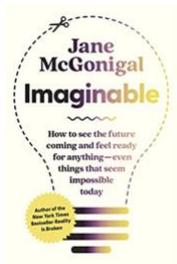


# 'CliffsNotes' Book Club Recap

DO YOU LOVE BOOKS ON LEADERSHIP, NEUROSCIENCE, AND BUSINESS, BUT NOT HAVE TIME TO READ ALL THE BOOKS?

Join the '**CliffsNotes' club**—where there's no pressure to pre-read the book, no membership required, no cost, and lots of discussion in just 90 minutes. Each month, you will hear a **summary of highlights** from a recently-published business book. This discussion summary is intended to provide a recap of the conversation at Book Club, rather than serve as a thorough book summary. We'll keep you "in the know" on the latest and greatest concepts and models. **Register here** for upcoming events.



April 2023  
**Imaginable**

By Jane McGonigal

## Discussion Highlights

Presented by Cate Rodman

In *Imaginable*, Jane McGonigal provides an organized and compelling introduction to future thinking. She posits that practicing future thinking will lead to “Less shock, more resilience.” It is not simply imagining or even anticipating, but also promoting actions today to influence a possible future.

She provides an assessment at the beginning on three aspects and believes that by the end of the book, you'll have increased your self-assessment positively in one, if not all, of them. The following are questions to begin that exploration.

When you think about the next ten years,

1. Do you think things will mostly stay the same or we will dramatically rethink and reinvent how we do things?
2. When you think about the world and your life will change, are you mostly worried or mostly optimistic?
3. How much control or influence do you feel you personally have in determining how the world and your life change?

*“When there’s uncertainty, there’s still a chance to have a say in what happens next.*

*When there’s unease, there’s an opportunity to figure out what we’re afraid of—  
and to decide whether we want to heed that discomfort or overcome it.”*

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## PART I UNSTICK YOUR MIND

**1: Take a Ten-year Trip.** 10 years is an interval of time that feels close enough to imagine, but far enough to allow for dramatic change. Feeling like we are able to have enough time to do what matters is *time spaciousness*, which promotes maximal (not minimal) goal setting. This distancing opens the mind to take in new information, and reduces blind spots.

- Make 10-year resolutions, set a calendar item 10 years in the future.

**2: Learn to Time Travel.** Episodic Future Thinking (EFT) is simulating your future in your mind. Allows you to pre-feel different possible futures creating a powerful decision-making, planning, and motivational tool. Discovering your motivations for the future will likely be closely linked to your deepest values and most essential needs. EFT promotes mental well-being, supports behavior change, and is linked to stimulating creativity.

- Imagine your life/the world in 10 years. Explore it in detail thinking about:
  - the specifics of what is there,
  - what is true there that is not true now,
  - what you want and how will you get it, and
  - how you feel.
- Try to remember your life 10 years ago (episodic memory) and seek out what has changed? Can you identify two or three changes that surprise you?

### 3: Play with Future Scenarios.

- Take at least a single feature that is dramatically different than today. Create its context and rationale. Staying realistic and authentic to yourself, play using the method from Ch. 2.

**4: Be Ridiculous, at First.** Future possibilities that seem unthinkable or impossible today are the ones that will be hardest to adapt to. These activities will challenge your assumptions and stretch your mind.

- Take 3 facts you think cannot change within a decade and find evidence for them changing in current times.
- Contemplate high-impact, low-probability events.

**5: Turn the World Upside Down.** More ways to practice and improve flexibility and creativity.

- Take a list of up to 100 facts true today and make them untrue in the future. Imagine how the context about how they changed and how the changes affect day-to-day life.
- Spend time within one of these worlds and explore. Make sense of them. How did this change happen and how does it work? How do you feel about it? And keep looking for clues that could make this world seem more plausible and realistic.

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## PART II THINK THE UNTHINKABLE

“There are no facts about the future.”

“The truth of the future isn't what will happen; it's what could happen.”

**6: Look for Clues.** Signals of change are concrete examples of how the world could one day be different. They can be weak or strong. This process helps to develop *strangesight* which is “being drawn to things that challenge your assumptions, feel unusual or surprising in a way that can be unsettling or hard to understand at first.”

- Collect and investigate “signals of change.”
- Be curious as well as communal with sharing these “signs.”

**7: Choose Your Future Forces.** Future forces will shape aspects of the future. We cannot be in control of a future force, but they can ebb and flow on their own.

- Monitor and stay current of a list of Future Forces.
- Be prepared to help at least one person should it become a real crisis.

**8: Practice Hard Empathy.** Soft empathy is when we connect with our own “similar” experiences. Without relatable experiences, we must practice hard empathy. Imagining someone who is unfamiliar, circumstances that are, or people we don't necessarily want to have empathy for.

- Look for stories about the unfamiliar. Imagine that unfamiliar occurring in your own life, *not theirs*.
- Free write a journal entry from the future. This involves *mental* and *social simulation*.
  1. Set the scene.
  2. Feel the moment.
  3. Try to make sense of it.
  4. Take action.

**9: Heal the Deeper Disease.** Looking through a “deeper disease” lens practices making connections between different domains.

- Find where you feel urgent optimism. Look for calling, belonging, hope, and power attributes for this area to find where you can be effective and successful.
- Practice imagining the future where that root cause has been solved and where it has not been.

## PART III IMAGINE THE UNIMAGINABLE

**10: Answer the Call to Adventure.** Freeze is our most primal instinct, before flight, fight, or tend/befriend. So we need to learn helpfulness, not helplessness. The “hero’s journey” to the future applies to all of us. Refusing the call could involve distancing, denial, fatigue, or surrender.

- Your Bags for the Future are packed with:
  - Skills and abilities;
  - Deep knowledge and passions;
  - Communities; and
  - Values.
- Imagine yourself doing something important. “If you are not the hero of your own future, then you’re imagining the wrong future.”

**11: Simulate Any Future You Want.** Contemplating a possible future superimposed on your current life creates a mental simulation, a *waking dream*. Teaches your brain to respond with less shock/more flexibility to real change. You can share these through journaling, social media, etc., and it makes a distributed story. Sharing is fascinating, but the experience is the most important. Simulation planning includes:

1. **What** scenario do you want to simulate?
2. **Who** will you invite to participate?
3. **When** will you start and end the simulation?
4. **Where** will the social sharing happen?
5. **How** will you explore different dimensions of the future?
6. **Why** are you simulating this future?

Tips for Inventing a New Scenario:

- Focus on a few favorite signals of change and future forces.
- Pick an archetype. Or pick four! E.g., growth, constraint, collapse, or transformation.
- Get feedback before you play.

**12: Spend Ten Days in the Future (The Game)** Three scenarios are provided for simulation practice. Choose a scenario, set up a “journal” mechanism, and suggests to bring someone with you. Create a bio for future you complete with identifying your skills and abilities; deep knowledge and passions; communities; and values. After you’ve completed a 10-day visit to a scenario, McGonigal recommends collecting signals of change, commit to tracking a future force, plan a micro-action, and process with someone.

The three scenarios are:

- The Road to Zerophoria. Zero-waste mentality.
- Welcome Party. Global climate migration.
- Ten-Year Winter. Global vote to partially block sun’s rays for 10 years to roll back global warming effects.

**Resources:**

[Institute for the Future](#)

[Global Risk Report](#)

**About the Book Club** In this monthly club, a presenter shares highlights from a book related to leadership, business, neuroscience, or coaching. Membership is not required, and there's no obligation to pre-read the book. This discussion summary is intended to provide a recap of the conversation at Book Club, rather than serve as a thorough book summary. [Register here](#) for upcoming events. For the full set of discussion summaries, [click here](#).