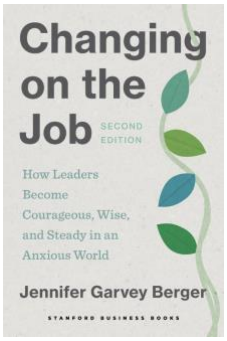
'CliffsNotes' Book Club Recap

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.*



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Changing on the Job: How Leaders Become Courageous, Wise, and Steady in an Anxious World

By Jennifer Garvey Berger

Book Summary

Generated by ChatGPT and Claude; edited by Diane Dixon

What do we need to do to develop leaders so that they can navigate the complexity of unprecedented problems they face in the world and organizations today? Garvey Berger argues that leadership development is not about adding skills—it's about transforming how leaders think; transforming how leaders make meaning. She believes that today's complex, fast-changing world requires leaders who can navigate ambiguity, hold multiple perspectives, and continuously evolve their mindset. These are capabilities that come from developmental growth, not training alone. Drawing on Constructive-Developmental Theory rooted in Robert Kegan's work, Garvey Berger explains that adults progress through four stages of meaning-making, each representing a more complex way of understanding the world.

Each of these forms of mind are different fitness levels for facing complexity. Leaders who progress to the higher stages become more capable of holding ambiguity, taking multiple perspectives, and navigating the relational complexity that modern organizations demand. The second edition is intended to be more applied with a stronger emphasis on leading amid uncertainty, polarization, and rapid change. It is designed for both leaders and coaches to help them understand the four levels of complexity fitness that the adults they work with experience. Garvey Berger believes understanding the different ways people make sense of the world helps us to treat one another with more curiosity and grace.

Core Themes

- **Learning ≠ Growing.** Horizontal development (acquiring new skills, frameworks, or information) is different from vertical development (expanding the very system of meaning-making through which a person perceives the world). The workplace is the ideal crucible for vertical growth—but only if it is intentionally designed to support it.
- **Complexity Demands More Complex Minds.** As leadership roles become larger and more diffuse, they require longer-range strategic thinking, multi-stakeholder empathy, and tolerance for ambiguity that only self-authored and self-transforming minds can reliably provide.
- **Growth Requires Understanding, Not Just Challenge.** To support another person's development, a coach or leader must first understand the world as that person sees it—not as the coach sees it.

Book Structure & Highlights

Part I: Hiding in Plain Sight: How Complexity Fitness Helps You Make a Better Organization
This section introduces **"complexity fitness"**—the ability to function effectively in uncertain, rapidly changing environments. "When you keep complexity fitness in mind, you have access to a whole new set of questions and opportunities.

Chapter 1: The Invisible Dimension—How we Make Meaning Shapes Everything

Chapter 2: Overview of the Four Forms of Mind—Self-Sovereign, Socialized, Self-Authored, Self-Transforming

Chapter 3: Self-transforming Leadership Matters in a Turbulent World. Practicing some of the strengths of the self-transforming mind—creating lightness (exercise irony); creating perspective (listening to grow); creating agility (disrupting causality).

Chapter 4: Rhythm of Developmental Growth How do you travel from one form of mind to the next--not being subject to limiting beliefs. Development means making "subject" (what we are run by) into "object" (what we can see and reflect on). Growing occurs when the form of our understanding changes (transformation). Insight—learning increases knowledge in the form of our thinking that already exist (in-form-ation); growing means we need to change the form itself (trans-form-ation). How do we make workplaces more supportive of growth?

Chapter 5: Feedback "When leaders are dealing with complex humans doing complex work, they have to give feedback in a way that offers perspective cleanly and without judgment, is genuinely curious, and involves openly listening—about the issue, about the person, about the context."

Chapter 6: Selecting leaders fit for complex challenges—there is no perfect measurement to determine complexity fitness, having high levels of complexity fitness does not guarantee success. When using adult development theory in hiring and selection consider role requirements, demands the role might put on a candidate's complexity fitness, problems to be addressed, stakeholders, and self-awareness.

Chapter 7: If teaming is developmental, then leaders cultivate conditions that enable and make the most of developmental diversity for team performance and growth of each team member. Leaders engage team members in a continual process of defining and redefining difficult aspects of teaming. Leaders need to get on the balcony to—Cultivate Trust, Manage Disagreement and Conflict, Harness Accountability, Make Sense of Success and Failure.

Part II: Deeper Looks into the Four Forms of Mind-Unlocking New Possibilities

Garvey Berger explores each developmental stage in depth: how leaders at each stage think, behave, and respond with detailed case vignettes showing the same situation filtered through different forms of mind. She describes key strengths, blind spots, and central areas of growth for each form of mind:

- **Chapter 8: The Self-sovereign Mind: Rules, Roles, and Black-and-White Thinking**
- **Chapter 9: The Socialized Mind: Belonging, Loyalty, and the Voice of the Group**
- **Chapter 10: The Self-authored Mind: Principles, Self-reflection, and Inner Authority**
- **Chapter 11: The Self-transforming Mind: Systems, Paradox, and Relational Leadership**

Chapter 12: Beginning to Understand Someone Else's Complexity Fitness: Finding the Growth Edge

- **"Growth edge"**—Identifying the precise developmental frontier where a person is ready to stretch just beyond a person's current way of thinking without being pushed into territory that overwhelms.
- **Four skills needed to see and understand someone's complexity fitness**: Recognize difference between form of mind structure and content of conversation: ask questions to bump up against edges of understanding; listen actively and judge slowly not attaching your meaning to the words of others; keep an open mind.
- **Steps for Uncovering Complexity Fitness: Growth Edge Interview**
  - Step 1: Look for key Issues: responsibility, conflict, perspective-taking, assumptions about the world.
  - Step 2: Narrowing the choices—keep an open mind; assume the person could be self-sovereign, self-transforming or anywhere in between.
  - Step 3: Moving to the edge: most, least, best, worst—forms of mind are cumulative; person who is self-authored also has some pieces of self-sovereign. Have to move the person to their edge of understanding.
  - Step 4: Ask the same question in a new way to go deeper—second or third moving to the edge question that actually moves away from story into the meaning-making space.

Chapter 13: How Do I Understand My Own Mind?

- What's your story—a recent success; feeling anger; trouble making a decision—write a paragraph or so.
  - Ask yourself the right questions—listen to the answers; emotional valences require different questions.
    - Positive-What is the best thing for you about this?
    - Negative-What is the hardest part of this for you?
    - Ambivalent-What is the most important part of this decision for you?
  - Ask questions related to each form of mind.
- Why it matters—more realistic about your expectations; understand your limitations; understand what pushes your buttons and why; design your development; design ways of thinking about support you need while developing the capacity to take on greater levels of self-complexity.

Part III: Growth Edge Coaching-Supporting Individuals to Intentionally Evolve

Note: This section is practical and especially valuable for consultants, coaches, and HR/OD professionals.

Chapter 14: Reach People Where They Are Instead of Where You Wish They Were

- Coaching decision to take targeted approach or psychologically spacious approach with client—helped by understanding the client's various forms of mind, coaching benefits client might experience, coaching challenges they may together. "With this focus, a coach and client can together explore the clients' growth edge, that space where the client reaches the edge of their current capacities." "Wonder: through what form of mind does my client see the world today?"

Chapter 15: Learning to Hold the Perspective of Others: Coaching in the Transition from Self-Sovereign to Socialized Mind

- Self-sovereign minds may be among most difficult to coach; hard for them to distinguish inner voice from inner voices of others. Help them get a window into their mind and emotions, then use that window to begin to imagine the inner workings of others.
- Coaching processes, strategies, and mindsets—listen without judgment, attack the tactical, notice the body, change your mind before trying to change others.

Chapter 16: Finding the Internal Voice: Coaching in the Transition from Socialized to Self-Authored Mind

- Stereotypes about socialized mind in organizations—"Yes people." More than company loyalists, they can also be mavericks.
- Coaching processes, strategies, and mindsets—most familiar type of coaching or leadership development—helping the client discover and learn to trust own internal voice. Grow the client's capacity; coach for transformation. Question authorities; shape the body, shape your life, focus on authorship.

Chapter 17: Becoming Bigger Than Just Myself: Coaching in the Transition from Self-Authored to Self-Transforming Mind

- **Key Characteristics**: Sense of self internally created. Depending on where they are in the self-authored trajectory, could be tightly defending boundaries or loosening them to include other perspectives, principles, or values in their thinking. **Core Coaching Interventions:** Uncover assumptions, illuminate shadows, let your body be your teacher, seek wise mentors and thinking partners.

Chapter 18: The Coach's Growth Edge Matters Too

- **Key Questions:** "When we are trying to help others, how does our own form of mind organize our experiences so that we see particular possibilities and do not see others? What do we need to know about our own development, as coaches, to make the most of our opportunity to support and help our clients? How do we cope with difference between our own highest hopes and aspirations and our current capacities—and support ourselves to grow?"

Part IV: Cultivating Leadership: How to Support Growth in Groups

Garvey Berger shifts from individual growth to **organizational culture**.
Organizations should be designed to **develop people, not just extract performance**. A "developmental organization" turns **everyday work into a growth engine**.

Chapter 19: Creating Learning and Development Experiences That Are Actually Developmental Practices

- Focus on transformational learning design. **Considerations:** Psychologically spacious-to include as many different sensemaking systems. Think about new entry points with a group; relationship to authority and the truth, and success outcomes.
- If you want people to think about things in new ways, need to create transformative learning spaces.

Chapter 20: Supporting All of Us: Building Habits that Support Cultures of Growth (with Keth Johnston)

- Looks at how developmental theory, transformative learning theory, and neuroscience help us find ways to support people's development in the future.
- Sustainable change—have to create "habits of mind" that not only support change but also make future changes more possible. Changing not just the *content* people make sense of but the way they make sense.
- Three habits of mind can be built into coaching and leadership development programs, and knit into the fabric of work: **asking different questions; taking multiple perspectives, seeing systems (managing patterns and polarities).**

Afterword: The Point of It All--Developing Our Capacity for Love and Community

Addendum: Forms of Mind

Forms of Mind	Perspective/Focus	Authority	Leadership	Strengths	Challenges
Self-Sovereign	Mind of their own/autonomy Understands other perspectives from their own perspective- Personal needs, goals	Found in rules and regulations	Directive, Independent	Clarity of purpose and self-interest	Collaboration considering others' perspectives
Socialized	Relationships, Embedded in the perspectives of others. Sees the world through these perspectives	Internalized value/principle/role outside of self	Consensus-driven	Devotion to cause bigger than themselves	Lack of capacity to decide between important others and competing ideas
Self-authored	Can take in multiple perspectives while maintaining their own. Uses these views to strengthen own set of principles	Found in self; determines rules and regulations for themselves-internal values; personal ideology; clear direction	Strategic, principled	Commitment to self-authored ideals and values; can make independent judgments	Lack of ability to get outside own perspectives; may struggle with competing perspectives
Self-Transforming	Sees and understands the perspectives of others and uses those views to continuously transform their own perspective becoming more expansive and inclusive	Fluid and shared; not located in any particular person or job. Comes from the combination of the situation and people in the situation	Adaptive, paradox embracing	Constant interest in learning, comfortable with ambiguity and complexity	Lack of ability to not see patterns; difficulty remembering seeing the world this way is not typical

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.