“I highly recommend this book for instructors who care more about their students than test scores, for students who care more about learning than their GPA, for leaders of society and masters of the universe who care more about serving the public good than increasing their profit margin, and for artists who constantly remind us of the human condition. The 5 Elements of Effective Thinking provides comfort in a world that has lost its equilibrium.”
—Christopher J. Campisano, director of Princeton University’s Program in Teacher Preparation

Edward B. Burger & Michael Starbird

The 5 Elements of Effective Thinking presents practical, lively, and inspiring ways for you to become more successful through better thinking. The idea is simple: You can learn how to think far better by adopting specific strategies. Brilliant people aren’t a special breed—they just use their minds differently. By using the straightforward and thought-provoking techniques in The 5 Elements of Effective Thinking, you will regularly find imaginative solutions to difficult challenges, and you will discover new ways of looking at your world and yourself—revealing previously hidden opportunities.

The book offers real-life stories, explicit action items, and concrete methods that allow you to attain a deeper understanding of any issue, exploit the power of failure as a step toward success, develop a habit of creating probing questions, see the world of ideas as an ever-flowing stream of thought, and embrace the uplifting reality that we are all capable of change. No matter who you are, the practical mind-sets introduced in the book will empower you to realize any goal in a more creative, intelligent, and effective manner. Filled with engaging examples that unlock truths about thinking in every walk of life, The 5 Elements of Effective Thinking is written for all who want to reach their fullest potential—including students, parents, teachers, businesspeople, professionals, athletes, artists, leaders, and lifelong learners.

Whenever you are stuck, need a new idea, or want to learn and grow, The 5 Elements of Effective Thinking will inspire and guide you on your way.

Edward B. Burger is a professor at Williams College, an educational and business consultant, and a former vice provost at Baylor University. He has authored or coauthored more than sixty-five articles, books, and video series; delivered over five hundred addresses and workshops throughout the world; and made more than fifty radio and television appearances. His teaching and scholarly writing have earned him many national honors, including the largest teaching award given in the English-speaking world. Michael Starbird is University Distinguished Teaching Professor at The University of Texas at Austin and an educational and business consultant. His numerous books, lectures, workshops, and video courses have reached large national audiences of students, teachers, businesspeople, and lifelong learners. His success at teaching people to think has been recognized by more than a dozen awards, including the highest national teaching award in his subject.
An interview with Edward B. Burger and Michael Starbird

What motivated you to write this book?

Successful people are successful because they think well. Over the past twenty-plus years, we came to realize that better thinking came from specific strategies that anyone can learn and apply. Once we isolated and distilled those strategies, they became the five elements of effective thinking.

What's the main message you would like your readers to get?

We want everyone to discover that they can think far better than they currently do. They can solve business and personal problems more innovatively; they can discover and celebrate previously hidden opportunities in their own worlds. Whether old or young, they can learn and change by following practical and straightforward strategies of effective thinking.

What are your long-term goals for this book?

We hope it will become a standard tool for businesspeople, for students and teachers, for parents and lifelong learners, for athletes, artists, and everyone else. When we ourselves are faced with difficult challenges, we simply turn to the five elements of thinking and inevitably new ideas and approaches appear. We would like institutions—from governments to businesses to schools—to discover new ways to succeed. We hope that individuals in every walk of life will turn to the five elements for inspiration and direction as they face the unknown challenges that always lie lurking.

Can you give some examples of how you hope the book will change the way people think?

Businesspeople have already referred to our ideas as “an intellectual GPS” that guides them to better ideas. They have reported that the five elements are taped to their desks for ready reference.

Students testing these elements have told us that their approach to school was completely changed by them, and that they became more focused on real learning and thinking rather than checking off required boxes toward a degree.

Teachers have told us that our concepts have changed their goals in teaching. They became more clearly focused on teaching students to think better in concrete ways offered by their subjects. These teachers found that the goal of teaching creativity, curiosity, and deep understanding profoundly changed what they do inside and outside the classroom.