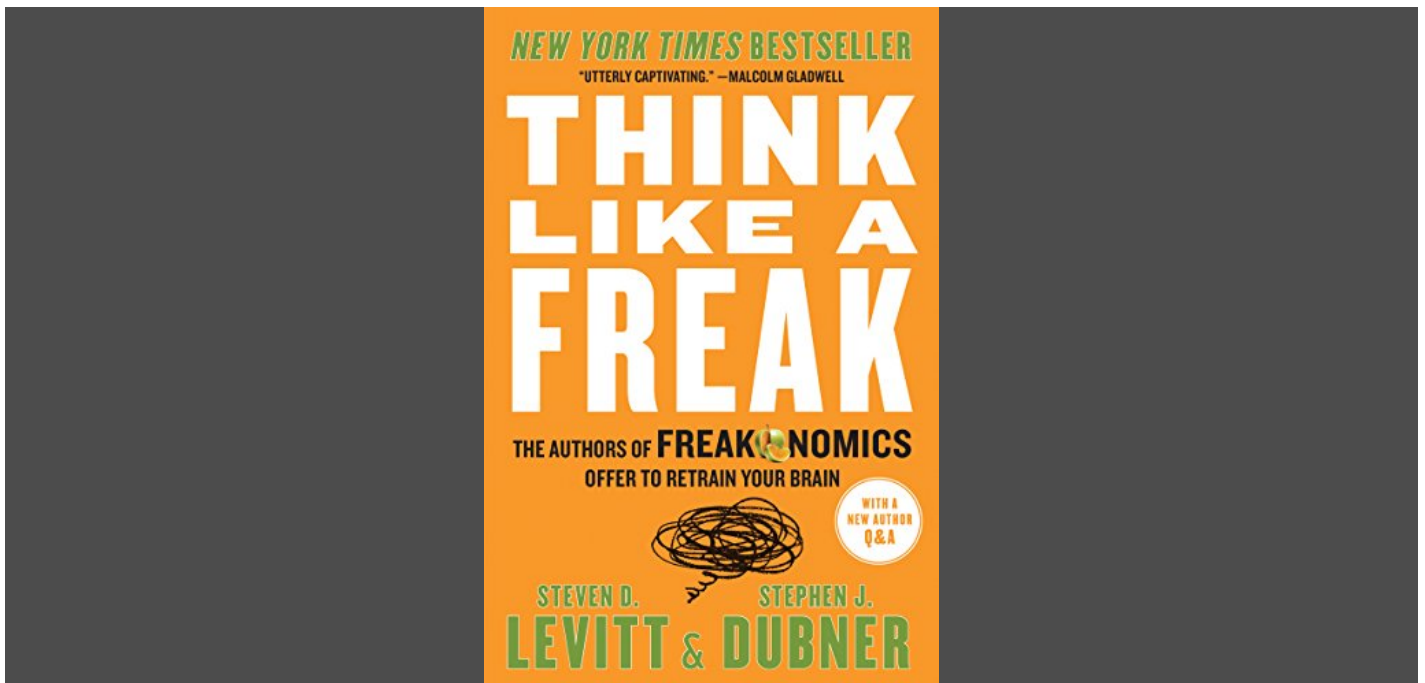


PDF | Think Like a Freak: The Authors
of Freakonomics Offer to Retrain
Your Brain

by Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner



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The *New York Times* bestselling *Freakonomics* changed the way we see the world, exposing the hidden side of just about everything. Then came *SuperFreakonomics*, a documentary film, an award-winning podcast, and more.

Now, with *Think Like a Freak* Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner have written their most revolutionary book yet. With their trademark blend of captivating storytelling and unconventional analysis, they take us inside their thought process and teach us all to think a bit more productively, more creatively, more rationally—to think, that is, like a Freak.

Levitt and Dubner offer a blueprint for an entirely new way to solve problems, whether your interest lies in minor lifehacks or major global reforms. As always, no topic is off-limits. They range from business to philanthropy to sports to politics, all with the goal of retraining your brain. Along the way, you'll learn the secrets of a Japanese hot-dog-eating champion, the reason an Australian doctor swallowed a batch of dangerous bacteria, and why Nigerian e-mail scammers make a point of saying they're from Nigeria.

Some of the steps toward thinking like a Freak:

- First, put away your moral compass—because it's hard to see a problem clearly if you've already decided what to do about it.
- Learn to say "I don't know"—for until you can admit what you don't yet know, it's virtually impossible to learn what you need to.
- Think like a child—because you'll come up with better ideas and ask better questions.
- Take a master class in incentives—because for better or worse, incentives rule our world.
- Learn to persuade people who don't want to be persuaded—because being right is rarely enough to carry the day.
- Learn to appreciate the upside of quitting—because you can't solve tomorrow's problem if you aren't willing to abandon today's dud.

Levitt and Dubner plainly see the world like no one else. Now you can too. Never before have such iconoclastic thinkers been so revealing—and so much fun to read.

Amazon.com Review



Malcolm Gladwell

Malcolm Gladwell Reviews *Think Like a Freak*

In one of the many wonderful moments in *Think Like a Freak*, Steven Levitt and Stephen Dubner ask the question: Who is easier to fool—kids or adults? The obvious answer, of course, is kids. The cliché is about taking candy from a baby, not a grown man. But instead of accepting conventional wisdom as fact, the two sit down with the magician Alex Stone—someone in the business of fooling people—and ask him what he thinks. And his answer? Adults.

Stone gave the example of the staple of magic tricks, the “double lift,” where two cards are presented as one. It’s how a magician can seemingly bury a card that you have selected at random and then miraculously retrieve it. Stone has done the double lift countless times in his career, and he says it is kids—overwhelmingly—who see through it. Why? The magician’s job is to present a series of cues—to guide the attention of his audience—and adults are really good at following cues and paying attention. Kids aren’t. Their gaze wanders. Adults have a set of expectations and assumptions about the way the world works, which makes them vulnerable to a profession that tries to exploit those expectations and assumptions. Kids don’t know enough to be exploited. Kids are more curious. They don’t overthink problems; they’re more likely to understand that the basis of the trick is something really, really simple. And most of all—and this is my favorite—kids are shorter than adults, so they quite literally see the trick from a different and more revealing angle.

Think Like a Freak is not a book about how to understand magic tricks. That’s what Dubner and Levitt’s first two books—*Freakonomics* and *SuperFreakonomics*—were about. It’s about the attitude we need to take towards the tricks and the problems that the world throws at us. Dubner and Levitt have a set of prescriptions about what that attitude comes down to, but at its root it comes down to putting yourself in the mind of the child, gazing upwards at the double lift: free yourself from expectations, be prepared for a really really simple explanation, and let your attention wander from time to time.

The two briefly revisit their famous argument from their first book about the link between the surge in abortions in the 1970s and the fall in violent crime twenty years later. Their point is not to reargue that particular claim. It is to point out that we shouldn’t avoid arguments like that just because they leave us a bit squeamish. They also tell the story of the Australian doctor Barry Marshall, who overturned years of received wisdom when he proved that ulcers are caused by gastric bacteria, not spicy food and stress. That idea was more than heretical at first. It was absurd. It was the kind of random idea that only a child would have. But Dubner and Levitt’s point, in their utterly captivating new book, is that following your curiosity—even to the most heretical and absurd end—makes the world a better place. It is also a lot of fun.

Product Description

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