

Directions: In this section, you are going to read a passage with ten statements attached to it. Each statement contains information given in one of the paragraphs. Identify the paragraph from which the information is derived. You may choose a paragraph more than once. Each paragraph is marked with a letter. Answer the questions by marking the corresponding letter on **Answer Sheet 2**.

Why facts don't change our minds

- A) The economist J. K. Galbraith once wrote, "Faced with a choice between changing one's mind and proving there is no need to do so, almost everyone gets busy with the proof."
- B) Leo Tolstoy was even bolder: "The most difficult subjects can be explained to the most slow-witted man if he has not formed any idea of them already; but the simplest thing cannot be made clear to the most intelligent man if he is firmly persuaded that he knows already, without a shadow of a doubt, what is laid before him."
- C) What's going on here? Why don't facts change our minds? And why would someone continue to believe a false or inaccurate idea anyway? How do such behaviors serve us? Humans need a reasonably accurate view of the world in order to survive. If your model of reality is wildly different from the actual world, then you struggle to take effective actions each day. However, truth and accuracy are not the only things that matter to the human mind. Humans also seem to have a deep desire to belong.
- D) In *Atomic Habits*, I wrote, "Humans are herd animals. We want to fit in, to bond with others, and to earn the respect and approval of our peers. Such inclinations are essential to our survival. For most of our evolutionary history, our ancestors lived in tribes. Becoming separated from the tribe—or worse, being cast out—was a death sentence."
- E) Understanding the truth of a situation is important, but so is remaining part of a tribe. While these two desires often work well together, they occasionally come into conflict. In many circumstances, social connection is actually more helpful to your daily life than understanding the truth of a particular fact or idea. The Harvard psychologist Steven Pinker put it this way, "People are embraced or condemned according to their beliefs, so one function of the mind may be to hold beliefs that bring the belief-holder the greatest number of allies, protectors, or disciples(信徒), rather than beliefs that are most likely to be true."
- F) We don't always believe things because they are correct. Sometimes we believe things because they make us look good to the people we care about. I thought Kevin Simler put it well when he wrote, "If a brain anticipates that it will be rewarded for adopting a particular belief, it's perfectly happy to do so, and doesn't much care where the reward comes from—whether it's pragmatic(实用主义的) (better outcomes resulting from better decisions), social (better treatment from one's peers), or some mix of the two."
- G) False beliefs can be useful in a social sense even if they are not useful in a factual sense. For lack of a better phrase, we might call this approach "factually false, but socially accurate." When we have to choose between the two, people often select friends and family over facts. This insight not only explains why we might hold our tongue at a dinner party or look the other way when our parents say something offensive, but also reveals a better way to change the minds of others.

- H) Convincing someone to change their mind is really the process of convincing them to change their tribe. If they abandon their beliefs, they run the risk of losing social ties. You can't expect someone to change their mind if you take away their community too. You have to give them somewhere to go. Nobody wants their worldview torn apart if loneliness is the outcome.
- I) The way to change people's minds is to become friends with them, to integrate them into your tribe, to bring them into your circle. Now, they can change their beliefs without the risk of being abandoned socially.
- J) Perhaps it is not difference, but distance, that breeds tribalism and hostility. As proximity increases, so does understanding. I am reminded of Abraham Lincoln's quote, "I don't like that man. I must get to know him better."
- K) Facts don't change our minds. Friendship does. Years ago, Ben Casnocha mentioned an idea to me that I haven't been able to shake: The people who are most likely to change our minds are the ones we agree with on 98 percent of topics. If someone you know, like, and trust believes a radical idea, you are more likely to give it merit, weight, or consideration. You already agree with them in most areas of life. Maybe you should change your mind on this one too. But if someone wildly different than you proposes the same radical idea, well, it's easy to dismiss them as nuts.
- L) One way to visualize this distinction is by mapping beliefs on a spectrum. If you divide this spectrum into 10 units and you find yourself at Position 7, then there is little sense in trying to convince someone at Position 1. The gap is too wide. When you're at Position 7, your time is better spent connecting with people who are at Positions 6 and 8, gradually pulling them in your direction.
- M) The most heated arguments often occur between people on opposite ends of the spectrum, but the most frequent learning occurs from people who are nearby. The closer you are to someone, the more likely it becomes that the one or two beliefs you don't share will bleed over into your own mind and shape your thinking. The further away an idea is from your current position, the more likely you are to reject it outright. When it comes to changing people's minds, it is very difficult to jump from one side to another. You can't jump down the spectrum. You have to slide down it.
- N) Any idea that is sufficiently different from your current worldview will feel threatening. And the best place to ponder a threatening idea is in a non-threatening environment. As a result, books are often a better vehicle for transforming beliefs than conversations or debates. In conversation, people have to carefully consider their status and appearance. They want to save face and avoid looking stupid. When confronted with an uncomfortable set of facts, the tendency is often to double down on their current position rather than publicly admit to being wrong. Books resolve this tension. With a book, the conversation takes place inside someone's head and without the risk of being judged by others. It's easier to be open-minded when you aren't feeling defensive.
- O) There is another reason bad ideas continue to live on, which is that people continue to talk about them. Silence is death for any idea. An idea that is never spoken or written down dies with the person who conceived it. Ideas can only be remembered when they are repeated. They can only be believed when they are repeated. I have already pointed out that people repeat ideas to signal they are part of the same social group. But here's a crucial point most people miss: People also repeat bad ideas when they complain about them. Before you can criticize an idea, you have to reference that idea. You end up repeating the ideas you're hoping people will forget—but, of course, people can't forget them because you keep talking about them. The more you repeat a bad idea, the more likely people are to believe it.

- P) Let's call this phenomenon Clear's Law of Recurrence: The number of people who believe an idea is directly proportional to the number of times it has been repeated during the last year—even if the idea is false.
36. According to the author, humans can hardly survive if separated from their community.
 37. People often accept false beliefs because they prioritize social bonds rather than facts.
 38. Most often people learn from those close to them.
 39. Sometimes people adopt certain beliefs in order to leave a favorable impression on those dear to them.
 40. Compared with face-to-face communication, books often provide a better medium for changing people's beliefs.
 41. On many occasions in daily life, people benefit more from their social bonds than from knowing the truth.
 42. If you want to change somebody's beliefs, you should first establish social connection with them.
 43. Humans cannot survive without a fair knowledge of the actual world.
 44. Repetition of bad ideas increases their chances of being accepted.
 45. Nobody is willing to give up their beliefs at the risk of getting isolated.