify extraordinary thinkers. Recently the chief executive officer of a large and successful oil corporation came to my office for a business consultation. His response to the question "What is the primary purpose of your company?" was "to create *exceptionally high* returns for our shareholders" as part of his overall statement. He was an extraordinary thinker.

Many extraordinary thinkers refuse to give in to seemingly insurmountable limitations and obstacles. Thomas Edison invented the electric lightbulb when everyone believed it wasn't possible. He succeeded after ten thousand attempts. When the world believed it couldn't be done, Roger Bannister ran the mile in four minutes. We don't know exactly how these people achieved their successes, but we do know that they courageously challenged and surpassed the conventional thinking of their time. Their extraordinary thinking may or may not have produced the best possible outcome, but it certainly provided the mental foundation for exceptional results.

Does this describe you? How much of your time is invested in extraordinary thinking? _____%

By now, you are probably wondering how positive thinking differs from Optimal Thinking. Read on to learn that when you compare the levels of positive thinking—even extraordinary thinking—to Optimal Thinking, positive thinking is suboptimal!

What Is Optimal Thinking?

"Wisdom denotes the pursuit of the best ends by the best means."

—Francis Hutcheson

Have any of these thoughts ever crossed your mind?

- I deserve the best in life.
- How can I make the most of this situation?

- What's the best solution?
- I'm taking the smartest actions toward my most important goal.
- I'm doing my best.
- I'm maximizing my options.
- What's the most constructive use of my time right now?

If you entertain such thoughts, please welcome yourself into the Optimal Thinking community.

Optimal Thinking is the language of your highest self. It empowers you to be your best and stops you from settling for second best. With Optimal Thinking, your highest self takes charge. You focus on the best or most constructive thought at all times. You choose your best option in any given moment and experience the results of your own best thoughts. When thinking Optimally, you are not concerned with others' concepts of "the best." You are not in competition with anyone. You are concerned with what "the best" means to you and you attach your own value to it. Of course, "the best" has a different meaning for each of us. When considering the purchase of a gift for a loved one or coworker, one Optimal Thinker may think that the best choice is the highest quality available, and isn't concerned with price. Another may choose the gift that offers the most value relative to price.

When you use this superlative form of thinking, you are aligned with your highest level of creativity—and creation. You can choose the best actions to accomplish what's most important to you. You automatically use words like "best," "wisest," "greatest," "most productive," "supreme," and "maximize." Here is the quantum leap!

Suboptimal Positive Thinking

good, better
great
high, higher
smart, smarter
important
enjoyable
profitable
effective
improve, manage, increase
outstanding

Optimal Thinking

best
greatest
highest, peak, top
smartest
most important
most enjoyable
most profitable
most effective
maximize, optimize, make
the most of
most outstanding

You can employ Optimal Thinking to instantly make the most of your life by asking questions like:

- What is most important to me?
- What's my major objective?
- Which resources will be most beneficial in helping me to achieve it?
- What are my greatest talents and abilities?
- How can I make the best use of them?
- What is the most constructive action I can take right now?
- Who are the right people with whom to share my goals and dreams?
- How can I optimize my gratitude for life?

With Optimal Thinking, you can also bring out the best in others. Just focus on the best ways to help them achieve what's most important to them. In Optimal interactions, when someone is off track, ask the "best" questions to help them find the best resolution. For example:

- What's the best way to handle this?
- What's the best solution?
- What's your highest priority right now?
- What's the best opportunity you can act upon right now?

If you run a business, you can maximize its success using Optimal Thinking. You will need to define your business in terms of its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, values, objectives, and plans by answering Optimal questions like:

- What are the greatest strengths of this company?
- Who are our most valuable employees?
- Who are our best customers?
- What are their most important needs?
- What are our most beneficial products/services?
- What are our most profitable products/services?
- How can we make the most of these strengths?
- What are our greatest weaknesses?
- What's the best way to minimize them?

Who Thinks Optimally?

We are all Optimal Thinkers. Some of us use Optimal Thinking from time to time, others use it more frequently, but most of us don't

use it consistently. Until now, this peak form of thinking has not been acknowledged or structured. That's why I coined the term Optimal Thinking. We all know that green is a color that is seen frequently in nature. Once we know that green is created when blue and yellow are combined, it's easy to reproduce it consistently. Similarly, once we identify Optimal Thinking as a specific form of thinking and understand its structure, we can use it consistently.

What's most exciting about Optimal Thinking is that you can use it at any time and in any place. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to be an Optimal Thinker. It doesn't matter what stage of life you are in, or in what circumstance you find yourself. You can use Optimal Thinking to *instantly make the most of your life*.

Consider Brian and Lynn, both physicians and Optimal Thinkers, who have been happily married for twenty years. When asked about the success of their relationship, Lynn said, "We take complete responsibility for our own feelings and behavior, and do our best to make the relationship the best it can be. Our favorite phrases are, 'What's our highest priority? What is best for both of us?'" Brian explained, "Whenever we have an argument, we embrace the present moment, observe our inner reactions, and explore what we are doing to cause them. We then figure out the best solution for both of us."

Optimal Thinking can be used to make the most of any situation. A perfect example is Gerry, a football player and Optimal Thinker, who was suffering from a severe knee injury. His doctor told him that he would risk further injury if he didn't take sufficient time to recover. To make the right decision, Gerry asked himself the following Optimal questions: "What's in my best interest? What's best for the team? What's the best solution?"

When the chief executive officer of a leading telecommunications company described the primary purpose of his company, he said: "To *maximize* returns to our shareholders." I knew he was an Optimal Thinker.

Do You Recognize These Optimal Thinkers?

History books are crammed with Optimal Thinkers from every walk of life. Albert Einstein encouraged us to live according to an Optimal standard. He said: "We have to do the best we can. This is our sacred human responsibility." American industrialist Harvey Samuel Firestone held an Optimal human relations perspective. He believed: "You get the best out of others when you give the best of