

PRACTICAL THINKING

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Practical Thinking Guidebook

The Practical Thinking guidebook is your essential resource for developing clear, objective, and effective thinking skills that can transform your personal and professional life. Practical thinking involves more than just solving problems—it's about anticipating opportunities, managing tasks efficiently, and maintaining a calm and organized approach to daily challenges. This guidebook is designed to help you enhance your practical thinking abilities, enabling you to set realistic goals, prioritize effectively, and tackle projects with confidence and clarity.

In these pages, you'll discover key traits of successful practical thinkers, including the ability to critically analyze situations, approach problems methodically, and stay focused under pressure. Whether you're aiming to improve your own practical thinking or assist others in developing these skills, this guide offers actionable insights and strategies. From breaking down complex projects into manageable tasks to leveraging the power of neuroplasticity to rewire your brain for positivity, you'll find a wealth of tips and techniques to boost your productivity and effectiveness.

Dive in and learn how to turn practical thinking into a powerful tool for success, helping you navigate the complexities of both work and life with greater ease and satisfaction.

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Practical Thinking Defined

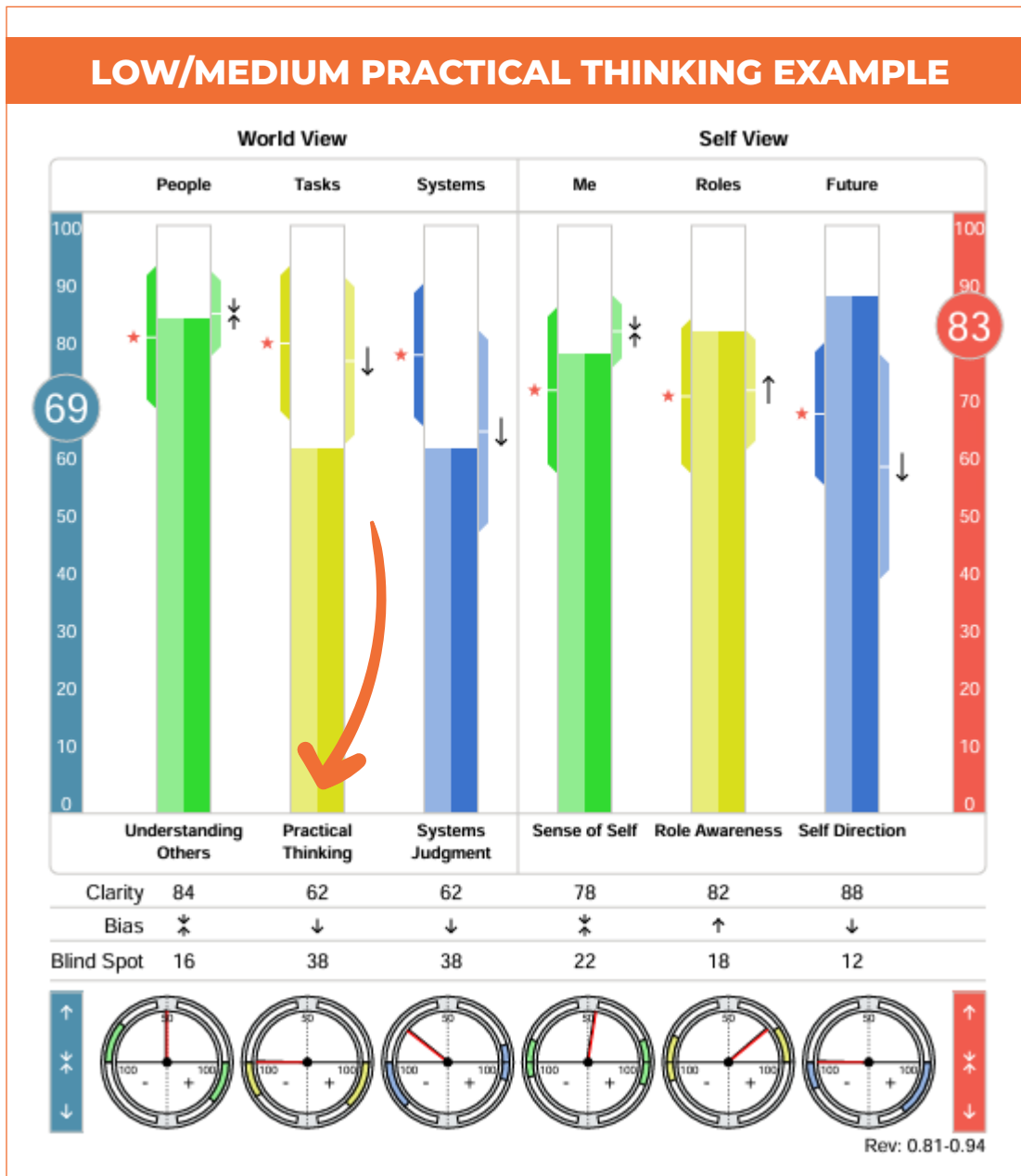
Having have a clear and objective understanding of the practical world, tasks, and processes. One key trait of good practical thinkers is that they spend more time working diligently toward important goals than they do “putting out fires,” which are urgent but potentially less important in the long run.

What are skills associated with Practical Thinking?

- Has the ability to look critically at current events and patterns of activities, anticipating potential opportunities and possible problems.
- Has developed his or her problem solving skills, approaching each new problem critically and analytically.
- Is confident in his or her own abilities to manage new situations, keeping calm and collected in stressful or busy times.
- Is organized and efficient about prioritizing and delegating responsibilities to ensure that key milestones are met and projects are finished on time.
- Sets realistic, achievable goals and objectives for him or herself and others based on careful analysis of existing workload, natural talents, and acquired abilities.
- Keen understanding cause and effect
- Approaches work immediately, thoroughly, and gladly
- Likes things to look good
- Does things well
- Feels organized and on top of things
- Gets a lot done—a multitasker

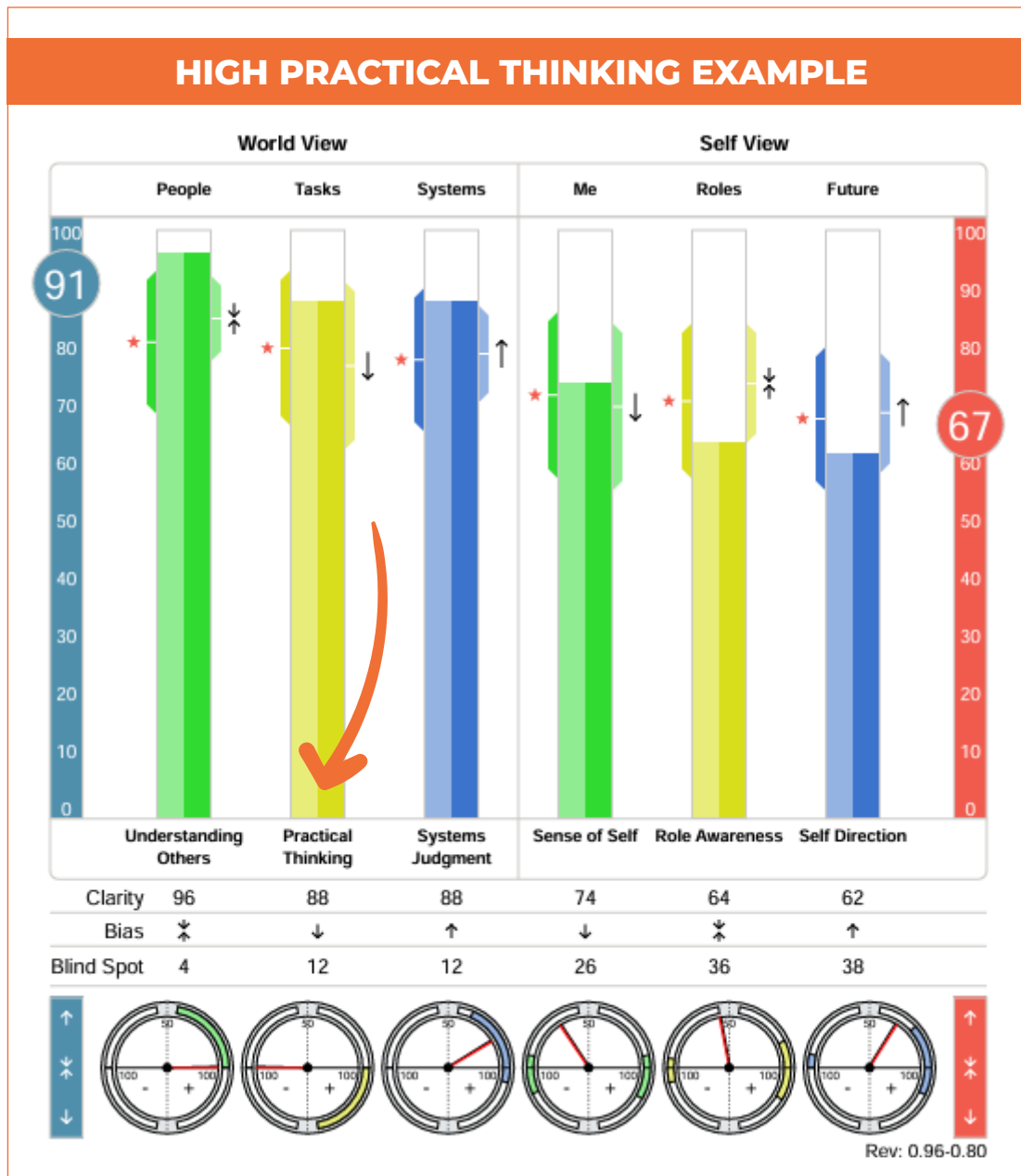
Sample Axiology Practical Thinking “Under the Hood” Scores from Real People

Scoring = 80-100 is High • 60-79 is Medium • 40-59 is low



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Hiring and Interview Questions: What to Ask When a Candidate Scores Low on Their Practical Thinking Scores

Lower Clarity on Practical Thinking (Scores between 40 to 60)

1. Give me an example of a project you completed and the outcome. Please give me the essential components of that project that played the most significant role in its completion.
2. Tell me about a time when you missed a deadline. What were the consequences? What did you do differently the next time you faced a deadline?
3. Have results ever been less than stellar for a project you've worked on? What caused the results to be less than great? How did it happen?
4. Give me an example of a time when you procrastinated before starting something. How did you get started? Did you complete that goal or project?
5. Give me an example of when you could focus your efforts on a single goal. How were you able to do that?
6. How would you approach a new task that you've been assigned without being given much direction?
7. How are you at finding new and more efficient ways to do things? Can you provide a specific example?

What to Do to Grow Your Own or Help Another Grow Their Practical Thinking Scores

ARKT - Awareness, Readiness, Knowledge, and Tools

- **Awareness** – Knowing that the gap exists is the first step to making a change. The Trimetrix assessment shows us where the gaps are and points us to what we can do about it.

- **Readiness** – Readiness is when someone is interested and ready to make the change. They see the gap, they have the awareness, and now something in their life is happening that makes them want to make the change

Awareness and readiness are 80% of the answer toward making a change. Without awareness and readiness, a change will not happen.

- **Knowledge** – The scores in the Trimetrix assessment are not static, they can be improved and grown.

- **Negativity bias:** the term scientists use to describe the innate human tendency to focus on negative experiences and stimuli. This is a biologically hardwired cognitive bias that helped us to survive in the natural environment that we evolved in. Negative experiences were often threats to our survival, so our distant ancestors that were most attentive to these and able to learn from them were the ones that passed their genes down to us. On the other hand, positive experiences—while enjoyable—didn't contribute much to our odds of survival, so they don't carry the same weight and importance in our brain.

- **Neuroplasticity:** The neuropsychologist Rick Hanson puts it this way: our brains are like Teflon for positive experiences and Velcro for negative ones. If this sounds like a recipe for unhappiness, well ... it is, and it's one reason that depression and anxiety are epidemic in the modern world. But here's the good news: we can rewire our brain for positivity and happiness.

Neuroplasticity is the now proven principle that we can change the structure and function of our brain throughout our lives and that our thoughts, emotions, and behavior are the primary means of doing that. Neuroplasticity means that we can overcome our inherent negativity bias and rewire our brains to pay more attention to the positive experiences we have. Negativity bias = unhappiness, anxiety, depression. Positivity bias = happiness, contentedness, and zest for life.

Eight Tools for Growing Practical Thinking:

1. **Mindset Mantra:** “I get things done immediately, thoroughly and cheerfully.”

Notice the three different and equally important descriptors in this mantra:

immediate (I don't procrastinate), **thorough** (I don't rush and make mistakes), and **cheerful** (I feel happy in the doing).

2. How do we rewire our brain? Create **Tune-N-Time (TNT)** by starting an **Appreciation Journal**. Writing down what we're grateful for on a daily basis shifts our attention away from negativity and toward positivity. This changes the wiring in our brain, which in turn leads to changes in gene expression and cellular function throughout our body (Eric Kandel won the Nobel Prize for this discovery in 2000). These changes can be significant, as indicated by a 2016 pilot study in patients with heart failure. The patients were split into two groups: one received standard care and the other received standard care but also did gratitude journaling. The results were remarkable. The patients who did gratitude journaling saw a decrease in inflammatory markers (CRP, TNF-a, IL-6), and an increase in heart rate variability (which corresponds to a decrease in the stress response) In other words, just writing down what they were grateful for each day reduced inflammation and relieved stress in measurable ways. Pretty cool, right? A gratitude journal isn't hard to do, but as you can see, it can lead to significant, positive changes—not only in your outlook on life, but in your health and well-being.

3. Overcome the Planning Fallacy

The planning fallacy describes our tendency to underestimate the amount of time it will take to complete a task, as well as the costs and risks associated with that task—even if it contradicts our experiences. Let time become your friend – never let it be your enemy. There are so many hours in the day.

REMEMBER the Five P's - Proper Planning Prevents Poor Performance.

4. **Getting Things Done: “The Art of Stress-Free Productivity”**, commonly referred to as GTD, is a self-help book by David Allen that provides an approach to personal productivity. First published in 2001, it has since been translated into many languages and has gained a large following worldwide. The primary goal of the GTD method is to allow individuals to focus their mental energy on completing tasks, rather than remembering them. To this end, it provides a framework for managing tasks and projects that involves five basic stages: capture, clarify, organize, reflect, and engage. Allen observed that our brains are much better at processing information than storing it (“your head’s a crappy office”). The GTD method lays out a workflow where you can dump all this mental clutter into an external system and organize it so you can confidently answer “What should I be working on?” at any given moment without worrying you might forget something important you need to do later.

We love the GTD methodology because it:

- Supports stress-free productivity
- Increases a sense of control
- Encourages planning
- Provides a structured approach to managing tasks
- Manages daily routines and long-term goals

5. NirvanaHQ App

Nirvana is a to-do app, designed around the GTD methodology. I have it on my Phone, iPad and Computer. It helps me prioritize daily actions, while keeping an eye on the big picture. My ‘mind is more like water’ because it has become a trusted space that helps me capture and organize all of the incoming actions, ideas and plans, personally and professionally.

6. Remember the 80/20 Rule

The rule says that you should be spending 80 percent of your time on the most important 20 percent of your projects. Make a list of all of the projects that are on your desk or that you know are pending. Be sure to include projects that have been assigned to you as well as projects you personally think are important for you to work on.

- Do you know what your most important 20 percent are?
- Do you spend 80 percent of your time on them? Why or why not?
- What can you do to re-prioritize your projects?
- Which projects can you delegate to someone else?
- Which projects don’t really need to be done?
- Which projects should you ADD to your list?

Set priorities for everything you do—it may help to look at your priority list every morning to see what shifts need to be made.

7. Critique – Teach What We Need and Want to Learn

Think about someone you know who fits the description of each of the types of poor Practical Thinkers.

Type (a)— A person who pays too much attention to perfection, at the expense of time and money.

Type (b)— A person who rushes through projects to get results, at the expense of quality and sometimes money.

1. How does each person reveal his or her lack of Practical Thinking ability?
2. What kind of situations does he or she seem to get him or herself into?
3. If you could give him or her three pieces of advice about thinking more practically, what would they be?

8. Fighting Fires

One key trait of good practical thinkers is that they spend more time working diligently toward important goals than they do “putting out fires,” which are urgent but potentially less important in the long run. Think about some recent “fires” you’ve put out. What were they? Why did they seem so important at the time?

Now that some time has passed, and you are looking at an objective listing of the fires you put out, think about the following questions:

- Could each of the fires been avoided or at least anticipated? How would/wouldn’t that have changed things?
- In retrospect, what do you think you should have been spending your time on, instead of putting out the fire?
- How can you work toward anticipating “fires” that are in the works right now?

QUICK TIPS:

For Developing Practical Thinking Skills

1. Explore alternative courses of action for each problem or situation you come across.
2. Break large projects into smaller tasks. Be realistic about what you can accomplish, and don't be afraid to delegate!
3. Look at the effect of each potential on resources and personnel, and try to select the option that has the best long-term success prospects.
4. Remember that quick fixes almost never really fix the problem—you'll just be dealing with it again soon if you don't get to the root of the problem and manage it effectively.
5. Make sure you aren't "fighting a lot of fires"; instead, you should be dealing calmly but urgently with important issues.
6. If you want to start a new project, and the idea requires buy-in from multiple functional groups in your organization, "pre-sell" the idea to key personnel in each department. Once you have their support, present your idea to the larger group.
7. If you are in charge of a project team, develop clear project plans and prioritize key activities for the team.
8. Try to anticipate problem situations or opportunities before they arise—you will be dealing with a smaller problem than if you wait until the problem escalates or miss the opportunity.
9. If groups within your organization have prevented your team from accomplishing goals, meet with key individuals in those groups to improve relationships.
10. Discuss plans you create with other people and be open to their feedback.
11. Network with other people across your organization. Develop relationships with key individuals, and share opportunities with them. It will help all of you reach your strategic goals more quickly and effectively.
12. Develop strategic alliances with contacts in other organizations. You will get much-needed perspective and potentially valuable allies.
13. Be creative! Make time for yourself to freely explore potentials and possibilities. We can get so mired down in reacting to the day-to-day routine that we forget to be creative and extend our limits.



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