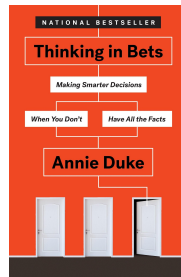


Thinking In Bets by [Annie Duke](#)

Book club facilitation guide by [Viktor Cessan](#)



If you've read my blog you might know that I like book clubs and that I try to make them [interactive or experiential](#) as opposed to the typical conceptual "What did you learn and think of these chapters"-approach.

During October and November 2019 I ran a book club on [Thinking in Bets](#), written by Annie Duke. If you're also planning on reading it at your workplace, here are some exercises you could run that relate to the chapters in the book. We've divided the book into three parts and meet 3 times (every second week). We're running two groups and they're 8-10 per group. Typically when groups are larger I create small groups for the exercises and give them 15-30 minutes to talk in small groups and then we meet back in the larger group to share some findings/insights.



Basic outline of book club:

- 10 members in every book club group.
- We meet for 2 hours per session.
- Session 1 covers chapters 1+2. Session 2 covers chapters 3+4. Session 3 covers chapters 5+6.
- We don't do all the exercises I've listed below, I usually prepare a few more than we have time for depending on what the group thinks is most interesting.
- Typically I wrap up every session with a 10-minute free conversation - what are your takeaways from this chapter or what are you going to try to do differently as a result of these chapters. But that comes at the end, after the other exercises.

The goal with the book club is not to create fluency. Instead it is to make abstract concepts more concrete. In the book club people get to play with the concepts in a different way than reading them, so that they get a better understanding of what the author is talking about.

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Book club principles

1. Explore abstract concepts through practical exercises
2. Learn through practice and joint exploration
3. Postpone judgment--it's fine to not want to use these tools later. This is only about learning more about the tool and you can decide for yourself if you want to use it. But let's not waste everyone's time by explaining why something isn't going to work or why something is the salvation.
4. Facilitate the exposure of ideas to people (and not necessarily your ideas as the facilitator)

Note that this is not an official author approved guide, this is just how we've run it and we may have gotten some of the authors points wrong.

If you use this facilitation guide, please let me know on viktor@cessan.com or connect with me on [linkedin](#). Would be great to know how to improve my coming guides and to understand if it's helpful.

Exercises for session 1

1. [Plotting decisions based on quality and outcome.](#)
2. [Handout about Identifying type 1 and type 2 errors.](#)
3. [Handout with self-reflection questions.](#)
4. [Handout about Belief formation and motivated reasoning](#)

Exercises for session 2

1. [Creating a learning loop step 1 - The basic loop](#)
2. [Creating a buddy system step 2 - Skill or Luck Fielding](#)
3. [Creating a learning loop step 3 - Using Annies' questions to improve the learning loop](#)
4. [Experiencing the buddy system](#) - To do

Exercises for session 3

1. [CUDOS](#)
2. [Scenario Planning](#)
3. [Decision-swear jar - Bingo](#)
4. [Temporal reflection](#) - To do
5. [Visualizing your learnings](#)

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Plotting decisions based on quality and outcome

The purpose of this exercise is to visualize how people evaluate their decisions. Depending on the size of the group and time, pair up people, have them work 1 by 1, or run this exercise in a large group. This exercise takes around 20 minutes to run through, let the group know of the time constraint to not get stuck in analysis paralysis.

Exercise

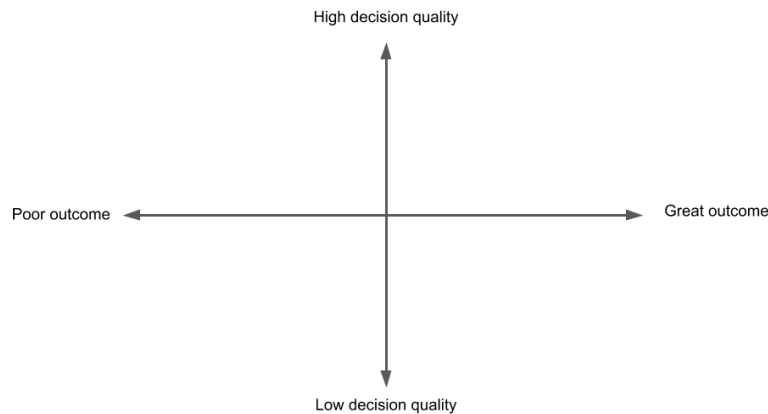
1. Begin and ask them to list 10 recent decisions that they've made, where they've gotten some form of response (encourage people to think about bets made in the last 6-12 months for this reason). Give them 5 minutes for this.
 - Use post-its (1 post-it per decision) as people will be moving their decisions around in a grid later. But don't disclose what the grid looks like yet.
 - *Typical questions are about the size of decisions and recency. We went with anything within the last year and went for a spread of anything from buying a house, getting married, changing jobs, to the choice of feature to implement, or even choice of lunch.*
2. Next, give them 2-3 min to assess if it was a good or bad decision and note that on the post it.
 - *We used +, -, and ? as icons on the post its to indicate good or bad decision and "I don't know yet"*
3. While everyone is writing, draw the following grid and ask people to plot their decisions based on the outcome.

Poor outcome ←————→ Great outcome

4. Next, add the decision quality axis and have people chat in groups about what high quality vs low quality is when it comes to making decisions. Spend ~5 min on this.
5. After that, ask people to re-plot their stickies. (You can either draw this on the whiteboard or print a personal copy of this [template](#).)

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Book club Exercises by Viktor Cessan, Organizational and Agile Coach www.viktorcessan.com
Based on the book [Thinking in Bets](#) - by Annie Duke.



Once people have plotted their decisions, have them reflect. What insights did they get? If they'd like to go back to the book to read more about this, this is covered in pages 1-10.

5 minutes for this part too.

Example of what it can look like:



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Type 1 and Type 2 errors.

Page 12 in the book.

How do You tell the difference between type 1 and type 2 errors?

What are one or two false positives you've encountered in your career?

What are one or two false negatives you've encountered in your career?

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Reflecting on a recent decision/bet

The purpose of the following exercises in session one i.e. all hand-out exercises is to provide space for people to start reflecting on an actual decision they made. Participants will do a lot of reflection in the following sessions but to ease people into it, the following exercises start off with a handout. Suggest that they take a somewhat more complex or difficult bet.

Exercise

1. Print the handout/s and hand them out to participants (hand out one at a time)
2. Form pair or trios depending on the size of the group. (If your group consists of only 4 people you can do it as one big group)
3. Give people 20 minutes to fill it out and to talk about it in their pairs or trios. If you're doing this in a big group give them 10 minutes to fill out the paper and then give people 5 minutes each to share.
4. Once everyone is done sharing have them reflect on insights and take aways.

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Self-reflection hand-out

Name one decision you're about to make or that you've just made.

What factors have you, and haven't you considered?

How unsure are you about this decision

Are you treating this decision as if the world was like chess or poker?

Learning from decisions

Name a decision you made in the past 3 months.

Was it a good or bad decision? Why?

How did you learn from this decision?

Saying "I don't know"

When's the most recent time you were expected to make a decision and instead said "I don't know"?

What happened as a result?

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Belief formation and Motivated reasoning

How are our beliefs formed, according to these chapters?

What is motivated reasoning?

In your work, you're going to meet a lot of people (stakeholders, customers, etc). Why is it important for you to understand how belief formation works, and what motivated reasoning is?

What can you do to ensure that strongly held, incorrect, beliefs are enlightened and that motivated reasoning is reduced?

What's one example of other people using motivated reasoning?

Think about one example where you are using motivated reasoning.

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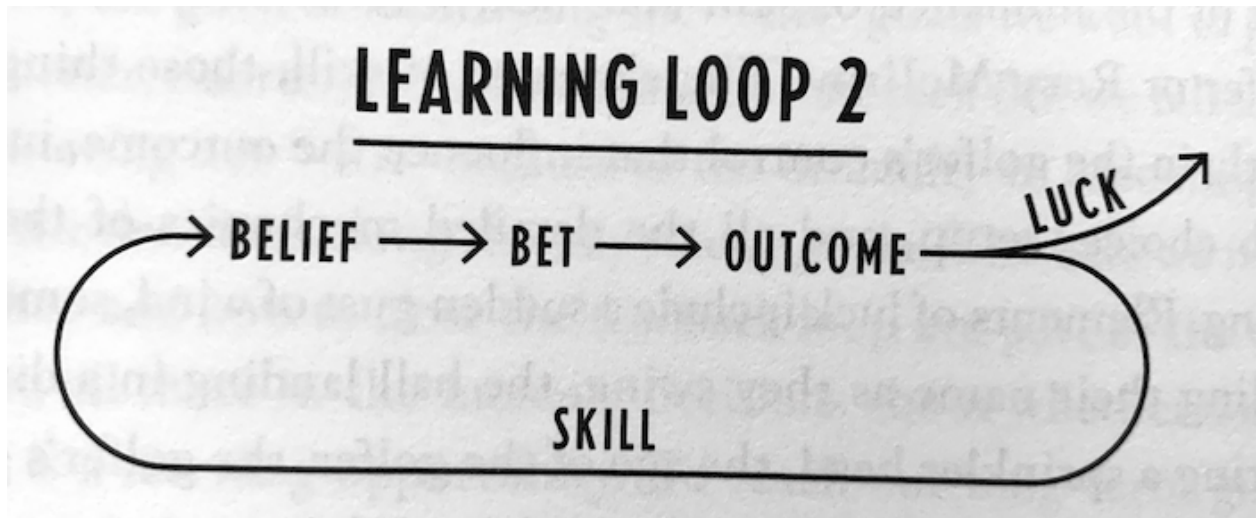
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Creating a learning loop – Step 1

This session is about creating a learning loop, learning how to field luck vs skill, and about exploring your beliefs surrounding a bet. The goal is to learn from one bet people have made and to be able to identify blind spots and increase quality in future decisions.

Instructions

1. Ask everyone to draw a learning loop (but for now leave out the luck part). For this exercise, I gave everyone one sheet of magic whiteboard paper each. They're going to be adding lots of post-its throughout this exercise but using A4 or A3 paper can work too.



2. Next, ask everyone to select one bet they've made that they would like to learn from. Write that on a post-it and put it underneath bet. The bet doesn't have to have played out fully yet but it should have started to play out.
3. Also have them fill out the input they considered, how they made the decision, the analysis etc in the circle. One thing per post-it if you're using post-its.
4. Ask them to also fill out the outcome/s and the belief they have that influenced the decision. Give people 10 minutes to create their posters.
5. Next, form pairs or trios if you have a large book club group and have people present their learning loop to each other. One person shares their bet, outcomes, skills, and beliefs. And the other person listens and probes. The listener should ask questions and explore areas of uncertainties e.g. how did you reach this decision, who else did you ask, what did you not consider, how are you evaluating success, what other ways could you evaluate the outcome, what would have to be true in order for that to work(exploring beliefs), what

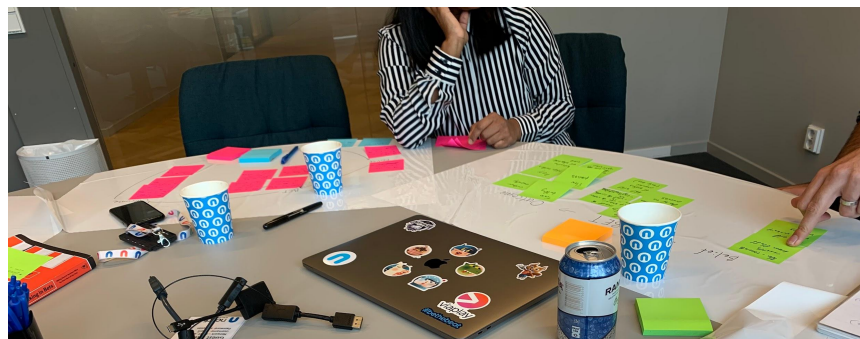
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about area X, basically ask anything they're curious about and mirror when you as the listener note inconsistencies or bias etc.

6. As the presenter discover blindspots (whether she forgot to do them or include them in her poster) she should note them down in another color on the post-its. This completes the picture but it also shows how much blindspots the person has.
7. Make sure everyone gets ~10 minutes to present and when the pairs are done presenting, ask people to reflect on what they've learned so far about their learning loop.

Once everyone has shared and reflected what they learned as a result of their conversations, ask them to share one or two takeaways so far.



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Creating a learning loop step 2 – Skill vs Luck fielding

Now explore skill and luck fielding to understand the extent that luck and skill mattered where luck is uncertainty and uncontrollable and unknowable factors.

1. Have the group ask themselves Annies questions for their bet and outcome/s:
 - a. If you made the same decision again, would it predictably lead to the exact same outcome? (Skill)
 - b. If you changed the decision, would it predictably lead to a different outcome? (skill)
 - c. If you make the same decision and it would lead to another outcome, then luck influences it. When our actions don't have a significant impact on the outcome then luck is the main influence.
2. Have the original pairs talk about their findings and update their learning loops.

One example from our group was that a manager had run a team-building exercise with a team and the outcome was that the team bonded. But running this exercise again with the team would not help build the team more, and running this exercise with another team would not predictably help build that team/improve the bonding. So that decision was mainly influenced by luck. When probing we discovered that the exercise wasn't adapted after the team's abilities, the team dynamics, nor the team composition.

This was helpful to the manager in understanding areas she left out when making decisions.

Creating a learning loop step 3 – Buddy System Questions

As the third and final step of this exercise of doing a learning loop, have the pairs or trios explore Annies' buddy system question. We only had time to explore 2 questions per person in the pair.

1. Go back to your pairs and have them explore Annies' question for their learning loops.

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2. Ask them to reflect together directly (one person is the presenter, one is the buddy). The buddy selects one question and the presenter selects one question to explore.
 - a. Why might my belief not be true?
 - b. What other evidence might be out there bearing on my belief?
 - c. Are there similar areas I can look toward to gauge whether similar beliefs to mine are true?
 - d. What sources of information could I have missed or minimized on the way to reaching my belief?
 - e. What are the reasons someone else could have a different belief, what's their support, and why might they be right instead of me?
 - f. What other perspectives are there as to why things turned out the way they did?
3. Give them 5 minutes each.

Output from this session (learning loops visualized).



Experiencing the Buddy System

To Do - Add an exercise about experiencing the buddy system. This exercise is similar to the learning loop but we've modified the social contract and made the goal of the pair to improve decision making quality and increase accuracy.

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CUDOS

To help the group explore different aspects of what CUDOS as rules of engagement feels like/what value it can bring, the participants got to either prepare:

- one decision that they'd made, that they wanted the group to explore. The only instruction was that it had to be outcome blind. So the group would not get to know what the outcome was either in advance or afterwards. CUDOS in this case was the rules of engagement.
- One specific aspect of CUDOS that they had experience from in the past e.g. I shot a messenger what can I do differently? I as a messenger was shot, what could I have done in that situation? Or I consider the credibility of the source and disregard input that might be valuable, what can I do to avoid it. Etc.
- A situation in which you are exploring how CUDOS might be helpful.

Allowing the group to explore CUDOS from different perspectives and can see it's multi-usefulness.

Exercise:

1. Share the instructions above i.e. to prepare one case to raise. We spent 15 minutes in preparation.
2. Have people share and explore the case using CUDOS. (If you're doing this in small groups allow 5 minutes of presentation and conversation per participant. If you're doing it in a slightly bigger group you may want to limit to having one or two participants share their example and give them more time.) We spent 10 minutes per participant.
 - a. Our first example was a decision that had been made. The person shared a story of how events turned out and we asked questions using Annies examples:
 - i. What influences are you under?
 - ii. What have become absolute truths?
 - iii. What would you have to see that might indicate your truths are not entirely accurate?
 - iv. The person talked about time so we asked, what makes you so sure that time is a key factor in the outcome?
3. Have people note down their insights from this exercise.

This exercise took 60 minutes.

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Scenario planning

Pages 208–218. Going from belief to potential future is hard, as Annie suggests. But plotting multiple futures and even assessing their probability is even more difficult. This exercise is about creating that whole chain for one bet. The goal is to discover more about how you assess probability and being aware of more futures. It's not about right or wrong.

Exercise:

1. Ask people to select a decision that they want to explore. It is fine if the bet has already played out but then they need to more actively practice openness to potential futures that could have happened.
2. Have them visualize the link between their belief, the bet, and start plotting different futures that could happen.
3. Next have them assess the probability of each future.
4. Ask them to present to each other in small groups. Make sure ppl spend some time exploring probability and how they assess probability. What different factors do you consider, what data and past experiences are you using to determine this?
5. Then have a big group conversation, ask for one volunteer and explore that person's chain.
6. Share insights in a big group.

This exercise took us 35 minutes.

Decision swear jar bingo

In this exercise, participants play bingo with the thought patterns/biases/expressions that Annie mentions in the section Decision-swear jar (pages 204–207). Participants select a bet they made and reflect on what happened and how they reason about it together with a buddy. The buddy listens intently to try to identify as many of the traps that Annie mentions.

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Decision swear jar bingo

Illusion of certainty	Overconfidence	Irrational outcome fielding	Moaning or complaining
Making generalized characterizations	Violating Mertonian norms of universalism	Zooming in on a moment	Motivated reasoning
Claiming "Wrong"	Lacking self-compassion	Overly generous editing	Accepting truths without evidence
Evaluating success through the outcome	Engagement of others	Infecting with conflicts of interest	Discouraging engagement from others

Book club [Exercises](#) by Viktor Cessan, Organizational and Agile Coach www.viktorcessan.com
Based on the book [Thinking in Bets](#) - by Annie Duke.



Exercise

1. Ask people to form pairs or trios and let people know we're going to play decision swear jar bingo. The goal of this game is to get bingo while identifying decision swearing.
2. Hand out one bingo template available [here](#) to everyone.
3. Have people prepare a bet they'd like to explore. Something they've decided that has or has not fully played out. Both are equally fine.
4. Give people some time to get acquainted with the decision swearing that Annie mentions on pages 204–207. 5–10 minutes should be enough.
5. Next, one they've decided what to present and have read the section in the book, ask them to start presenting to each other. While one person presents, the other in the small group listens intently. Asking questions is totally fine. As a suggestion, follow the CUDOS rules of engagement. Depending on how big the groups are and how much time you have you may want to allocate 5 or 10 minutes.
6. Once time is up switch so that the other person gets to present.
7. Talk about take-aways and insights in a small group.
8. Then talk about take-aways and insights in the big group.

You can also play this bingo as a big group with 5–10 people and with a shared bingo-template. There are some benefits with this since recognizing all the different biases can be difficult, but by asking many people to listen together it's likely that you'll notice more swearing.



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1. To do this, just ask for one volunteer that is ok with sharing their bet and what happened.
2. work to create safety - getting permission to ask questions
3. Give the volunteer 10 minutes to prepare, while she prepares ask the group to read pages 204-207.
4. Follow the steps above i.e. have the person present and the team records swearing on the bingo template, and then reflect in the big group.

If you reach bingo, shout it out and celebrate.

This exercise takes anywhere between 30-60 minutes depending on size.

Temporal reflection (10,10,10 + past and future you)

In this exercise, participants get to connect with their future and past self, and explore a decision together with other versions of themselves.

To do - create exercise steps

Visualize your learnings

This is the final exercise in the book club in which participants get to reflect upon the entire book, what they remember, what they learned, and what's changed for them. Participants get to create a visual book review.

Exercise

1. Give people one magic whiteboard each and ask them to create a visual book review.
2. Depending on the size of group and time allocated to exercise, give participants 0-5 minutes to present their reviews or put them up on the walls for a gallery walk.
3. Wrap up by asking people to share a couple of take-aways from the book club.

Time necessary 15-30 minutes depending on the size of group.