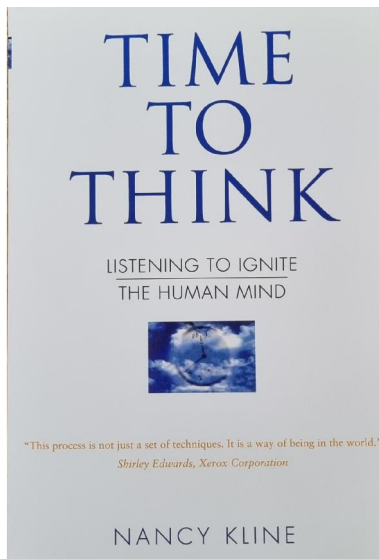


A learning conversation around Nancy Kline's book 'Time to Think'

Andrew Gibbons with Rebecca Norton, discussing 'The Thinking Environment'.



Summary of content with timings

- 1.20 Rebecca says that such a simple model has a lasting and conscious impact on all interactions.
- 2.20 Nancy Kline introduces a ten element framework for a 'thinking environment' – this is so practical.
- 2.50 Many people will feel the lessons within 'Time to Think' are dismissively obvious – more fool them.
- 3.05 What's at the heart of this? What's new and different, and isn't what many feel is 'common sense'?
- 3.25 Ten components of a thinking environment: Attention, ease, equality, appreciation, encouragement,
- 3.30 The ten components continued: Feelings, information, diversity, incisive questions, and place.
- 4.05 A thinking environment provides space and time that generates creativity and quality of reflection.
- 4.30 Contributions are enhanced when people know they will get a turn to speak, and will not be rushed.
- 4.40 Thinking quality is enhanced when time is allowed, respect is shown, and speakers are relaxed.
- 4.55 This is all about listening to understand, not just 'listening' to respond.
- 5.25 So often people show they are not listening, but, as Carl Rogers said, that they are waiting to talk.
- 5.45 I have never been in a meeting when the chair says 'let's just pause a minute, and think' I wish I had.
- 5.55 I see a key role of a meeting chair to give explicit time to think, not just sequence speakers in turn.
- 6.25 During training at start and end of days we had a thinking round, reflecting and processing in turn.
- 7.00 Start of the day it was 'what are you thinking about'? Giving the option of sharing thoughts or issues.
- 7.20 The end of day review gave a chance to thank someone, share learning, or choose to pass.

- 7.50 For Rebecca this was a transformational experience, it validated the power of thinking with purpose.
- 8.20 It's significant when rarely, you are truly seen as a human being, not as a human *doing*.
- 8.35 Nancy Kline believes that nobody has truly arrived in a room until they have spoken.
- 10.25 Speaking in turn allows each participant to be ready for their chance speak – it's time well spent.
- 10.55 Whatever value we see and feel in this, it will not fit organisations with unhelpfully embedded norms.
- 11.45 To work well apparently straightforward yet unfamiliar thinking practices need time and practice.
- 12.00 For this to be taken seriously new norms must be enforced and unhelpful behaviours' jumped upon.
- 12.40 When this works well, it transcends hierarchies and personality types enhancing group outputs.
- 13.00 This can be cultural, 'the way things are done around here' or transactional, during conversation.
- 13.25 It's about truly listening respectfully reflecting, giving yourself time to think about what is being said.
- 13.45 If you're really being listened to, it can seem odd, even uncomfortable, it's that rare and experience.
- 14.30 It's actually mentally exhausting to really engage, to attentively and truly listen without interruption.
- 15.15 I recently read of a senior management team where no-one can speak for more than 3 sentences.
- 15.30 Those that manage and lead group meetings must believe in the value of this enough to enforce.
- 17.40 Can this happen for real, beyond learning rooms, can real operational behaviour change in this way?
- 18.45 For a thinking environment to work, there must be buy-in and a feeling it is worthwhile, it will pay-off.
- 19.20 Very unusually, years ago, a senior management team had 'learning review' as the last agenda item.
- 19.50 I saw the most senior management in turn, say I've been thinking about this, and learned this...
- 20.30 The impact this can have, with a committed champion, and a group that buys in can be phenomenal.
- 21.20 It takes humility to accept that what someone has to say has more value than your own thoughts.
- 21.55 A lot of people are not good at silence, reflection makes them nervous, they feel uncomfortable.
- 22.45 Just because someone is silent doesn't mean there's nothing going on.
- 22.55 In the context of meetings the bigger the meeting the greater the noise, group management is tough.
- 23.10 In hard terms, 'thinkers aren't talkers, talkers aren't thinkers', both aren't done well at the same time.
- 23.20 When thinking, being spoken at distracts when talking, high quality thinking is not possible.
- 23.30 The Queen said at the Scottish Parliament in 2015 'make room for quiet thinking and contemplation'.
- 23.35 We don't make room for quiet thinking and contemplation – we compete for the next space to talk.
- 25.10 My first boss was great at meetings – he'd say nothing for an hour then when we spoke, we listened.
- 25.20 The chair might say 'Tony you've been quiet' his reply, 'I've been reflecting on what's been said'.

25.25 Tony built a platform of respectful reflective contemplation from which he made points with impact.

26.40 To 'have a good listening to' is a very unusual experience, the listener will ask 'what more is there?'

27.05 How often have we experienced in meetings or conversation someone asking to be told more?

27.40 To be asked 'and what else?' is such a powerful indicator of respectful interest and genuine focus.

29.05 We learn nothing hearing ourselves say the same stuff over again but from inquiry and questioning.

29.10 We learn from what others tell us we haven't heard before or what we think about for the first time.

29.40 Tell me Rebecca, more about Nancy Kline's books, her thoughts and the impact this has had on you.

30.20 This need not be a business thing, it can also make a positive impact on personal relationships.

30.50 There is something deeper for me, about allowing someone time to think than just time to speak.

32.10 Knowing someone is there for you, not judging you, appreciating you, and caring enough to listen...

32.40 This works best with groups that work together long term, to build the trust and belief in the process.

33.10 Sometimes you say out loud thoughts for the first time – it's great to be able to express yourself fully.

33.25 We have to become comfortable with other people's emotions, and I don't think we're good at that.

33.40 There's usually more in any context to be said than has been – we should not suppress the flow.

34.35 A lot of the power of this process is about learning to be comfortable with the uncomfortableness.

35.05 In a work context it could be about listening to an angry customer, then saying, 'I think there's more'.

36.00 Giving the space to fully express, acknowledging emotions, and seeking more of it, that's tough.

36.10 Only when you have given someone time to express what's really going on for them can you help.

36.30 I've never been told 'Before I respond to what you've said, is there more you need to let me know?'

36.45 This has massive potential in a sales or customer facing role, and wider than that, much wider.

37.20 We are talking about unusual behaviours beyond the norm, that bring remarkable results.

37.40 Often I feel you can be an oasis of best practice in a desert of 'acceptable under-performance'.

38.10 I am not going to change my mind just because other people don't agree with me, I know this works.

38.50 The hard learning, like this is where the real benefits lie, this I fear takes too much effort for many.

39.25 Tom Peters is a wonderful thinker, and I really like his belief in the phrase 'what do you think?'

39.55 If asked the above question you've then got to live up to the apparent indication of interest created.

40.20 If I know I am not being listened to, I will stop sharing, it closes down my thinking – what's the point?

41.05 I wonder how often if at all, we challenge behaviour that doesn't encourage time to think?

41.15 Do we ever for instance ever say 'I am disappointed in you because I feel you aren't listening to me?'

41.45 We need to be able to say 'I don't feel I'm getting from you what I'm consciously trying to do for you'.

- 42.25 We just tend to have conversations without rules – no norms or expectations are ever explicitly set.
- 42.50 I believe in this, so I must steel myself to challenge people and create better quality conversations.
- 43.15 Setting conversational ‘rules’ can work in a coaching contractual context, if we stick to them.
- 43.45 Often setting rules is not an option, so we need to do the ‘right’ thing, and expect less from others.
- 43.55 I advise people the more consciously you do this, the more aware you become you don’t get it back.
- 45.20 So, in conclusion, what’s the best next step anyone can take to learn from Nancy Kline’s thoughts?
- 45.45 Buy the book: ‘Time to think’, and the other, ‘More time to think’, visit the website for more resource.
- 45.50 Just consciously think ‘in the moment’, reflect in action about how to have better conversations.

See this, one of many Thinking Environment conversations at my YouTube channel.

The Link to the channel and my Podcast ‘The learning ear’ is on my website homepage below.

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