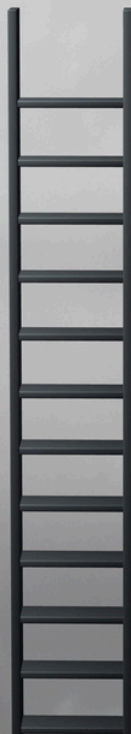


# Lenses of The Extended Mind: 9 Principles for Better Thinking



## Lenses of The Extended Mind: 9 Principles for Better Thinking

In *The Extended Mind*, Annie Murphy Paul shows how we can think better by engaging our bodies, environments, tools, and social connections. These nine principles are practical ways to extend our minds beyond the brain to unlock creativity, solve complex problems, and foster innovative thinking.

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### 1. Offload Information

**Principle:** Move information out of your head and into the world. Writing, drawing, or using tools helps clarify thoughts.

**Example:** A project manager uses a whiteboard to map out tasks and deadlines, organizing thoughts externally to reduce cognitive load.

**Try This:** Write down your ideas when they feel overwhelming, or create a visual mind map to track them. You'll see patterns more clearly!

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### 2. Transform Information into Artifacts

**Principle:** Turn abstract ideas into tangible objects. Physical artifacts help us see new possibilities.

**Example:** In architecture, designers create models to visualize buildings before construction, making abstract blueprints easier to grasp.

**Try This:** When brainstorming, use sticky notes, playdough, or sketching tools to make your ideas more tangible.

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### 3. Alter Your Own State

**Principle:** Manage your mental and physical state to improve focus and creativity. Your body's state affects how well you think.

**Embodied Intelligence:** Tools like interoception (awareness of internal sensations), exteroception (awareness of external stimuli), and proprioception (awareness of body movement) help manage emotions, stress, and creative flow.

**Example:** A designer steps outside for a short walk to regulate emotions and reset the brain before returning to creative work.

**Try This:** Try deep breathing or take a short movement break before tackling a tough problem. Notice how your thinking shifts.

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#### **4. Re-embody Thinking**

**Principle:** Involve your body in problem-solving. Movement and physical engagement enhance creativity.

**Theatre Principles:** Use techniques like Forum Theatre, Still Images, Bodystorming, and simulations to involve the body in thinking and decision-making processes. A skilled facilitator can guide such exercises to foster deeper engagement and new perspectives.

**Example:** In a workshop, participants use role-play and body movement to explore different perspectives on a complex challenge.

**Try This:** Next time you're stuck, stand up and move around as you think. Gesture with your hands or use props to help process your thoughts.

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#### **5. Re-spatialize Information**

**Principle:** Use visuals—maps, charts, and diagrams—to organize complex information and make it easier to understand.

**Example:** A team uses sticky notes on a wall to visually organize the steps in a project timeline, making it easier to see progress and identify gaps.

**Try This:** Create a diagram or timeline on a large surface. Physically moving pieces of information can lead to fresh insights.

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#### **6. Re-socialize Thinking**

**Principle:** Share your thinking with others. Conversations, brainstorming, and collaboration bring fresh perspectives and new insights.

**Example:** Tech companies hold cross-department brainstorming sessions to spark innovative ideas that wouldn't arise from individuals working in isolation.

**Try This:** Discuss a current challenge with a colleague. Explain your thinking, and see how their perspective helps refine your ideas.

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## 7. Generate Cognitive Loops

**Principle:** Move between internal thoughts and external actions. This back-and-forth between thinking and doing can improve problem-solving.

**Example:** A writer drafts an idea, steps away for a walk, then revises the draft with fresh insights gained during the break.

**Try This:** Work on a project for 20 minutes, then step away and focus on something unrelated. Come back with new eyes and revise.

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## 8. Create Cognitively Friendly Spaces

**Principle:** Design your environment to support thinking. A well-curated space can influence mood and cognition.

**Example:** Adding plants, natural light, and comfortable seating to an office boosts creativity and focus for a design team.

**Try This:** Take a look at your workspace. Could a change in lighting, adding greenery, or reorganizing improve your focus?

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## 9. Embody Extensions

**Principle:** Use tools, spaces, and social structures as cognitive extensions to enhance thinking.

**Example:** In a meeting, using a shared digital platform allows a team to collaboratively edit documents in real-time, extending each person's thinking through the technology.

**Try This:** Think about how you could better use tools or collaboration to help extend your thinking. Could a whiteboard, app, or shared space enhance your process?

## Closing Thoughts

Each of these principles highlights the power of extending our mind beyond the brain. By combining movement, external tools, and social interactions, we can cultivate richer and more creative ways of thinking. As you integrate these approaches into your work and everyday life, you'll find that your cognitive abilities expand in ways that help you solve problems more effectively, connect with others, and unlock new possibilities.

Explore and experiment with these lenses in diverse ways—there is no limit to how they can be applied. The more you engage with them, the more you'll discover how they can transform your thinking, work, and life.

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**Compiled by Colin Skelton @ Move Your Thinking - [colin@moveyourthinking.co.za](mailto:colin@moveyourthinking.co.za)**