



*"Dan is a captivating speaker and storyteller; telling stories that make you think, and desire to live better."*  
- Jill Dale, Montana State University

**DAN OHLER**

thinkin' outside the  
**barn!**

**And Steppin' Into Fresh B.S.**



## ***A Word From The Author***

This is a “taste,” of the book “**Thinkin’ Outside The Barn And Steppin’ Into Fresh B.S.**” It is especially for you.

The book is a compilation of real-life stories about experiences that have allowed me to ‘think outside my barn’ and enhance my life.

These experiences helped me, and they’ll help you, to evaluate your belief system and make positive changes that will serve you well. There are tools, ponderings, or coach-approach questions at the end of each chapter to give you step-by-step guidance.

Before you go further, you may have a couple questions burning in your mind:

- 1. What is a belief system?**
- 2. Who has one?**

Let me explain.

A **B**elief **S**ystem, or **B.S.**, is an unwritten, unconscious set of rules that determine **all** of our results in life – the good, the bad, and everything in between. It is made up of thousands of individual beliefs (ideas) we have learned about money, relationships, food, exercise, work, and yup, even sex. We learned and accepted these beliefs in our past because they protected us and kept us safe.

Some of these beliefs are responsible for the amazing things you have done and the success and happiness you have created for yourself. Some of these beliefs may have outlived their usefulness and they hold you back – they keep you from achieving to your potential.

These beliefs form a **system**, which is defined as: a set of doctrines or principles that we follow or use, without much, if any thought.

**Guess what? I have B.S. and you have B.S. Aren't we lucky that we are all full of B.S.?**

This is common-sense stuff, however we may forget to apply this common-sense in our daily lives.

The following stories are my experiences which are unique to me and yet the lessons are universal to anyone.

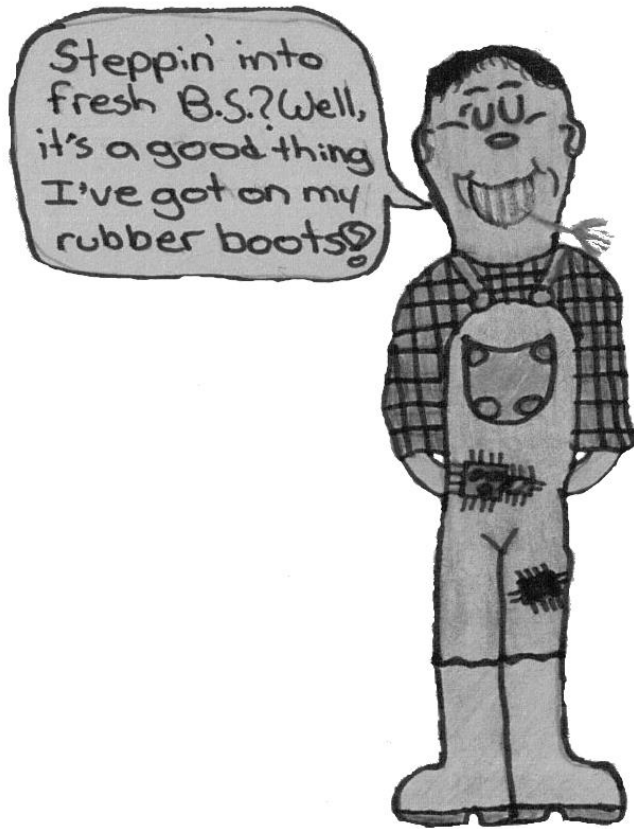
My first challenge for you, should you choose to accept it, is to read these stories and apply the lessons and insights in your life.

My second challenge for you, is to visit my website, buy the entire book, read it, and then confidently and persistently keep steppin' into fresh B.S.

**You'll be glad you did!**

**Ultimately, it is your choice. Have FUN!**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W. D. Allen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.



Drawing by Jenah McPherson (12 yrs old)

## **The Witch Ethel Show**

I am amazed at how the “right” connections and the “right” people always appear when the need is there. **Friends always appear when you need them most.**

It seems to be the way the universe works – or so it is for me. Here is an example.

“Sit! Sit!! Sit!!! Sit!!!!”

“Damn! When the going gets tough, he just - doesn’t - listen.”

Buck, my black and white Collie, darted across the gateway, wiggled under the fence, and then sat to watch the “Witch Ethel Show.”

Witch Ethel was a big black cow. She was half Black Angus and half Brahman. Brahman is a breed that is known for its adaptability, hardiness, and survivability. Because of these traits, they make good mothers. It also means they are very protective of their babies, and in Witch Ethel’s case, she was just – plain – nasty.

Let’s jump inside a time-capsule and go back in time about six months to the fall. The harvest was complete. It was the time of the year when we weaned the calves from their mothers, and decided what cows we were going to keep in the herd. We call that “culling” the herd. We would check our records looking for undesirable attributes and behaviours of our mother cows.

## **2 Thinkin' Outside The Barn!**

Many of these undesirable traits are of a genetic nature. We were, in effect, forming our future calf crops. If the cows had poor feet, udders, eyes, or temperament – on the truck they went. It was the last great bovine adventure. This journey would ultimately end in someone's Big Mac, Big Whopper or Wiener schnitzel.

“Dad, let's get rid of Witch Ethel.”

“Nope. I think we should keep her. She always throws one heck of a good calf.”

“But she's so dog-gone mean.”

“Just stay out of her way, and let nature run its course. She's a good cow. She always takes good care of her calf.”

“Yea, I suppose you're right.” And I gave in - again.

Now fast forward the tape to the spring. It was calving season. Normally I would catch the calves when they were newborn, before they could run very well. I would give them an identification tag in their ear, and injections of vitamins and selenium to keep them healthy.

The mother cows don't care for this, although they usually don't cause me any grief. I don't blame them for being upset. How would you like it if some big jerk grabbed your baby by the legs, flopped it on the ground, sat on it, poked it and prodded it with needles, and made it cry? I'd be upset too.

Witch Ethel didn't care for it either. But she was different. She wasn't going to let that big jerk (me) do his deed. She really didn't care that I was

trying to keep her calf healthy. Hence, there was no way that I could get close to her calf.

Get your cameras ready folks! The Witch Ethel show is about to begin.

I saddled up Clyde, my big grey quarter horse, and rode out into the pasture. Clyde and I were associates, partners, and friends. We had done lots of work together over the years. There was a huge level of trust between us.

“Look Clyde. I think that’s Witch Ethel’s calf, sleeping all by him self. It must be fifty or sixty meters through the gate to the bale feeder. Witch Ethel must be having her breakfast. Perfect! This is our chance! Let’s do it!”

I quietly slipped off Clyde, tagging pliers in one hand, two syringes gripped between my teeth. I snuck up on that calf and dropped onto its back. This was going to be a piece of cake.

The calf woke up. “Blaaaaaaaa!!!!!!”

I heard a blood curdling “Mooooooooo!!!!!!”

Out of the corner of my eye I saw Witch Ethel catapult out of the herd. She was zero to sixty in a split second. She had hooves flying and snot blowing. She was one mad cow!

I’m not talking about Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) mad. I’m talking about just – plain – P...ed Off – protective mother mad.

“Oh, oh! She wants me for breakfast. Gotta get this done!”



#### **4 Thinkin' Outside The Barn!**

“Tag in ear, yea! One shot, yea! Two shots, yea!  
Oh, oh!!”

Witch Ethel hit me like a freight train, sending me rolling in the mud, manure, and muck. She ran right over me and her calf.

I jumped to my feet as she spun around and turned back toward me.

“Oh boy, here she comes again!”

“What am I going to do now? No sticks, no rocks. Holy Moly!” (Actually, it was some other worldly words of wisdom that I learned on the school bus)

“Where are my friends when I need ‘em most?”

Just then my trusty steed, Clyde, sprang to life, and planted himself firmly between Witch Ethel and me.

I bent down and peered under Clyde. Witch Ethel blew snot, snorted, pawed the ground – and then turned her attention to her calf, who had jumped to his feet and had run to her side.

“Whew!! Friends always appear when you need ‘em most.”

From my experience, when I’m feeling down on my luck, trodden on, and crap coming at me from all directions, I know that I can count on my trusted friends to be there for me. They pick me up, dust me off, and give me help, advice, encouragement, and support. And like Clyde, they will even give me a ride home if I need one. They believe in me, even in those times when I struggle to believe in myself. It seems to work that way.

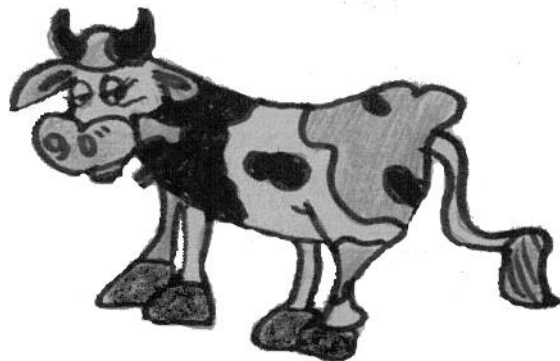
**Friends always appear when you need them most.**

Do you have times in your life when you feel:

- Down and out?
- Too much to do and no time to do it?
- “Stuff” happening (the word rhymes with “it”)?
- Out of control?
- You just can’t do it all?

Wake up and be conscious! Look around you!  
Reach out! Ask!

**Friends always appear when you need them most.**



Drawing by Jenah McPherson (12 yrs old)

## **Do You Colour Your Day Or Does Your Day Colour You?**

**P**ablo Picasso said, “There are painters who turn the sun into a yellow spot. There are others who, through their creativity and skills, turn a yellow spot into the sun.”

Are we all painters?

Recently, I called a company to discuss some communication and customer-service training.

“Good morning. This is Dan Ohler, with Thinkin’ Outside The Barn! May I please speak to the person in charge of Human Resources and Training?”

From the other end of the line came a grunt of enthusiasm like a bear awakened from slumber. “That would probably be the manager. He’s not here, and the rest of us wish we weren’t.”

Ouch! Can you imagine being that dissatisfied with your work that you would make a comment like that, to a potential customer?

Maybe you can. If work is that much fun for eight to ten hours a day, do you suppose that attitude spills over into the personal, family, and community life?

Absolutely it does.

Here is how it happens.

It is a really, really bad day at work. My boss chews me out for something I did, or didn't do. I'm ticked-off at my boss, and the world, because it is not my fault. I go home and yell at my partner. She spanks the child. The child kicks the dog. The dog bites the cat, and the cat goes to the corner of the living room and pees on the carpet.

**Let's face the facts – it affects more than one person.**

I believe that life is too short to spend it doing things that are not challenging, enjoyable and rewarding. You may be thinking, "But Dan, I can't just take my job and shove it. I have bills to pay, and mouths to feed."

It may not be the job. I know of several people who have lived their lives going from job to job, leaving each one when it does not go the way they want. At each place, the conditions "suck", the boss is a jerk, the owner does not know how to run a business, the co-workers are back-stabbers, and the customers are stupid.

Is it possible that a person can have the rotten luck to always get jobs at the same kind of places with the same kind of bosses, co-workers, and customers?

Let's take a closer look. What is common in each place of business? You have guessed it – that employee.

It may be the work, or the conditions at work. This may be true, but more than likely it is that the attitude needs an adjustment.

## **8 Thinkin' Outside The Barn!**

Attitude is a choice, yet it may not be as easy as going into the same workplace and saying, “OK, I am choosing to have a positive attitude today.” The key is to change the focus from “me” to “them” (“them” meaning other people, or something else). It takes seeing what we do as being a valuable contribution to society.

I think about some of the dirtiest, worst tasks and jobs that I have done. For many of these, I did not choose a positive attitude. I was focused on how bad things were for “me”, how tough “I” had it, or how poorly “I” was being treated. I was a victim. Poor me!

### **Do you feel a tear or two running down your cheek for poor little “me”?**

I could have chosen to see these tasks as good valuable work, providing a worthy service to others, or as an opportunity to learn lessons about the world and myself. In doing so, I might have felt more excited about these jobs. I suspect I would have done them more effectively, efficiently, and done better-quality work.

The challenge for you is this: when you are in the middle of one of those dreaded tasks, wondering why the world has dumped on you again, try one of these sayings to shift your attitude and perspective.

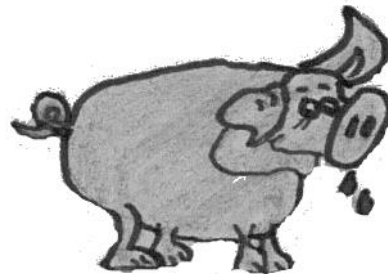
- “This is easy and I love it!”
- “I am providing a valuable service to others.”
- “This is important work that needs to be done.”

- “I can do this better than anyone I know.”
- “I am lucky to have the abilities to help others by doing this.”
- “The world is a better place because I can do this.”

Henry David Thoreau described this kind of a life perspective as, “It is something to be able to paint a particular picture, or to carve a statue, and so to make a few objects beautiful; but it is far more glorious to carve and paint the very atmosphere and medium through which we look, which morally we can do. To affect the quality of the day, that is the highest of arts.”

**Do you colour your day or does your day colour you?**

**How are you going to paint your day, TODAY?**



Drawing by Jenah McPherson (12 yrs old)

# **Your Thoughts Create Your Reality. Who Do You Want To Be?**

**A**merican Trappist monk and spiritual writer, Thomas Merton, wrote, “The thought manifests as the word, the word manifests as the deed, the deed turns into habit and habit hardens into character. So watch your thoughts with care!”

In other words, we have many conscious and unconscious **thoughts**. Because of the **thoughts**, we say things (**words**) out loud or silently to ourselves. Because of these **words**, we do things (**deeds**). We do these same **deeds** over and over, and they develop into unconscious **habits**. These **habits** are who we are. They form our **character**.

Most of us live our lives to a large degree by these unconscious habits. We do the same things, day after day, without giving them a thought. Think about your life.

- Do you always sleep on the same side of the bed?
- Does your alarm go off at the same time every morning?
- How many times do you hit the snooze button before you get up?

- When you put your pants or slacks on, do you put in the left leg first or the right?
- On your shirt or blouse, do you button it up, or do you button it down?
- How do you cross your legs, left leg over right or right over left?

Many of your daily routines are done in the same order and same way every day. This living by habit can be very effective for the mundane tasks of life.

Personally, I find it a waste of good thinking-time to evaluate and consider all of the pros and cons to brushing my teeth with my left hand or my right. It does not matter. Just brush them!

Habits can be very effective in our professional and work lives as long as we are aware of them, and **consciously** create them to move us toward our desired experiences and goals.

Ineffective habits that have been **unconsciously** created can be hard to change unless we understand that we must **consciously choose to think differently**. I learned this lesson early in life.

**Picture this.**

I did not want to get up. And I heard her again.

“Dan, jump out of bed and get ready for school.”

I didn’t want to go to school! I knew – I just knew that it would be a day filled with frustration, disappointment, and ridicule.



## **12 Thinkin' Outside The Barn!**

It was the day of the track meet at school. I should have been excited about this outside day of activity, competition, and fun. But I wasn't. Stavely, Alberta was a small community. The school was so small that everyone was expected to, and required to participate in the track meet.

We did the running events. It seemed to me that we ran a hundred miles. I was always the last one to cross the line, if I made it that far.

There was the high jump and long jump. In my case, it was the low jump and short jump.

We had throwing events too. We threw this thing similar to a shovel handle, called a javelin. We threw another thing called a discus. I'm a farm kid. This was like throwing a big heavy cowpie.

The track meet was a big community event. All of the parents came to watch their kids and cheer them on. As far as I was concerned, the only good thing about the whole day was that they gave us ice cream when we were done.

I rolled my body out of bed and looked at myself in the full-length mirror on the back of the door.

"Mirror, mirror on the wall, who's the fattest of them all? That would be you Dan. Twelve years old, four-foot-four, one hundred and forty-five pounds. Man, it's easier to step over you than it is to walk around you."

I put on my new pants that Mom bought at the "Mr. Big and Tall" store. I surely didn't qualify as "Mr. Tall". I noticed the tag on the inside of the waist band. They had a thirty-six inch waist.

I remembered that the pant legs were really long when I tried them on in the store. “They don’t fit, Mom”, I said with an extruded, pouty, lower lip as I looked at the big rolls of cloth gathered below my knees.

Mom said, “I don’t care about the legs. I can cut them off. Do they fit around the waist?”

As I was dressing, my mind wandered to a conversation I had with Uncle Axel. Uncle Axel was a big, big man. He was a little over six feet tall and weighed three hundred and twenty pounds. He told me about the teasing and ridicule that he had experienced when he was growing up. He told me that he learned early in life to tell lots of jokes and stories. He discovered that if he could get people to laugh with him, they would not laugh at him. He talked about the frustrations and difficulty of doing the fun physical things that most of us take for granted. He could not run, play baseball or hockey. Even walking and golf were difficult for Uncle Axel. He talked about his body. His back and legs hurt. His stomach did not feel good. His hands and feet would swell up.

I remembered him saying, “Dan, I don’t know what it is like to be in good physical condition, with a proper weight. But I do know that life is not a lot of fun if you live it the way I have. It is not Momma’s fault for feeding me all of those good cookies and cakes and things. It is not my wife’s fault for doing the same. And I know that nobody forces me to sit and watch TV and eat snacks rather than to go for a walk. The Doctor tells me that there is nothing wrong with me medically other than I am grossly overweight. I can’t blame my size on anyone or anything else. It is my life and my body. I control them.

## 14 Thinkin' Outside The Barn!

Although I might seem happy, it is a cover up for what is really going on. I don't feel good about who I am."

Then he said some words that really stuck in my noodle.

"Dan, I can see that you are on the same path that I was on, when I was your age. It's your body and your life. You can do what you want. If you want to make some changes, **now** is the time. **Now** is the time to understand that you can **choose** life to be what you desire. **Now** is the time to **think** about who you want to be and do something about it. **Your thoughts create your reality. Who do you want to be?"**

I had never heard Uncle Axel talk so seriously. I knew he meant it.

As I finished dressing, Uncle Axel's words went through my mind again. Looking into the mirror I said, "Dan, things are going to be different from this point on."

Over the next few months I thought a lot about who I wanted to be, and what my physical body would look like. I put in extra effort to jump and run and play everyday. I convinced myself that it was OK for my muscles to feel tired. I drank lots of water and pushed myself away from the table before dessert. I convinced myself that I really did not like chocolates, cakes, and other sweets.

I lost forty pounds of roly-poly jiggly-jiggly, and I felt great. It was not so much about my body as it was about my mind and my heart. I felt good about who I was.

All I did was change my life habits.

- I changed my eating habits. That was part of it.
- I changed my physical activity habits. That was part of it too.
- Most importantly, I changed my **thinking** habits.

Was it easy? Not always. It took constantly thinking about the new habits that I was creating.

Was it worth it? You bet your pickled herring it was. The new habits still serve me well, as several decades later I weigh less than I did then.

I thank Uncle Axel every day for the lesson I learned from him: **My thoughts create my reality. Who do I want to be?**

**That's my story. What is yours?**

Do you have things going on in your life that you would like to change?

- Do you have a body size and physical condition that you are proud of?
- Are your relationships as fantastic and dynamic as you would like?
- Do you communicate effectively all of the time: at work, in business, at home, and in your community?
- Do you get angry at other people and situations?

## **16 Thinkin' Outside The Barn!**

- Do you blame others to save face rather than admit to a mistake?
- Are you happy with that?

**Your thoughts create your reality. Who do you want to be?**

**Here are some hints for change:**

- **Consciously** look at some of the wonderful realities that you are creating in your life. Acknowledge and reward yourself for those realities. As you focus on these results, more of them will occur.
- Look at things that are not going the way you like and **consciously** choose to evaluate, and change your **thoughts, words, deeds, and habits**.
- Commit to a new pattern daily. Think about the new **thoughts, words, deeds, and habits** for a few moments prior to getting out of bed in the morning.
- Ask someone you know, like, and trust to support you with your changes in a loving, caring way. Be accountable to them.
- Believe and trust that the new habits will create new, successful, and desired results.

Those old patterns and habits may have been a part of your character for many years. It will take some time to create new ones. Be patient and kind to yourself, and trust the process.

Studies indicate that new habits take a minimum of twenty-one days to create. Start with small

**Your Thoughts Create Your Reality 17**

changes, and move to larger ones as you experience success.

What do you have to lose?

What do you have to gain?

**Your thoughts create your reality. Who do you want to be?**



Drawing by Jenah McPherson (12 yrs old)

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