As a Man Thinketh
by James Allen

Master Your Mind
TODAY’S THOUGHTS DETERMINE TOMORROW’S CIRCUMSTANCES

QUICK OVERVIEW

In this short work, James Allen examines how a person’s thoughts affect every aspect of his life. “All achievements, whether in the business, intellectual or spiritual world, are the result of definitely directed thought,” Allen writes. That is why, to be successful, healthy and happy, it’s imperative to master one’s thoughts.

Allen’s eloquent, period language brings readers to the realization that thoughts and character are inseparably intertwined. A person’s character, he says, “is the complete sum of all his thoughts.” He contends that, through thoughts, one shapes the entire course of life.

Allen painstakingly and convincingly details the whys of mastering one’s thoughts, but there is less guidance on how to do so. Self-control and awareness are certainly keys, and Allen prescribes devoting time to reflect and discover oneself and one’s dreams. He, like many personal-development teachers, admonishes people to guard their minds. Protect one’s thoughts from people, books or media that don’t reflect what you want to become.

Today, the original version of As a Man Thinketh (which was used for this summary) is considered public domain and is accessible free in e-book form on the Web.

APPLY AND ACHIEVE

This little volume (the result of meditation and experience) is not intended as an exhaustive treatise on the much-written-upon subject of the power of thought.

It is suggestive rather than explanatory, its object being to stimulate men and women to the discovery and perception of the truth that, “They themselves are makers of themselves” by virtue of the thoughts which they choose and encourage; that mind is the master weaver, both of the inner garment of character and the outer garment of circumstance, and that, as they may have hitherto woven in ignorance and pain they may now weave in enlightenment and happiness.

SUCCESS Points

In this book you will:

• Learn how to develop a character that life rewards
• Recognize that the attitudes and thoughts of your mind have an impact on your physical body
• Acknowledge that thought and purpose must link before satisfying achievement occurs
• Understand that your accomplishments are related to what and how you think
THOUGHT AND CHARACTER

The aphorism, “As a man thinketh in his heart so is he,” not only embraces the whole of a man’s being, but is so comprehensive as to reach out to every condition and circumstance of his life. A man is literally what he thinks, his character being the complete sum of all his thoughts.

As the plant springs from, and could not be without, the seed, so every act of a man springs from the hidden seeds of thought, and could not have appeared without them. This applies equally to those acts called “spontaneous” and “unpremeditated” as to those which are deliberately executed.

Act is the blossom of thought, and joy and suffering are its fruits; thus does a man garner in the sweet and bitter fruitage of his own husbandry. Cause and effect is as absolute and undeviating in the hidden realm of thought as in the world of visible and material things. A noble character is not a thing of favor or chance, but is the natural result of continued effort in right thinking.

Man is made or unmade by himself; in the armory of thought he forges the weapons by which he destroys himself. He also fashions the tools with which he builds joy and strength and peace. By the right choice and true application of thought, man ascends; by the abuse and wrong application of thought, he descends. Between these two extremes are all the grades of character, and man is their maker and master.

Of all the beautiful truths, none is more gladdening or fruitful than this—that man is the master of thought, the molder of character, and maker and shaper of condition, environment and destiny. Man holds the key to every situation, and contains within himself that transforming and regenerative agency by which he may make himself what he wills.

Man is always the master, even in his weakest and most abandoned state; but in his weakness and degradation he is the foolish master who misgoverns his “household.” When he begins to reflect upon his condition, and to search diligently for the Law upon which his being is established, he then becomes the wise master, directing his energies with intelligence, and fashioning his thoughts to fruitful issues. Such is the conscious master, and man can only thus become by discovering within himself the laws of thought; which discovery is totally a matter of application, self-analysis and experience.

Effect of Thought on Circumstances

A man’s mind may be likened to a garden, which may be intelligently cultivated or allowed to run wild; but whether cultivated or neglected, it must, and will, bring forth. Man is buffeted by circumstances so long as he believes himself to be the creature of outside conditions. But when he realizes that he may command the hidden soil and seeds of his being out of which circumstances grow, he then becomes the rightful master of himself.

Circumstance does not make the man; it reveals him to himself.

Men do not attract that which they want, but that which they are. Their whims, fancies and ambitions are thwarted at every step, but their inmost thoughts and desires are fed with their own food, be it foul or clean. Thought and action are the jailers of Fate—they imprison, being base. They are also the angels of Freedom—they liberate, being noble. Not what he wishes and prays for does a man get, but what he justly earns.

Men are anxious to improve their circumstances, but are unwilling to improve themselves. They therefore remain bound.

Good thoughts and actions can never produce bad results. Bad thoughts and actions can never produce good results. This is but saying that nothing can come from corn but corn, nothing from nettles but nettles. Men understand this law in the natural world, and work with it. But few understand it in the mental and moral world and they, therefore, do not cooperate with it.

A man only begins to be a man when he ceases to whine and revile, and commences to search for the hidden justice which regulates his life. And as he adapts his mind to that regulating factor, he ceases to accuse others as the cause of his condition, and builds himself up in strong and noble thoughts. A man cannot directly choose his circumstances, but he can choose his thoughts, and so indirectly, yet surely, shape his circumstances.

Let a man cease from his sinful thoughts, and all the world will soften toward him, and be ready to help him. Let him put away his weakly thoughts, and opportunities will spring up on every hand to aid his strong resolves. Let him encourage good thoughts, and no hard fate shall bind him down to wretchedness and shame.
THOUGHT AND CHARACTER
within himself conscious he begins to reflect upon his condition, and to search the foolish master who misgoverns his "household." When abandoned state; but in his weakness and degradation he is what he wills.

Two extremes are all the grades of character, and man is wrong application of thought, he descends. Between these application of thought, man ascends; by the abuse and joy and strength and peace. By the right choice and true result of continued effort in right thinking.

Absolute and undeviating in the hidden realm of thought its fruits; thus does a man garner in the sweet and bitter hidden seeds of thought, and could not have appeared circumstance of his life. A man is literally what he thinks he," not only embraces the whole of a man's being, but is which discovery is totally a matter of application, self-

Harmonized with that end. That, while aiming at the good end, he is continually illustrative of the truth that man is the cause (though nearly always unconsciously) of his circumstances. That, while aiming at the good end, he is continually frustrating its accomplishment by encouraging thoughts and desires which cannot possibly harmonize with that end.

Here is a rich man who is the victim of a painful and persistent disease as the result of gluttony. He is willing to give large sums of money to get rid of it, but he will not sacrifice his glutinous desires. He wants to gratify his taste for rich and unnatural foods and have his health as well. Such a man is totally unfit to have health, because he has not yet learned the first principles of a healthy life.

Here is an employer of labor who adopts crooked measures to avoid paying the regulation wage, and, in the hope of making larger profits, reduces the wages of his workpeople. Such a man is altogether unfitted for prosperity. And when he finds himself bankrupt, both as regards reputation and riches, he blames circumstances, not knowing that he is the sole author of his condition.

I have introduced these three cases merely as illustrative of the truth that man is the cause (though nearly always unconsciously) of his circumstances. That, while aiming at the good end, he is continually frustrating its accomplishment by encouraging thoughts and desires which cannot possibly harmonize with that end.

Effect of Thought on Health and the Body
The body is the servant of the mind. It obeys the operations of the mind, whether they be deliberately chosen or automatically expressed. At the bidding of unlawful thoughts the body sinks rapidly into disease and decay; at the command of glad and beautiful thoughts it becomes clothed with youthfulness and beauty.

Disease and health, like circumstances, are rooted in thought. Sickly thoughts will express themselves through a sickly body. Thoughts of fear have been known to kill a man as speedily as a bullet, and they are continually killing thousands of people just as surely though less rapidly.

The people who live in fear of disease are the people who get it. Anxiety quickly demoralizes the whole body, and lays it open to the entrance of disease; while impure thoughts, even if not physically indulged, will soon shatter the nervous system.

Strong, pure and happy thoughts build up the body in vigor and grace. The body is a delicate instrument, which responds readily to the thoughts, and habits of thought will produce their own effects, good or bad, upon it. Out of a clean heart comes a clean life and a clean body. Out of a defiled mind proceeds a defiled life and corrupt body.

If you would perfect your body, guard your mind. If you would renew your body, beautify your mind. Thoughts of malice, envy, disappointment, despondency, rob the body of its health and grace. A sour face does not come by chance; it is made by sour thoughts. Wrinkles that mar are drawn by folly, passion, pride.

I know a woman of 96 who has the bright, innocent face of a girl. I know a man well under middle age whose face is drawn into inharmonious contours. The one is the result of a sweet and sunny disposition; the other is the outcome of passion and discontent. On the faces of the aged there are wrinkles made by sympathy, others by strong and pure thought, others are carved by passion. Who cannot distinguish them? With those who have lived righteously, age is calm, peaceful and softly mellowed, like the setting sun.

THOUGHT AND PURPOSE
Until thought is linked with purpose there is no intelligent accomplishment. They who have no central purpose in their life fall an easy prey to worries, fears, troubles and self-pityings, all of which are indications of weakness, which lead, just as surely as deliberately planned sins (though by a different route), to failure, unhappiness and loss, for weakness cannot persist in a power-evolving universe.
A man should conceive of a legitimate purpose in his heart, and set out to accomplish it. He should make this purpose the centralizing point of his thoughts. It may take the form of a spiritual ideal, or it may be a worldly object, according to his nature at the time being. But whichever it is, he should steadily focus his thought forces upon the object which he has set before him.

This is the royal road to self-control and true concentration of thought. Even if he fails again and again to accomplish his purpose (as he necessarily must until weakness is overcome), the strength of character gained will be the measure of his true success, and this will form a new starting point for future power and triumph.

Those who are not prepared for the apprehension of a great purpose, should fix the thoughts upon the faultless performance of their duty, no matter how insignificant their task may appear. Only in this way can the thoughts be gathered and focused, and resolution and energy be developed, which being done, there is nothing which may not be accomplished.

As the physically weak man can make himself strong by careful and patient training, so the man of weak thoughts can make them strong by exercising himself in right thinking.

Having conceived of his purpose, a man should mentally mark out a straight pathway to its achievement, looking neither to the right nor to the left. Doubts and fears should be rigorously excluded; they are disintegrating elements which break up the straight line of effort, rendering it crooked, ineffectual, useless. Thoughts of doubt and fear never accomplish anything, and never can. They always lead to failure. Purpose, energy, power to do and all strong thoughts cease when doubt and fear creep in.

The will to do springs from the knowledge that we can do. Doubt and fear are the great enemies of knowledge, and he who encourages them, who does not slay them, thwarts himself at every step.

THE THOUGHT-FACTOR IN ACHIEVEMENT

All that a man achieves and all that he fails to achieve is the direct result of his own thoughts.

Individual responsibility is absolute. A man’s weakness and strength, purity and impurity, are his own, and not another man’s. They are brought about by himself, and not by another; and they can only be altered by himself, never by another. His suffering and his happiness are evolved from within. As he thinks, so he is; as he continues to think, so he remains.

A strong man cannot help a weaker unless the weaker is willing to be helped, and even then the weak man must become strong of himself. He who has conquered weakness, and has put away all selfish thoughts, is neither oppressor nor oppressed. He is free. A man can only rise, conquer and achieve by lifting up his thoughts. He can only remain weak, abject and miserable by refusing to lift up his thoughts.

Before a man can achieve anything, even in worldly things, he must lift his thoughts above slavish animal indulgence. A man whose first thought is bestial indulgence could neither think clearly nor plan methodically. He could not find and develop his latent resources, and would fail in any undertaking. Not having commenced manfully to control his thoughts, he is not in a

What Is Your Will?

You will be what you will to be; Let failure find its false content In that poor word, “environment,” But spirit scorns it, and is free.

It masters time, it conquers space; It cows that boastful trickster, Chance, And bids the tyrant Circumstance Uncrown, and fill a servant’s place.

The human Will, that force unseen, The offspring of a deathless Soul, Can hew a way to any goal, Though walls of granite intervene.

Be not impatient in delay, But wait as one who understands; When spirit rises and commands, The gods are ready to obey.
position to control affairs and to adopt serious responsibilities. He is not fit to act independently and stand alone, but he is limited only by the thoughts which he chooses.

There can be no progress, no achievement without sacrifice. A man’s worldly success will be in the measure that he sacrifices his confused animal thoughts, and fixes his mind on the development of his plans, and the strengthening of his resolution and self-reliance. And the higher he lifts his thoughts, the more manly, upright and righteous he becomes, the greater will be his success, the more blessed and enduring will be his achievements.

Achievement, of whatever kind, is the crown of effort, the diadem of thought. By the aid of self-control, resolution, purity, righteousness and well-directed thought a man ascends. By the aid of animality, indolence, impurity, corruption and confusion of thought a man descends.

Men do not attract that which they want, but that which they are.

A man may rise to high success in the world, and even to lofty altitudes in the spiritual realm, and again descend into weakness and wretchedness by allowing arrogant, selfish and corrupt thoughts to take possession of him.

Victories attained by right thought can only be maintained by watchfulness. Many give way when success is assured, and rapidly fall back into failure. All achievements, whether in the business, intellectual or spiritual world, are the result of definitely directed thought, are governed by the same law and are of the same method; the only difference lies in the object of attainment.

He who would accomplish little must sacrifice little. He who would achieve much must sacrifice much. He who would attain highly must sacrifice greatly.

**VISIONS AND IDEALS**

He who cherishes a beautiful vision, a lofty ideal in his heart, will one day realize it. Columbus cherished a vision of another world, and he discovered it. Copernicus fostered the vision of a multiplicity of worlds and a wider universe, and he revealed it.

Dream lofty dreams, and as you dream, so shall you become. Your vision is the promise of what you shall one day be. The greatest achievement was at first and for a time a dream. The oak sleeps in the acorn; the bird waits in the egg. Dreams are the seedlings of realities.

Your circumstances may be uncongenial, but they shall not long remain so if you but perceive an ideal and strive to reach it. You cannot travel within and stand still without.

Here is a youth hard pressed by poverty and labor; confined long hours in an unhealthy workshop; unschooled, and lacking all the arts of refinement. But he dreams of better things. He conceives of, mentally builds up, an ideal condition of life. The vision of the wider liberty and a larger scope takes possession of him; unrest urges him to action, and he utilizes all his spare time and means, small though they are, to the development of his latent powers and resources.

Very soon so altered has his mind become that the workshop can no longer hold him. It has become so out of harmony with his mentality that it falls out of his life, and with the growth of opportunities which fit the scope of his expanding powers, he passes out of it forever.

Years later we see this youth as a full-grown man. We find him a master of certain forces of the mind which he wields with influence and power. In his hands he holds the cords of gigantic responsibilities. He speaks, and lives are changed. He has realized the vision of his youth. He has become one with his ideal.

And you, too, will realize the vision (not the idle wish) of your heart, be it base or beautiful, or a mixture of both, for you will always gravitate toward that which you secretly most love.

Into your hands will be placed the exact results of your own thoughts; you will receive that which you earn, no more, no less. Whatever your present environment may be, you will fall, remain or rise with your thoughts, your Vision, your Ideal. You will become as small as your controlling desire; as great as your dominant aspiration.

The thoughtless, the ignorant and the indolent, seeing only the apparent effects of things and not the things themselves, talk of luck, of fortune and chance. See a man grow rich, they say, “How lucky he is!” Observing another become intellectual, they exclaim, “How highly favored he is!”
In all human affairs there are efforts, and there are results, and the strength of the effort is the measure of the result. The vision that you glorify in your mind, the Ideal that you enthrone in your heart—this you will build your life by, this you will become.

SERENITY
The calm man, having learned how to govern himself, knows how to adapt himself to others; and they, in turn, reverence his spiritual strength, and feel that they can learn of him and rely upon him. The more tranquil a man becomes, the greater is his success, his influence, his power for good. Even the ordinary trader will find his business prosperity increase as he develops a greater self-control and equanimity, for people will always prefer to deal with a man whose demeanor is strongly equable.

The strong calm man is always loved and revered. He is like a shade-giving tree in a thirsty land, or a sheltering rock in a storm. Who does not love a tranquil heart, a sweet-tempered, balanced life? It does not matter whether it rains or shines, or what changes come to those possessing these blessings, for they are always sweet, serene and calm.

The great majority of people ruin their lives and mar their happiness by lack of self-control. How few people we meet in life who are well-balanced, who have that exquisite poise which is characteristic of the finished character!

Tempest-tossed souls, wherever ye may be, under whatsoever conditions ye may live, know this—the sunny shore of your ideal awaits your coming. Keep your hand firmly upon the helm of thought.
Say unto your heart, “Peace, be still!”

Recommended Reading
Visit your favorite bookseller to purchase this book. It is also available in e-book format online for free. If you enjoy As a Man Thinketh, check out:

Talent Is Never Enough by John C. Maxwell

Acres of Diamonds by Russell H. Conwell

The Power of Self Talk by Dr. Jim Will

About the Author
James Allen retired in 1902 at the age of 38 to devote his time to writing and philosophical study. It is believed that his life and writings were heavily influenced by the philosophy of Leo Tolstoy and Buddha. In the foreword to As a Man Thinketh, Allen writes that the book is the result of meditation and experience. His wife once noted that Allen did not write for writing’s sake, but because he had an idea or method that he had successfully applied to his own life. As a Man Thinketh was the second of 19 books Allen wrote before his death in 1912.