



[www.habitsofmind.org](http://www.habitsofmind.org)



[www.mindfulbydesign.com](http://www.mindfulbydesign.com)

## THINKING FLEXIBLY

"I can't understand why people are frightened by new ideas. I'm frightened of old ones."

*John Cage*

---

"It's an ill plan that cannot be changed."

*Latin proverb*

---

"Just when I think I have learned the way to live, life changes."

*Hugh Prather*

---

"Nothing is more dangerous than an idea when it's the only one you've got."

*Alain (Emile August Chartier)*

---

"It's a mighty poor mind that can only think of one way to spell a word."

*Andrew Jackson*

---

"Education's purpose is to replace an empty mind with an open one."

*Malcolm Forbes*

---

"Life is not a static thing. The only people who do not change their minds are incompetents in asylums, and those in cemeteries."

*Everett McKinley Dirksen*

---

"Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail."

*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

---

"They always say that time changes things, but you actually have to change them yourself. "

*Andy Warhol*

---

"Only fools and dead men don't change their minds. Fools won't and dead men can't."

*John H. Patterson*

---

"Too much consistency is as bad for the mind as for the body."

*Aldous Huxley*

---

" Unless you change how you are, you'll always have what you've got."

*Jim Rohn, Speaker and Author*

---

"Change your thoughts and you change your world."

*Norman Vincent Peale*

---

"Continuing to cling to the patterns you know inhibits your ability to discover what you don't know."

*Eric Allenbaugh*

---

"Discovery consists of seeing what everybody has seen and thinking what nobody has thought."

*Albert von Szent-Gyorgyi*

---

"Change is the constant, the signal for rebirth, the egg of the phoenix."

*Christina Baldwin*

---

"The dust of exploded beliefs may make a fine sunset."

*Geoffrey Madan*

---

"There is nothing so confining as the prisons of our own perceptions."

*William Shakespeare  
King Lear*

---

"No problem can be solved from the same consciousness that created it. We must learn to see the world anew."

*Albert Einstein*

---

"Team members need to be able to suspend disbelief, think the unthinkable, and let intuition and premonitions flow freely. Therefore, a necessary skill in team members is tolerance for ambiguity."

*Kees van der Heijden*

---

"The only thing that makes life possible is permanent, intolerable uncertainty, not knowing what comes next."

*Ursula K. Leguin*

---

"I desire that there be as many different persons in the world as possible; I would have each one be very careful to find out and preserve his own way."

*Henry David Thoreau*

---

"Change is fun and exciting and, like a haircut, looks funny at first; but once you get used to it, it's great."

*Anne Blair*

---

"New frameworks are like climbing a mountain--the larger view encompasses rather than rejects the earlier, more restricted view."

*Albert Einstein*

---

"Don't be afraid to give up the good to go for the great."

*Kenny Rogers*

---

"If you find a good solution and become attached to it the solution may become your next problem."

*Dr. Robert Anthony*

---

"Everyone thinks of changing the world but no one thinks of changing himself."

*Leo Tolstoy.*

---

"Faced with the choice between changing one's mind, and proving that there is no need to do so, almost everybody gets busy on the proof."

*John Kenneth Galbraith*

---

"Did you ever notice how difficult it is to argue with someone who is not obsessed with being right?"

*Wayne W. Dyer*

---

"Our destination is never a place but rather a new way of looking at things."

*Henry Miller*

---

"Once people learn something, they're reluctant to let it go"

*Robert Easton*

---

"If you never change your mind, why have one?"

*Edward deBono*

---

"Only in growth, reform and change... paradoxically enough... is true security to be found."

*Anne Morrow Lindbergh*

---

"It is what we think we know already that often prevents us from learning."

*Claude Bernard*

---

"Maturity of mind is the capacity to endure uncertainty."

*John Finley*

---

"It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change."

*Charles Darwin*

---

"When you're through changing, you're through."

*Bruce Barton*

---

"A person can grow only as much as his horizon allows."

*John Powell*

---

"What we truly and earnestly aspire to be, that in some sense we are. The mere aspiration, by changing the frame of mind, for the moment realizes itself."

*Anna Jameson*

---

"Have confidence in your decisions. Make them expeditiously, and stay with them as long as you believe you are correct no matter what others say. However, when you conclude you were in error, do not hesitate to announce the error publicly and change course."

*Edward J. Koch*

---

"Soften the rigidities within yourself and the universe will give you strength and vigor."

*Arabic Proverb*

---

"You are the one who can stretch your own horizon."

*Edgar F. Magnin*

---

"My green thumb came only as a result of the mistakes I made while learning to see things from the plant's point of view."

*H. Fred Ale.*

---

"The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function."

*F. Scott Fitzgerald*

---

"Of all forms of mental activity, the most difficult to induce even in the minds of the young, who may be presumed not to have lost their flexibility, is the art of handling the same bundle of data as before, but placing them in a new system of relations with one another by giving them a different framework, all of which virtually means putting on a different kind of thinking-cap for the moment.

It is easy to teach anybody a new fact...but it needs light from heaven above to enable a teacher to break the old framework in which the student is accustomed to seeing."

*Arthur Koestler*

---

"Life at any time can become difficult: life at any time can become easy. It all depends upon how one adjusts oneself to life."

*Morarji Desai*

---

"There are two ways of meeting difficulties: you alter the difficulties, or you alter yourself to meet them."

*Phyllis Bottome*

---

“When one door is shut, another one opens.”

*Miguel de Cervantes*

---

"They must often change, who would be constant in happiness or wisdom."

*Confucius*

---

"It's never too late -- in fiction or in life -- to revise."

*Nancy Thayer*

---

“We know that uncertainty creates anxiety and sometimes desperate attempts to find something to believe in. Uncertainty engenders real opportunity as well as misleading choices, great leaders as well as false messiahs, and new ways of understanding the world alongside hollow maxims and deceptive promises. Understandably, we seek guides and guideposts to ease the anxiety of the journey. But we also need to depend on our own insights and imagination to cultivate, from our own experience, a way to move forward.”

*Alan Briskin*

---

"Change cannot be avoided. Change provides the opportunity for innovation. It gives you the chance to demonstrate your creativity."

*-Keshavan Nair, Author and Professor*

---

"My opinion is a view I hold until . . . well, until I find something that changes it."

*Luigi Pirandello*

---

"It is not necessary to change. Survival is not mandatory."

*W. Edwards Deming*

---

"The art of life lies in constant readjustment to our surroundings."

*Okakura Kakuzo*

---

"It is well for people who think to change their minds occasionally in order to keep them clean."

*Luther Burbank*

---

“Stubbornness does have its helpful features. You always know what you are going to be thinking tomorrow.”

*Glen Beaman*

---

“Because things are the way they are, things will not stay the way they are.”

*Bertold Brecht*

---

"If you don't like something change it; if you can't change it, change the way you think about it"

*Mary Engelbreit*

---

“You had better be ready to change your mind when needed.”

*Henry B. Wilson*

---

“If you're in a bad situation, don't worry it'll change.  
If you're in a good situation, don't worry it'll change.”

*John A. Simone, Sr.*

---

“I shall try to correct errors when shown to be errors, and I shall adopt new views so fast as they shall appear to be new views.”

*Abraham Lincoln*

---

“It's never too late – in fiction or in life – to revise.”

*Nancy Thayer*

---

"No one can make you change.  
No one can stop you from changing.  
No one really knows how you must change.  
Not even you.  
Not until you start. "

*Dr. David Viscott, Author and Psychologist*

---

“Our only security is our ability to change.”

*John Lilly*

---

“A wise man changes his mind, a fool never will.”

*Spanish Proverb*

---

“The foolish and the dead alone never change their opinion.”

*James Russell Lowell*

---

"I bend but do not break."

*Jean de la Fontaine*

---

Flexibility and adaptability do not happen just by reacting fast to new information. They arise from mental and emotional balance, the lack of attachment to specific outcomes, and putting care for self and others as a prime operating principle. Flexible attitudes build flexible physiology. Flexible physiology means more resilience in times of challenge or strain. Staying open--emotionally--insures internal flexibility.

*,Doc Childre and Bruce Cryer  
From Chaos to Coherence*

---

"It is change, continuing change, inevitable change, that is the dominant factor in society today  
No sensible decision can be made any longer without taking into account not only the world as it is, but the world as it will be."

*Isaac Asimov*

---

"Nothing is so firmly believed as what we least know."

*Michel Eyquem de Montaigne, French Author*

---

"Think in terms of what's good for the other person and success will seek you out. "

*Mary Kay Ash, Entrepreneur*

---

"Any plan is bad which is not susceptible to change."

*Bartolommeo de San Concordio, Painter and Writer*

---

"He who rejects change is the architect of decay. The only human institution which rejects progress is the cemetery."

*Harold Wilson*

---

"The universe is change; our life is what our thoughts make of it."

*Marcus Aurelius Antoninus*

---

"A truly strong and sound mind is the mind that can equally embrace great things and small."

*Samuel Johnson*

---

"If you don't change your beliefs, your life will be like this forever.  
Is that good news?"

*Robert Anthony, Author*

---

"I dwell in possibility."

*Emily Dickinson*

---

"So often we try to alter circumstances to suit ourselves, instead of letting them alter us, which is what they are meant to do."

*Mother Maribel*

---

**Source:**

These quotes originally compiled by Emeritus Professor Art Costa.  
Also available at [www.instituteforhabitsofmind.com](http://www.instituteforhabitsofmind.com)