

Choosing Whysly - Book Review

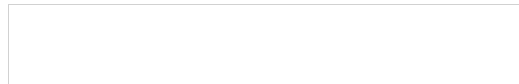


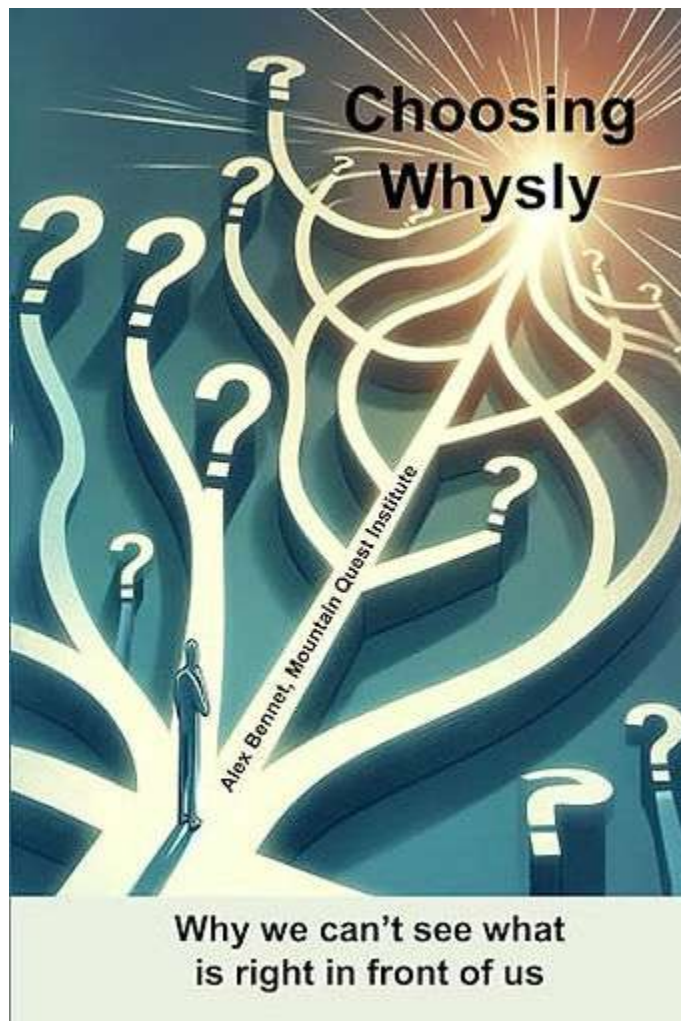
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Choosing Whysly by Alex Bennet explores why people overlook what is directly before them and how to make wiser choices. It offers practical ways to recognize cognitive biases, strengthen attention, question assumptions, build independent understanding, and use reflection, collaboration, and AI to perceive reality more clearly and improve personal and organizational decisions.





The book **Choosing Whysly: “Why we can’t see what is in front of us”** is one of a series of books written by Alex Bennet in 2026 that addresses core issues related to knowledge and meaning. The book’s title is a play on words - choosing wisely - where the word “whysly” is written in a way that hints at an alternative title: choosing while asking why.

The subtitle points to the issue at hand: why we, as human beings, don’t see what is right in front of our eyes.

The book can be divided into two main parts: the first relates to positive activity to advance ourselves as beings who choose wisely, and the second discusses the inhibiting factors to such a choice, and how we can deal with them.

Advancing ourselves toward wise choice:

- Agency
- Asking the “why” question
- Building independent understanding

Dealing with the inhibiting factors:

- Consciousness
- Attention and intention
- Blindness
- Relativity
- Biases
- Cognitive dissonance
- Self-deception

Toward the end, Bennet examines the place of artificial intelligence (AI) in relation to wise choice, with insights of practical applicative value.

Bennet bases her ideas throughout the book on learning from a wide range of disciplines and sciences.

I recommend reading the book and advancing our ability to choose wisely for ourselves and for society as a whole.

Advancing Wise Choice

Agency

As human beings, we have the capacity for wise decision-making.

Choosing wisely is more complex than one might initially think, since it is subjective - it relies on a fabric of beliefs, perceptions, emotions, and cultural framework that form the basis of our knowledge.

And yet, active agency (Agency) toward wise choice is significant: at the personal level, at the level of social responsibility, and at the level of influence on the world we operate in.

Understanding our subjectivity can serve as a lever for expanding and even breaking through the boundaries within which we exist:

Expansion:

- Through exposure to new experiences and experiments
- Through connecting to other mindsets via reading and viewing art
- Through critical reflection and self-questioning
- Through infinite learning (learning as a way of life (see ["Infinite Learning"](#) >>)).

Breaking boundaries:

- Through paradigm shifts
- Through crisis or trauma
- Through peak experiences

A passive process is not enough. One must stop, examine, seek factual grounding, reframe the situation, act, validate, and integrate. Changing beliefs and perceptions is not a purely logical process and is accompanied by an emotional fabric that must also be addressed to ensure integration.

The decision to choose wisely proactively is the first step in addressing why we don't see what is right in front of our eyes.

Asking the “Why” Question

The power of asking the “why” question lies in its being a central, foundational tool that helps us understand the motivation behind behavior, thoughts, and the goals we set.

Asking the “why” question allows individuals and organizations to clarify meaning and direction.

Asking the “why” question is the basis of the Golden Circle model, also known by the title of the book that describes this model: “Start with Why” (see [“Start with Why” >>](#)).

The “why” question can be used to address the issue at hand, by asking the “why” question (5 times - as is customary), in various contexts, such as:

- Perceptions and values we rely on when evaluating opportunities
- A broader understanding of the chaotic reality in which we exist

Asking the “why” question can form an essential part of the journey of self-exploration - meaning, connections, and progress.

Such a search process is personal and reflective and can relate to: existential questions; understanding our narrative; developing knowledge and curiosity; motivation to act; developing connections and empathy toward others; the ability to deal with challenges; and contribution to the common good for us as a society and world.

And returning to the Golden Circle model, it is implied from the above that asking the “why” and “who” questions is intertwined and serves each other.

Building Independent Understanding

Building independent understanding is not self-evident. It is a process that requires:

1. Defining the core question
2. Learning based on:
 1. A cross-disciplinary literature review
 2. Listening to expert opinions in the field
 3. Experience: developing and examining case studies
3. Identifying key insights
4. Creating a conceptual framework that constitutes a synthesis of what was learned
5. Writing (which constitutes further processing); iteration
6. Receiving feedback
7. Summarizing and publishing.

Dealing with the Inhibiting Factors

It is not enough to develop ourselves positively to make wise choices and see everything that stands before us.

There are quite a few built-in challenges, inhibiting factors that prevent wise choice and stop us from seeing what is right in front of our eyes. They are intertwined with each other. This review first examines the foundational factors related to consciousness and attention, moves to the categories, and from there continues to more specific factors. The main ones are:

Consciousness

The concept of consciousness rests on diverse scientific foundations, two of the most important being the neurological-physical field, which links consciousness to sensory processing and neural activity, and the cognitive field, which relates to aspects of attention, integration, and memory retrieval.

From hundreds of definitions, Bennet chooses the explanation of her late husband, David Bennet, who refers to consciousness as a process, a collection of ideas, thoughts, images, sensations, and perceptions, and the understanding of the connections within and between them.

In addressing the question of why we don't see what stands before us, the simple answer is that the brain filters the information accessible to us and of which we are aware to efficiently manage this limited resource.

Proposed ways of dealing with expanding awareness:

1. Reflection and meta-cognition: asking questions, seeking innovation, and staying in the moment (mindfulness).
2. Managing awareness: using dedicated techniques to examine perspectives and seek out and expose the subconscious.
3. Using technology: using artificial intelligence for awareness-promoting dialogue (expanded below).

Attention and Intention

The knowledge that our brain is economical with resources makes it easier to understand that even if something is right in front of us, we don't necessarily see it. A well-known example is a famous basketball-court experiment in which viewers are asked to count the number of baskets. As a result of focusing on this goal, almost all viewers (about 90%) miss a gorilla in costume entering and leaving the arena.

When examining our ability to pay attention, several types of challenges can be identified:

- Limited attention when performing different tasks, among which attention is divided.
- Attention over time (vigilance). The limited ability to remain vigilant in a monotonous environment over time.
- Selective attention. We need to prioritize attention and not invest in everything around us that we witness.
- Attentional blink. Brief moments very close to the time when we do pay attention, in which our brain cannot absorb additional information.
- Inattention to information items that do not align with the existing worldview.
- The gap between explicit attention and implicit or tacit attention (implicit, tacit).
- Psychological stress.
- Attention during repetitive ritual activities.
- Social attention. Perhaps surprisingly, or perhaps not, this influences our personal attention.
- Time-dependent attention. Attention allocation occurs at moments when we expect important events.

Ways of dealing with attention challenges:

1. **Being in the moment:** mindfulness training.
2. **Intention:** setting goals or declaring intentions.

Blindness

It can be said that every time we don't see what is right in front of our eyes, this constitutes "blindness." Before examining specific inhibiting factors, the different categories of blindness can be examined:

- Blindness to change (whether small or dramatic): we look for continuity.

- Cultural blindness: the tendency to think that everyone behaves as we do culturally. The tendency to think that even if we are familiar with several different cultural behaviors, everyone must act according to them, and that there cannot be a culture in which behavior or perception is otherwise.
- Economic blindness: a narrow focus on what is economically good for us, and not beyond that, or on what is good for us now without a long-term view.
- Emotional (psychological) blindness: the inability to understand or accept feelings other than our own. Goleman, in his excellent book Emotional Intelligence, teaches us that it is not enough to rely only on awareness; we also need attunement to nonverbal and context-dependent cues.
- Ideological/moral/political/perceptual blindness: the inability to see beyond what matches our ideology, morality, political agendas, and perceptions.
- Volitional blindness: blindness to seeing things that would require us to take responsibility and act.

***Note:** there are additional categories, which are mentioned at length in the contexts of the additional chapters above or below, and therefore are not detailed here.*

Ways to deal with blindness challenges:

1. Awareness of our challenges based on self-reflection.
2. Diverse exposure to cultures, ideologies, and more.
3. Critical thinking.
4. Encouraging empathy.
5. Collaborative approaches. Working collaboratively allows us to learn from our peers about our blind spots.

6. Setting goals.
7. Defining accountability.
8. Using technology.

Relativity

Sometimes we don't see what is in front of our eyes because our analysis is relative rather than absolute.

We examine our beliefs and perceptions in relation to truths and morality. But these are not universal. They are compared with conceptual frameworks or understandings we have adopted, including in contexts of morality, culture, and even the knowledge base (epistemology). Our relative perception can manifest in a variety of fields, such as:

- Aesthetics
- Law and justice
- Language and knowledge
- Logic
- Science (yes - even science is not immune to perceptions and agendas).

Ways of dealing with relativity challenges:

1. Recognizing the relativity within us.

Biases

Bennet devotes a dedicated chapter to one of the central inhibiting factors in our ability not to see what stands before us: cognitive biases. Those are the heuristics and shortcuts our brain uses to work efficiently. This is in accordance with the theory developed by Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky (see book summary >> A Cloud of Possibilities).

Understanding the biases that cause our brain to make systematic (!!) mistakes makes it possible to see why we don't see what is right in front of our eyes.

Key relevant biases include:

- **Confirmation bias:** preference for information that fits our existing perceptions.
- **Anchoring bias:** anchoring to the first information we receive and attributing subsequent information items to it (relativity).
- **Role bias:** gradual drift over time in fulfilling a role from value-based decisions to habit-based decisions.
- **Availability heuristic:** over-weighting available information, or information we remember because it was recently received.
- **Dunning-Kruger effect:** over-attributing ability to ourselves relative to others.
- **Egocentric bias:** over-attributing importance to our own positions or contributions.
- **Implicit bias:** attributing our unconscious patterns or stereotypes to what is observed.
- **Implausibility bias:** the tendency to ignore information that seems implausible relative to our beliefs and perceptions.
- **In-group bias:** preference for information and behavior preferred in relation to those who are in our group, compared to those who are not part of this group.
- **Negativity bias:** over-attributing weight to negative acts or risks compared to their positive equivalent.
- **Normalcy/status quo bias:** attributing lower weight to scenarios that are not continuous with the current situation.
- **Omission bias:** more lenient judgment of inaction (passive) compared to action, even if they lead to the same outcome.

- **Optimism bias:** attributing a more optimistic scenario and future to ourselves than to others.
- **Projection bias:** the tendency to project our own perceptions onto others.
- **Self-serving bias:** the tendency to prefer information that serves us.

Ways of dealing with biases:

1. Awareness
2. Knowledge
3. Critical thinking
4. Encouraging empathic thinking
5. Collaborative approaches
6. Setting goals
7. Using technology.

Cognitive Dissonance

Cognitive dissonance is an inhibiting factor that prevents us from seeing reality clearly. The term coined by Leon Festinger, one of the fathers of social psychology, describes the psychological tension created by a contradiction among our beliefs, attitudes, or behaviors. In such situations, we tend to seek justifications that allow us to reduce the tension and maintain a sense of internal consistency - even when this means partially distorting reality.

Ways of dealing with cognitive dissonance:

1. Self-awareness
2. Separation between identity and behavior
3. Proactive search for contradicting information

The goal is not to eliminate dissonance - it is a natural human mechanism - but to reduce automatic defenses and strengthen learning, accountability, and clarity of thought.

Self-Deception

Self-deception is a process in which we convince ourselves of a certain truth (or its opposite) despite having conclusive evidence that this is not the case.

Self-deception can affect our decision-making in aspects of:

- Cognitive dissonance
- Confidence or motivation to act
- Risk-taking
- Avoidance of taking responsibility
- Emotional management
- Interpersonal relationships
- Unwillingness to receive feedback
- Preventing learning.

Ways of dealing with self-deception:

1. Being in the moment (mindfulness)
2. Requesting honest feedback
3. Personal journaling
4. An approach that invites discomfort and dissonance
5. Challenging biases
6. Group approaches to sharing.

AI and We Human Beings

When thinking about the matter of artificial intelligence, it is appropriate to analyze it from two aspects:

1. To what extent does the AI make mistakes in the context of seeing reality?
And how?
2. To what extent can the AI help us overcome our own failure to see reality?
And how?

Artificial Intelligence and Human Errors

First of all, it turns out that in many respects, artificial intelligence is similar to us in its failure to see reality:

- The AI and I both rely on prior experience.
- The AI and I both fill in information gaps based on the specific context.
- The AI and I both make assumptions, not always justified, based on which we analyze reality.
- The AI and I both suffer from the attention challenge and fail to take into account all the knowledge available to us.

But there are also differences.

Human advantages:

- The experience we rely on also includes information that can be absorbed sensorially - sound, sight, touch, smell, and more.
- We have the ability to self-reflect and perform meta-cognitive processes.
- If told, awareness and the ability to act in relation to personal blindness.
- Flexibility in integrating information from sources with entirely different characteristics (touch and text, for example).
- The ability to learn and identify new patterns even when there are few examples.

Human disadvantages:

- Influence from more types of attention-related challenges (for example, attentional blink).
- Influence of variable motivation.
- Influence of psychological stress.
- Influence of social pressure.
- The volume of information scanned at any given time.

Using Artificial Intelligence for the Benefit of Human Beings

Artificial intelligence can be used to better perceive reality in front of our eyes, using various methods. Examples include:

1. Complementing the human being in providing attention, especially, but not only, during the attentional blink.
2. Expanding the memory and knowledge base available to us.
- 3.
4. Requesting assistance in critical thinking, to proactively seek out where we are wrong in our analysis of reality.

A word of caution: using AI is not without risks. These increase the more we develop excessive dependence on the machine.

And yet, clarity of vision improves, and it is definitely not worthwhile to forgo this important resource.

Summary

Our understanding of reality depends first and foremost on our desire to see more and to see better.

We must be proactive in our choice and not remain passive in this context.

The book presents a comprehensive review of inhibiting factors we must acknowledge, along with practical tools to help us overcome them and see reality clearly. Both at the individual level and through collaborative tools. And at the end of the day, a better view opens before us, a new world of opportunities.