6 Ways You're Thinking Wrong--and What You Can Do About Them

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WHEN I WAS a graduate student at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, doing research in cognitive psychology, our lab group went out every now and then for nachos and beers. It was a great opportunity for us to ask our adviser about things that wouldn't likely come up in our more formal meetings. At one of those gatherings, I summoned up the courage to ask him a question that had been on my mind for some time: "Do you think cognitive psychology can make the world a better place?" I had asked a simple yes-or-no question, so he chose a simple answer: "Yes."

Over the course of the next 30 years, I've tried to answer that question myself by working on problems that I hope have real-world applications. In my research at Yale University, where I've been a professor of psychology since 2003, I've examined some of the biases that can lead us astray–and developed strategies to correct them in ways that are directly applicable to situations people encounter in their daily lives.

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