



SUPERCHARGE **YOUR BRAIN**

Simple Hacks To Boost Your Brain
Performance, Unlock Your Full Potential
and Live a More Fulfilling Life



BUSINESS COACH SPECIALIST
Where Ambitious Businesses Grow

Supercharge Your Brain!

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Supercharge Your Brain!

We all want to perform at our best at all times. It is easy to get complacent and float through life without much thought on how to improve results. And with our busy lives, it can be difficult to take the time for ourselves to “sharpen the sword.”

In this eBook I go through 17 different tips, tools, tricks, and hacks that will give your brain the boost needed to perform at your best in your everyday life, at work or in your business.

The following topics are included in the course:

- a. Time Management
- b. Productivity methods
- c. Tackling self-limiting beliefs
- d. Adopting a continuous learning mindset
- e. Sleep optimisation
- f. Reinvention of oneself
- g. Stress management
- h. Visualisation
- i. Habit building
- j. 80/20 rule and implications
- k. Emotional intelligence
- l. Meditation
- m. Importance of finding a mentor
- n. Goal setting and achievement
- o. Importance of Exercise
- p. Nootropics
- q. Feed Your Brain

While the topics can and do overlap at times, it is designed so that you can view each one of them as a standalone topic. Each topic has action steps and you will get more from the course if you take action.

Knowledge alone is fine, but implementation is key if you want to achieve meaningful, positive changes in your life.

Time management

Time management is self-management. We are all allotted the same 24 hours of time each day. It has been called time management for years, but perhaps it is time to recognise this as a misnomer and rename it.

How many times have you heard someone say, "I don't have enough time"? It is likely all of us have said that at some point.

In most cases, a more accurate statement is "I will not make the time for that". We tend to make time for things we need to do, or the things we love to do.

Here are a few tips to get more out of your day:

- **Plan out your day** – Make a preliminary schedule of how your ideal will go with specific times. We all know things can get off track from an emergency or task from a boss and many other reasons. If that happens, don't panic, and reschedule the remainder of the day after the unexpected event is taken care of.
- **The Pomodoro Technique** – This was developed by an Italian named Francesco Cirillo in the late 1980's. The beauty of this method is that it does give you a light at the end of the tunnel by allowing for breaks after a burst, or interval of work, usually around 25 minutes. This technique allows one to work hard during the interval with complete focus.

The way the technique is maximised is by turning off distractions like email, phone, internet and others for the duration of the interval. Reward yourself at the end of time with a short break. Then back to work!

- **Prioritise your tasks** – There are many methods to ranking in order of importance the tasks that need to be completed during the day.

Many people seem busy but still seem to struggle with important tasks. One reason for this is inordinate time spent on the lower level tasks. These tasks do not bring value to the business or the company.

Tackle the high-level tasks early in the day. This will allow time for lower level tasks later in the day that do not require the same amount of energy and focus as the higher-level tasks. If you work better in the afternoon, then you may be able to reverse the order, but this can add to the stress levels if you wait too long to start and do not have sufficient time to finish before the day is done.

- **“Just Say No”** – Although many do not like to say no, this can be a very effective method to preserving some precious time. There simply is not enough time to do everything asked of us on a daily basis. Because of this, it is wise to pick and choose the things we should do when requested.

Plus, if you make it clear in the beginning by saying no, the person will respect that although it may take some time for them to get accustomed to this.

There is nothing worse than promising something you simply can't deliver in a timely manner that makes it awkward for both parties. They are waiting on you, and you constantly have it in your mind as well. With a no up front, other arrangements will be made and you won't add to your stress.

- **Set daily goals** – While we often think of long term goals consisting of big accomplishments, we can also set smaller daily goals. This will lead to a feeling of accomplishment throughout the day and help build momentum.
- **Limit, shorten, or skip meetings altogether** – First ask, is a meeting really necessary? If so, set a beginning and ending time for the meeting. Meetings can tend to drag on endlessly, taking away a ton of time for all involved.

Conclusion

As technology seems to make our world spin faster each day, each person is looking for a way to recapture some time.

While it may seem counterintuitive, slow down and take time to plan your day. While you're doing this, be cognizant of the importance of the tasks.

Make time and take time for the most important tasks first. This will help your day be more productive and help you manage stress from time constraints.

Action steps

- Start recognising which requests should be agreed to and which ones should be declined. If this is a departure from your character, it will take some getting used to by others, but it will start to be a tremendous time saver
- Start getting away from the “meeting” culture. What is the most efficient way to disseminate the required information? Can it be done with email or memo? If not, limit the length of the meeting by having an end time.
- Prioritise your to do list at the same time you are making it. This will indicate which ones should be done first or in some cases when you work best.

Productivity Methods

Competition is fierce in the marketplace and it is getting tougher every day. How can you be a little better, stronger, faster, or smarter? Everyone is looking for an edge. Here are a few ways to take control of your life and day and be a stronger competitor.

- **Outsource** – From low tech jobs like cutting the grass to higher tech tasks such as managing your numerous social networking channels, there are workers clamoring to take care of these jobs for you. From apps like Task Rabbit to sites like Fiverr.com, there are many places to find eager and willing, not to mention knowledgeable and skilled workers. In many cases, it makes sense to outsource tasks you don't know how to do or don't want to do to make time for high impact tasks or for additional family or leisure time. It is a way of buying back your time.
- **Break projects into smaller pieces** – How do you eat the elephant? One bite at a time of course! Big projects or jobs can seem daunting or overwhelming in the beginning, the best way to manage this is to break the parts down into components that can be tackled one at a time or assigned to others. The milestone approach gives a way to measure progress on a partial completion basis and being able to celebrate small victories along the way.
- **Use idle time for improvement** – What do you do when commuting? Listen to talking heads or the latest Top 40 hits? Turn your commute into your own self-improvement university.

You can become an expert in a given topic over a relatively short amount time at an hour a day in the car if you have a 30-minute one-way commute. Turn TV time into reading or skill development time. Americans spend up to 30-40 hours watching TV on average per week, nearly the equivalent of a full-time job. Imagine if that time were spent on gaining knowledge and skills, or even half of that time!

- **Environment** – It is important to create an environment conducive to productivity. A quiet and clean space away from distractions are best. When working or creating, it is extremely difficult to get back on task. Some research has shown it takes as much as 17 minutes to get back on task after an interruption.
- **Identify your peak energy times** – Do you ever hear someone say “I am just not a morning person”? While this may sound to some like an excuse to hit the snooze button a few more times, there is actually something to this.

Our body has a natural rhythm making certain times more conducive than others to peak performance.

Take some time to notice when your mind is at its best and schedule the high impact tasks for those peak times.

Save the trivial and mundane for when your levels are not at their maximum and you can get more “bang for your buck” during your peak times.

- **Single-task is the new multi-task** – More recent research has shown that you can actually get more productivity through focusing on a single task instead of juggling many tasks at one time. Our brains are simply not wired to do multiple complex tasks at the same time.

While people will brag about multi-tasking and appear to be super busy, the fact is the level of production goes down with each task because we begin to spread our focus thinner across the tasks.

Buckle down and do less, but to completion. An exception to this could be lower level tasks that do not require extreme concentration, such as surfing the web while listening to music.

- **Prioritise** – Assign a number or letter to each task, such as 1,2,3,4 or A, B, C, D with the lowest character being the most important and the highest character being essentially not important at all. This assignment will provide visual evidence of the most important jobs that should take precedence over the “busy” work that can be delegated, pushed back until later, or even eliminated.

Conclusion

The economy and technology are changing faster than at any time in history. The ones that will be successful will take advantage of continuous learning opportunities. Rest assured your competitors are looking for ways to be more efficient and more knowledgeable leveraging rapidly advancing technologies.

Action Steps

- Get a timer or use your smartphone so that you can work in bursts and know when it is time for a break.
- Start scheduling each day ahead of time either first thing in the morning or the day before. This can be done with paper or there are literally thousands of apps to digitise the process.
- Find the techniques that work for you and stick with them. Not every method will work for each individual, but something will work for you. Take time to experiment with each one and narrow it down to the ones that are best for you.

Self-Limiting beliefs

"When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change." - Wayne Dyer

Self-limiting beliefs are beliefs that can prevent one from chasing or even setting goals because the goals and dreams seem out of reach for a variety of reasons.

These beliefs become cemented in our brains through our environment and experiences throughout our lifetimes. While these notions can grow to be hindrances when we feel the need to climb the ladder of self-actualisation, they probably served a useful purpose at some point.

On many levels, we come by these beliefs quite naturally. Our brains are literally wired to keep us out of harm's way or keep us from taking on things that could be considered risky behavior.

Examples of Self-Limiting Beliefs

We have thoughts swirling in and out of heads at a staggering rate constantly. In the formative years and beyond, we are starting to develop the ideas that will shape our future. We say things like "I do not have enough time to do that", or "I do not have the money to start that".

One practice that is essential when beginning to tackle self-limiting beliefs is to question the validity of the preconceptions that seem to flow so freely from our mouths and in our minds.

When one takes the time to analyse the statements that are the root of killing our dreams and goals, often he or she will begin to realise that the statements are simply not true. We can make time for things that are important, there is always time. It just may require cutting out non-essential activities or rearranging one's schedule.

On the topic of scant money or other resources, while money is a significant barrier to entry for many industries, there are often other ways through creativity or utilizing other people's money to circumvent the potential roadblocks.

"I do not know how to" or "I do not know where to start" are two common excuses many use. This is quickly becoming less and less a valid argument since there are more and more ways to learn how to do practically anything through the search engines, YouTube, Udemy, online schools and many other distribution channels.

We are truly in the Information Age with no turning back. Learning is becoming easier through technology and resources.

Often what is a more accurate statement is "I do not want to take time or effort to learn to..." One thing that technology can't replace is that effort is still required.

While it is easy to form "analysis paralysis", one must learn to focus on the pertinent skills and information that needs to be learned.

Conclusion

What we say both outwardly - and in our minds can make the difference in succeeding and failing.

Our beliefs are shaped by our parents, teachers, friends, experiences and many other environmental factors.

It is important to differentiate between our beliefs and facts. They are definitely not one in the same. Our beliefs are contaminated by listening to those that may or may not be the best to form lifelong beliefs from.

Money is great example of this. We often learn principles of money from our parents who may or not be successful in accumulating wealth. If your parents made it by paycheck to paycheck, wouldn't it be wise to question these beliefs and principles? Money is only one of many examples.

The point is one should question common beliefs, they do not necessarily contain common sense. Seek out experts and others that have succeeded and find out how they were able to find success.

Finding others that are doing what you would like to do can eliminate self-limiting beliefs. There will always be those that will tell you what you want to do will not work.

Always consider the source! The world is full of people that have succeeded when nearly everyone around them said they would not.

Action steps

- Become cognizant of the ideals that are the source of impeding your progress. Becoming complacent and accepting there are not better ways or more success will guarantee the status quo is as far as you will go. Write these down so you can visualise what is holding you back and analyse and question these one by one.
- While most of what happens in our minds is below the conscious level, what we say can be controlled. When self-limiting beliefs are announced orally, your brain accepts it as fact. Eliminate these toxic beliefs from your vocabulary. While it is not all that is required to overcome self-imposed limitations. It is a good starting point.
- Utilise techniques to help overcome self-limiting beliefs. You can actually aid in reprogramming your brain with meditation, subconscious training, affirmations, visualisation and many other methods. Experiment with some of these to find which ones are going to work best for you.

Adopting a continuous Learning Mindset

In her book *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, Carol Dweck utilised 30 years of research and practice in the educational field to differentiate between a *fixed* versus a *growth* mindset. We all would like to think that we are intelligent and have all of the tools we need to succeed.

However, the Information Age has taught us all a very important lesson: there will always be more to know and learn and practice. Advances in neuroscience have shown that the brain is more dynamic and malleable than previously thought. This means that neural pathways and networks can actually change over time and establish new connections while strengthening others that are not quite as strong.

We all know people (or maybe even ourselves) that totally dismiss new learning opportunities from fear that we simply do not have the capacity to learn and grasp seemingly difficult or new topics. How often have you heard someone say, "I can't do maths" or "I'm such a klutz, I could never dance" and the lists could go on forever. These are examples of having a *fixed* mindset.

While it certainly true that some things come easier than others, adopting a *growth* mindset frees our mind to the possibilities of overcoming potential weaknesses through constant learning and effort or work.

The concept of continuous learning and improvement is definitely not anything new. The Japanese word *Kaizen*, literally meaning “change for the better”, refers to any change, large or small.

Over the years the word *kaizen* seems to have taken on more of an “incremental” or small changes definition that implies small improvements that occur over a longer period of time but that over time can make a significant difference.

Being one percent better every day does not sound earth shattering, but a 20% to 30% change over a month can be a huge impact. The popularity of the term *kaizen* came from Toyota and has been implemented successfully by another American car manufacturer Ford Motor Company.

However other large companies such as Pratt Whitney, Lockheed Martin, Intel, and Allied Signal just to name a few, have adopted *kaizen* in one form or another.

The concept is not limited to only large businesses and has also become a popular one with both small businesses and personal growth enthusiasts and numerous books have been penned about the subject.

How to Adopt a Growth or Continuous Learning Mindset

The concept of continuous learning certainly sounds good on the surface, but how can one actually begin to adopt the growth mindset and reap the benefit?

As with any new habit, it takes time to evaluate, plan, and implement the new and improved habit. First of all, simply become aware of the things that you may have dismissed because of a fixed mindset.

You must also sincerely want to take on the new challenge. Without this, it is doomed from inception.

Next, there must be a commitment to put forth the effort required for the new challenges and be prepared for inevitable setbacks along the way.

It is completely normal to meet these challenges, and this is where your improved *growth* mindset will kick in and aid you on the journey. The truth is, these points of resistance are where most people meet their demise on a new opportunity or challenge.

The ones that succeed will seek solutions to problems or find other means to circumvent any arising roadblocks. There is no real magic here, persistence and an open mind are paramount to success.

Conclusion

Although popularised by a teacher and prevalent in the Education industry, the *growth* or *continuous learning* mindset has been found to have practical application across many industries and platforms. Having a fixed mindset can impede one's growth substantially because it significantly reduces the amount of solutions and alternatives that are available.

Having a continuous learning outlook will keep an individual humble because the essence of the mindset is that one person does not have all of the answers and it is also conceding that situations and options are fluid based on globalisation and rocket ship speed increases in technology.

The keys are awareness, desire to change and learn, and persistence in addressing problems and issues along the path. If these are present, success is within reach.

Action Steps

- Think about and list some things that interest you, but you may have thought learning it or doing it was out of reach based on preconceived ideas or what others have told you.
- Pick one of these as a starter and try to keep an open mind about the subject. Be cognizant of self-talk language and replace negative talk like "This is just too difficult" and replace it with something like, "This will definitely be a challenge, but I am committing to the time and effort required to improve."
- Do not be afraid to fail or make mistakes. It is inevitable there will be mistakes along your journey. It is part of the process and it will make you more prepared for the next step or the next challenge.
- Keep an open mind and persist. It will separate you from the masses.

Optimise sleep to keep your brain Supercharged!

"Sleep is the best meditation" – Dalai Lama

There is really nothing else we spend fully a third of our lives doing. Sleep is important for our cognitive functions and regular solid sleep can make many other parts of our life go smoother. There is nothing worse than feeling tired throughout the day.

Millions of people have issues with either not sleeping enough or not sleeping well.

What can you do to go to sleep better?

While experts will provide varying advice on many sleep topics, exercise is one that seemingly everyone agrees on. Getting regular exercise daily can really help to regulate the sleep schedule. In addition to wearing yourself out with exercise, a light snack before bed can also help going to sleep a little bit sooner. The key here is not to eat too much because that can make you bloated and uncomfortable and that can backfire and make it harder to go to sleep.

Alcohol and caffeine

While it is true that alcohol can relax you and help you go to sleep. The irony is that while you might go to sleep a little sooner, the quality of sleep may be worse because it can cause you to wake up more and also toss and turn. Caffeine, as one would imagine, can keep you up and awake. Some experts say

to cut out caffeine a full six hours a day prior to going to bed to make sure it does not interfere with getting to sleep.

Preparing for sleep and optimising sleep environment

It turns out our brains do not like distractions of any type when it comes to sleep. Bright lights, like LED and others can actually trick our brains into thinking it is still daytime rather than dark.

Many sleep experts say cover up lights like device charging lights, laptops, television, and others to cut down on distractions. A fan or white noise producer can also drown out background noise and reduce any extra sounds that could distract us.

While it is generally wise to be thrifty, experts say that investing in your sleep can pay large dividends. This is definitely one place not to skimp.

A cheap mattress can cause back issues so make sure you do the research and invest in a mattress that is conducive to good sleep and rest. The same goes for pillows and sheets. A pillow that supports your head and neck is leaps and bounds better than a pillow that flattens out. Cool and comfortable sheets can also make your sleeping environment more enjoyable.

While it sounds chilly, 60 to 68 degrees Fahrenheit is the guidelines for optimal sleep. When it is too warm, it can make it harder to get and stay asleep. If you are cool, you can add layers in order to get comfortable.

From a spiritual standpoint, many say meditating or praying before bed can be calming. Soft and light music can also ease our brains to sleep.

Help! I can't sleep

If you are tossing and turning and you still just can't seem to get to sleep, sleep experts will recommend getting out of bed and doing a light activity such as reading to help the mood. Also, as previously mentioned, a light snack with milk can possibly help. Even a warm bath is known to aid in getting to sleep. There are also some natural remedies like lavender, magnesium, valerian, chamomile and melatonin. If all else fails, seek a doctor for a prescription or do a sleep study to get in depth information on your individual issues.

Conclusion

Sleep is one of the most important parts of overall brain health. Without adequate sleep, it is unlikely that you are operating at your best.

There are ways to monitor yourself through sleep apps and wearable devices like Fitbit or others that can measure sleep along with other statistics such as heart rate, walking steps, and many other things.

When in doubt, monitor your sleep performance, you may well be surprised at the results. Take sleep seriously because a rested mind will perform much better.

Action steps

- As with many things, writing it down will help. Write down your sleep schedule and see how your cognitive performance relates to your sleep quality. Many agree that waking up at the same time every day can help regulate the sleeping schedule overall.
- Cut off devices an hour or two before laying down for sleep. Make sure to cover up any distracting LED or other lights that may be charging devices.
- Establish a daily exercise habit. Not only will be it good for your body, but also your mind. It can be a huge help in getting to sleep and sleeping well.
- In order to wake up more naturally, try to awake to lighter and softer sounds so that you are not jolted awake!
- Commit to optimising your sleep for your best brain health and performance.

How can you reinvent yourself?

"When things are bad, it's the best time to reinvent yourself.

– George Lopez

"Life isn't about finding yourself, Life is about creating yourself"

– George Bernard Shaw

"You're fired!" No you did not just get kicked off *The Apprentice* by Sir Alan Sugar, you actually were fired, or downsized, or laid off, or however Human Resources wants to frame it, but that doesn't matter, you have to start over. What do you do now?

Or you have just had enough of 65 hour weeks with no raise or bonus for the last three years and you've been passed over for promotions time and time again although you were the best one for the job.

Or you can actually tolerate your job and the people around you but there is a voice inside your head telling you to finally act on that new business that has been swimming around in your head for the last fifteen years.

It really doesn't matter how you got here, but you are here.

How do reinvent yourself in order to give yourself the best shot of crushing the next chapter of your new life?

While there is no real instruction manual for this like most things in life that are complex, there are some things you can learn from those that have done it and rocked it!

- **Commit to it** – Don't start waffling now, and don't look back. You will need to immerse yourself in this new phase so a pity party is not what's on the roadmap.
- **Network** – If you are smart, you have been doing this all along, (along with saving 9-12 months of living expenses, but who's counting) but now it is time to kick your networking into overdrive. The good news is this is the best time history to utilise social media to network, sites like LinkedIn, Twitter, and even Facebook can be great starting points. Use past, current, and also look to expand to form new connections, you will need them at some point.
- **Have gratitude** – This may seem counter intuitive, however this is the healthy attitude to have. You are still alive and going so the sky is the limit. There are no boundaries now with a fresh start. Use the knowledge you've gained in the past to foster new ideas.
- **Learn, read, listen, watch, take courses...** - you get the picture here. There are so many ways to consume books and courses now so there is really no excuse not to. You can use travel time to absorb audiobooks, you can take online courses, watch YouTube videos, print books, e-books, and the list continues forever. While you have accumulated tons of knowledge from previous experiences, chances are you have a whole new vernacular to learn and it is going to take a few years so be patient. Expert reinventor James Altucher recommends 500 books, yes 500 that's not a misprint!

- **Get a mentor** – A mentor can save you tons of time that might otherwise be wasted by providing shortcuts. He or she has been there and has likely been where you are at some point even if long ago. Listen with an open mind, get away from your comfort zone and learn as much as you can from them.
- **No one cares what you did before** – While deep down in your heart you think there are some transferable skills and knowledge, no one else cares about that. Do not waste your time rehashing past accomplishments because they are not relatable to the current situation.
- **Block out those close to you that do not understand or share your dreams and passion** - When I made a major career switch, almost no one around me encouraged me. I got a lot of questions about why I was doing it. I did not feel the need to explain to those I knew were being condescending. Things did work out, but it did take a few years to really hit my stride. Again, patience is a virtue.
- **Keep yourself healthy** – Take time to exercise daily, eat well, and sleep well. You are going to need all of your energy to pull this off. If you are not feeling well, your performance will likely show that.

Conclusion

This can be an exciting but stressful time. Under ideal circumstances, you will have saved some money, you will have the support of family and friends, and you will be healthy, grateful and patient.

However, in the real world things are seldom that easy as you know. Take things in your stride and try to let the hope and motivation for the future get you past any stormy weather.

Be prepared for at least several years of hard work before getting the desired results. Set goals along the way and readjust your plans when necessary. Some people have done this multiple times in a lifetime so take comfort in the fact that you know it can be done.

Action steps

- Take the leap and don't look back. Be ready for the learning process and be patient.
- Action, action, action. You can still take steps while learning, do not be afraid of making mistakes or failing. It is part of the process and everyone fails sooner or later.
- Use your network and continue building it, it is one of your best allies. Use your network to find a mentor that will speed up the learning curve.

Ways to Manage Stress

"It's not the load that breaks you down, it's the way you carry it"
– Lou Holtz

Everyone has some level of stress. It is a function of the human body's nervous system. At times, our stress levels can get higher depending on outside factors and this can lead to feeling overwhelmed by the stressors.

When stress levels elevate, it can impact us physically, mentally, and emotionally. It can also affect those around us if we do not learn how to manage it properly.

Best practices for managing stress

There are obvious stressors that come from large life events like marriage, moving, divorce, starting a new job or business, having children, buying a home and others. In addition to the big ones, there is day to day stress like traffic, a cranky boss, financial problems, and so on.

While some are temporary and some are continuous, the stress should be handled with healthy coping strategies. Some of the coping strategies are:

- **Exercise** – This is one of the best coping mechanisms. It reduces overall stress and also helps sleep.

- **Relaxation techniques** – Deep breathing, massage, music therapy, meditation, prayer, yoga, tai chi, and guided positive imagery are all examples of relaxation techniques that can be helpful in managing stress.
- **Task management** – Review the trusty old to-do list. Break down large projects into smaller ones so that they seem more manageable. Prioritise tasks in order to become more efficient. Are there tasks on your list that you can delegate to someone else or eliminate altogether?
- Keep a journal of things that caused stress and include how you felt, what was your reaction to it, and what actions you took to improve the situation.
- **Learn to say no** – Taking on too many tasks can mean unnecessary stress. Do not overextend yourself in an attempt to keep everyone happy. People will learn to respect your time more wisely after a few no's and be less likely to continue to ask.
- Laugh and make time for leisure activities and things you like to do on a daily basis. Everyone deserves some free time for themselves. Do not feel guilty, this will keep you fresh and pleasant to be around.
- Focus on the basics like sleeping and eating well. Try to optimise your sleep patterns and do not overdo caffeine, sugar and alcohol. Stop smoking! (Do I even have to remind you?)

The Four A's of Stress Management

According to the *Mayo Clinic*, the four A's of stress management are Avoid, Alter, Adapt, and Accept. These are detailed more below as follows:

- **Avoid** – Learn to say no to undesirable tasks that do not create value or happiness in your or others' lives. Avoid the people that stress to the best of your ability. Remember the 80/20 Rule that 80% of our happiness likely comes from 20% of the people you interact with regularly, so now may be a great time to evaluate those around you to see who should make the cut. You don't necessarily have to cut them off totally, however, you can reduce the amount of time significantly to manage stress. To a certain extent, you can control your environment, so create a calm atmosphere. Dissect the task list to see what items are unnecessary.
- **Alter** – Here is where you can look at trying to balance the schedule in order to account for things you like to do and not just things you have to do. Instead of keeping feelings inside that will eventually burst out, express your feelings to others and it will likely be reciprocated. Compromise where necessary especially with family members in order to keep the peace.
- **Adapt** – First of all, begin this "A" by having a grateful attitude. While we all want more from life, chances are you have it pretty good. So be thankful for what you have instead of dwelling on the things that you do not have. Evaluate the "big picture" and ask yourself if the stressor will

even matter later. If not, let it go. Stop trying to be perfect all the time!

- **Accept** – We all know this but seem to forget at times. Some things are out of your control so try not to overly stress on these things. You simply can't control others' actions so focus on you because there are always things you can do better.

Develop a positive state of mind by looking at the "bright side" of things and find a different way of looking at issues so that you are not dwelling solely on the negative.

Forgive those that have wronged you. This may be the hardest of all for many. If you can do this, you will definitely reduce some stress ghosts from the past that still seem to haunt you.

Conclusion

The real foundation of managing stress is developing the feeling that you are in control of your life for the most part. Certain things are outside of your control, but it is not wise to stress over the things outside of personal control.

What is the way you look at stress? Do you take responsibility for it or do you tend to blame everyone or everything else? Try to remember our bodies are wired to have a certain amount of stress as a protection mechanism. Accept it as a part of life and accept things you can't directly control and you will go a long way in reducing stress.

Action Steps

- Evaluate your task list and eliminate unnecessary items. If you can't get rid of it, can you delegate it?
- Learn to accept the things you can't control
- Develop healthy coping habits such as exercise or finding time for things that you enjoy. Make this a daily habit.
- Accept stress as a part of life but do not let it overwhelm you.

How Visualisation can help you achieve your goals

Whatever the mind of a man can conceive and believe, it can achieve - Napoleon Hill

Visualisation techniques are usually more associated with world class and Olympic athletes. The popularity and visibility of visualisation began in the 1960's with Russian Olympians.

However, more and more people outside of sports have realised that these concepts and techniques could be applied outside of sports and applied to business, school, or really anything else that a person would want to increase his or her success in.

Visualisation may sound exotic or difficult. In reality, it is just the process of using your mind's eye to "see" yourself performing something successfully or envisioning a desired outcome prior to it actually happening. It is also often referred to as positive mental imagery in some circles.

Types of visualisation

Although there are several types of visualisation techniques, probably the most two implemented are *outcome based* visualisation and *process oriented* visualisation.

The *outcome based* involves picturing yourself in the winner's circle or enjoying the fruits of your labour.

An example of this could be printing out a picture of your dream home and seeing yourself in there enjoying it with your family.

The *process oriented* technique is more a practice or rehearsal of the steps one by one in your mind. An example is a figure skater reviewing his or her jumps right before the performance. Both can be equally as effective.

The outcome based technique does not have to involve total concentration and could be a vision board, a printout of your income goals on your desk, or even index cards that you review daily. You can really be creative with this technique.

For either technique, drilling down to the tiniest detail will be more effective as it will seem more realistic and also be more memorable.

Numerous cultures have practiced visualisation for thousands of years. Modern research seeks to affirm what others have known for quite some time that visualisation really works.

The science behind visualisation is that our brains make little distinction between imagining the performance and actually doing the performance. Advances in brain scan technologies have confirmed this by measuring brain activity on the *functional MRI*.

Although it is not substitute for hard work, it can definitely be an additional tool that can be used in goal achievement. A huge benefit is the minimal use of resources needed. You just need a quiet comfortable place and plenty of focus.

You can often see athletes, speech givers, and many others using visualisation just prior to a big performance.

What are the effects and benefits of using visualisation?

According to the blog of Jack Canfield, author of *Chicken Soup for the Soul* and many other bestselling books and widely considered one of the top personal development coaches, utilising visualisation does four important things:

- **It activates your creative subconscious.** This is important because about 95% of your thinking is on a subconscious level and this can help to eliminate some of the negative thoughts by seeing yourself succeed repetitiously.
- **It programs your brain.** Although the old saying is “you can’t teach an old dog new tricks,” we now know that new neural pathways can be made and there can be increased strength between formerly weaker connections in the brain.
- **It activates LOA, or the Law of Attraction.** The Law of Attraction has many names, but the thought of the Universe conspiring to align factors in your favor is the premise. This concept was made more popular through *The Secret* movie that featured many modern personal development gurus and others.
- **It builds internal motivation.** While there are several types of motivations, both internal and external, we all want to succeed in our endeavors. Seeing success over and over or “seeing” the winning outcome can help to cement the desire to win internally.

Conclusion

Visualisation can be an important goal achievement tool in your arsenal. While many associate visualisation with sports, it can be applied to a plethora of activities. Many use it in conjunction with meditations, prayer and also affirmations.

Outcome based visualisation techniques can be as simple as reminders placed in highly visible places so thoughts and goals consistently stay on top of the mind.

The visualisation should be as detailed as possible all the way down to minor details such as clothing, location, who is there and so on. The more detailed the scenes, the more real it will seem.

Action steps

- Write down several goals and place them in a spot you will see on a daily basis. Another idea is a vision board that has your ideal location, clothing, vehicle, and more. Index cards with goal reminders can be made and reviewed daily.
- When meditating or praying, use visualisation as an additional component during this time. Picture yourself succeeding and making the right steps to achieve your goals and dreams.
- Use spare moments to find a quiet spot and use the time to visualise desired outcomes. Even a few minutes here and there can be fruitful in the long run.

Building Positive Habits

I believe it is a safe bet that there is not one of us that would not want to change one habit or another and replace it with something that will reap rewards down the road. There are the usual culprits such as losing weight, going back to school, going to the gym, eating healthier, and improving relationships. Then there are more complex goals such as finally starting that business, writing that book that's been bursting out of you, or running a marathon for the first time. No matter what it is, all of these things have something in common. They require a positive habit, or in some cases, a series of them to reach the goal.

If you have ever tried (and we have all tried to develop a positive habit at some time), then you know this much: it is difficult. New Year is a prime example. Many set out to change starting January 1st only to flame out by the end of January. We have all been there. The bad news is this is the norm. The good news is there are techniques you can use to increase the chances you don't end up feeling like a total failure. You don't have to wait for the New Year to start either. Chances are a random date is as good as any to start. Sometimes just starting is hard and that is understandable. After all we are wired to be creatures of habit, good or bad habits. Here are some tips to improve your chances of succeeding. First, start with something small and pick *one*, yes *one* thing. Next is to be very specific about what it will be. Something vague like "live a better life" is not going to work.

People tend to start the process by writing down everything they want to change. Resist the temptation of tackling the entire inventory list and stay small and specific. Next, develop a plan. Write out exactly what you want to do with specific numbers to back it up. After your plan is complete you must now find a way to stay accountable. Keep a log or diary of your progress.

We live in a society that values fast results and convenience. The truth is that thinking must be abandoned if we are to succeed in the habit building business. Take the long term view of your progress and results. You will unlikely see any immediate gains. Slow and steady wins the race every time. But we are human after all, so you will want to know how long it takes to make this a permanent part of your routine. This is where things get tricky. While some gurus will advertise the three week mark as time to crack the champagne, the reality is that the actual amount of time to master the habit depends on a myriad of factors including what the actual change is, the environment you are part of, and your ability level and will power just to name a few factors. Other research indicates that ninety days or more is a more realistic timeframe to start being able to celebrate mastery of the new positive habit.

What happens if you fall off the wagon? In order to be successful, the best practice is to take it easy and learn to be forgiving to yourself or otherwise frustration can increase the failure rate. Missing a day is not the end of the world as far as new habits go, but it is very important to rebound after a temporary setback. Perseverance is your ally especially in the beginning stages where the rewards and your confidence are at their low points.

Conclusion

The first step can be the hardest. Some of the best results come from substituting a positive habit in place of a negative one. Instead of another hour of reality television, commit to an hour of walking a day. Success often brings more success so you can build on the small victories. Don't bite off more than you can chew and tackle everything all at one time. This is sure to bring immediate failure. Be quite specific and make sure the progress can be measured and tracked. Write it all down because it is proven that writing down your goals highly increases your chance of succeeding.

Action steps

- Write down the things you would like to change or improve but just pick one small thing to focus on in the beginning. As you become more adept at accomplishing goals and mastering new and positive habits, you can increase the depth and difficulty levels later on
- **Be accountable** – Find a partner to work with or tell someone what you are doing so you will be more likely to keep going. Track your progress daily so you can see the results visually
- **Persevere** – Your plans may change or go awry but that is not an excuse to stop. Learn to be forgiving but quickly recover so your progress is not lost. Keep forward momentum and celebrate small victories along the way.

The 80/20 Rule

The 80/20 Rule gets tossed around entrepreneurial circles frequently. But what exactly is it and how does it apply to you in your own journey?

Essentially, what it means is 80% of the results come from 20% of the effort. This principle originated from an Italian economist named Wilfredo Pareto. On the surface, this can seem like an abstract statistical formula. However, it has proven to have practical applications in many fields such as math, science, software, safety and health in the workplace, advertising, and many more.

A real-life example of the 80/20 rule in action involves two people that I worked with in an office. One of the people worked super late hours into the night and another person who was often able to leave the office early in the day because he was done with his work and totally caught up.

The person that worked late somehow did not have the production of the one who simply came in, did his job with focus and went home.

Both people were smart, it did not necessarily have to do with ability levels. I can tell you from seeing both them in action that difference was the 80/20 Principle although they probably did not think of it in that way or know the name of it.

The one spending inordinate amounts of time at the office was eventually let go because of lack of production. How could this happen? She was focusing on the wrong things. She was busy, but not productive. If there is one thing to take away from the 80/20 Rule is that being busy does not make you successful or insure you are doing the correct things.

How can this help you?

If you work in an office, you likely have a variety of things you do each day as a part of your role. There are obviously things you do that are more important than others. If you work from a to-do list, take a look at the list. Identify the items that have a direct impact on the company's bottom line.

The most productive items are the things you are being evaluated on by your supervisor.

When it comes time for your annual performance review, you will not be judged on the minor tasks that could be delegated, pushed off until later or even eliminated. Focus on the higher impact activities that make a difference to the bottom line of your company and perform those first and perform them well.

This is where procrastination can cause problems. We see a long list of items and believe all of the items must be done but the truth is these items must be prioritised based on the level of importance.

Entrepreneurial Application

What if you don't work for someone but have your own business. Take some time to evaluate your business. 80% of your profits come from 20% of your customers. With this being said, who do you think you should focus on?

Without evaluating the numbers, it may not be evident where your profits are derived from. What about advertising costs? It is important to keep in mind that 80% of the results from the advertising campaigns come from 20% of the ads. The internet has made the results of advertising much more measurable.

Take some time and effort to focus on what is working with regard to ads and which ones are not producing results.

Personal applications

Have you ever looked around at all things you have accumulated? It can be staggering at the amount of things we collect over the years.

Just like business, the 80/20 Rule has an impact on your personal life as well. 80% of your joy comes from 20% of the material things you have. With that in mind, do you really need all of the other things that are taking up space in your home and your life?

Maybe it is time to declutter and get rid of things that longer bring you joy. Donate, give to friends or family, throw away or sell things that you no longer have a use for or is taking up precious space. The same goes for people.

In general, it is wise to keep a tight circle of friends. Are there people in your life that don't share your vision for success or are otherwise keeping you from being happy?

It may be time to look at the people in your life and make some hard decisions about the people you are aligned with.

Choose the 20% that challenges and pushes you to be better and not the ones pulling you down. After all, misery loves company.

Action steps

- Prioritise your to-do list with the 80/20 Rule in mind. Focus on the high impact tasks that will make a difference to your company. Being busy does not make you successful!
- In business, focus on the 20% of customers that provide the 80% of profits. The other customers are taking a disproportionate time compared to Return on Investment (ROI).
- Since the 80/20 Rule has implications on your personal life, look at the things and people around you and evaluate what 20% is bringing you the most joy. Take the opportunity to eliminate anything keeping you from success or happiness.

Emotional Intelligence

"No one cares how much you know, until they know how much you care" - Theodore Roosevelt

"There is no separation of mind and emotions; emotions, thinking, and learning are all linked." — Eric Jensen

Dictionary.com definition - The capacity to be aware of, control, and express one's emotions, and to handle interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically.

While the term was originally coined by two researchers in the early 1990's named Peter Salavoy and John Mayer, (not the singer) the term *Emotional Intelligence* exploded in popularity after psychologist and also author Daniel Goleman's book, *Emotional Intelligence: Why It can matter more than IQ* was published in 1995.

The concept is made up of five components:

- **Self-awareness**- This requires both channeling and recognising your own feelings in the moment
- **Self-regulation**- We all feel certain emotions as things happen. Self-regulation involves stopping negative emotions like anger before they get out of control.
- **Motivation** – This involves maintaining a positive attitude when it comes to the team or the organisation and keeping everyone marching towards the goals.

- **Empathy** – This is understanding how others feel and understanding what drives others. It also involves taking that information into consideration when deciding how to coach and lead with all of that in mind.
- **Social skills** – This could also be known as “people” skills or having strong interpersonal communication skills

What does it mean to be self-aware? Essentially, Emotional Intelligence goes beyond what is measured on a regular IQ test because it involves how you handle both other people and yourself.

For many years, there was not a way to explain how a person with average intelligence is often able to excel past someone with a genius level IQ in business or in the workplace.

Someone previously may have called it “people skills” or “intangibles” before Emotional Intelligence or EQ, or EI as the author of the book Daniel Goleman would prefer to have it to be called.

Now it is widely recognised that advanced social skills enable persons of average intelligence to make up ground past those perceived to have superior raw intelligence and get promoted higher or have more overall success in the business world.

These skills are often associated with higher level jobs. Mastery of the sub-skills located in the components makes one highly prepared as a Leader.

Attributes of Emotional Intelligence – What sets apart an Emotionally Intelligent person from someone who is not?

- **They are curious about others** – Emotionally Intelligent people have a genuine concern for others and like to know what makes others think and feel as they do. They are always looking for new and better ways to accomplish goals and are not married to “this is how we have always done it”.
- **They are usually not perfectionists** - They have the knowledge to realise that sometimes “good enough” is sufficient. They remain committed but do not get bogged down in minutia and they learn from past errors.
- **They have strong self-awareness** – They do not believe they are perfect and therefore realise that there are always things they can improve. They do not however permit weaknesses to dictate failure.
- **They have an infectious sense of positivity** – They are enjoyable to be around and seem to lift others in the process.
- **Not scared of change** – People with high emotional intelligence realise that change is inevitable but do not complain about but instead they embrace it and tout its potential for improvements.
- **Trustworthy** – Those with EI always do the right thing even if it is difficult

- **Understands how to resolve conflicts** – Those with high EI understand how to recognise and intervene when there are issues within the group
- **Inspirational** – They know how to be motivating Leaders and through this they are able to get strong results from the group or organisation.

Conclusion

Those that have developed the traits of a highly emotional intelligent person are often the Leaders of an organisation. The skills take many years of experience to cultivate and most will not reach this level. One must consciously work on the skills because many will not come naturally. The main concept is that IQ alone is not the guarantee of success. Having average IQ intelligence but high EI will position you much better than the reverse.

Action Steps

- Examine the traits of high EI people and evaluate where you think you stand in comparison.
- Take a look around your field or organisation and pick three people you feel have very high Emotional Intelligence. What can you do to emulate their success? What are some actions they have taken specifically that demonstrates high EI?
- There are several resources online that allow you to take a test that will measure EI. Take one of these tests and see how you stack up and also see what areas could use improvement.

Meditation

What do you think of when one mentions meditation? Do you picture Buddhist monks in a monastery in some far-off land chanting oms for days on end? Well it turns out you don't have to become a monk or even spend all day pondering stillness to benefit from meditation.

There is increasingly more evidence that even a few minutes a day can help and perhaps less surprising that a couple of weeks of continuous meditation can pay dividends far into the future with regards to health benefits and also mental well-being.

The Western world has increasingly embraced the practices of the Eastern culture as time goes on and the scientific world, although late to the party, has started paying attention to the once mythical sounding practice.

The potential benefits are almost too many to name. Some of the most popular and often mentioned are anxiety and stress reduction, help in lessening depression, increased focus and cognitive function, and the list goes on and on.

There is no wonder why humans need to slow our minds down. At an estimated 50,000 thoughts per day swirling around in our minds and the speed of technology doubling about every two years or so, the speed of life is accelerating at an alarming rate.

The goal for meditators is to slow down the mind, literally giving their brains a much-needed break. The good news is even a few minutes a day can reap big benefits. A Yale University study actually indicated that meditation can have the equivalent

medical outcome as antidepressants. This is not something big pharmaceutical companies will likely tout especially since meditation comes without side effects unlike their chemical counterparts.

Schools in America have also taken notice of the benefits of meditation. Several schools have reported increased levels of concentration in students and more concretely increases in standardised tests after only a couple weeks of meditation.

Studies have also shown that students with Attention Deficit Disorder, commonly referred to as ADD, can benefit from meditation and this actually includes adults with the disorder as well.

From a medical perspective, perhaps the most intriguing and surprising element of practicing meditation is that the structure of the brain can be transformed or altered through the practice of meditating.

With the increased use of the functional MRI, also known as fMRI, the makeup of the brain can be viewed and studied more efficiently. Scientists in a UCLA study ascertained that the critical grey matter of the brain was more abundant in those that meditated for 20 years compared to those who did not. A Harvard study added to the evidence that brain structure can be altered as fMRI showed an increase in the cortical thickness of the hippocampus portion of the brain in those that meditated regularly.

The effects of meditation can be characterised into two distinct categories: short term and long term.

The short-term benefits consist of immediate benefits to the central nervous system. These benefits include lower blood pressure, more relaxation and less stress, increased blood circulation, lowered heart rate, a decrease in cortisol, and an overall better sense of well-being.

The longer-term benefits can overlap with short term in some categories such as relaxation and reduced stress among others and can range all the way to the aforementioned altered brain structure. Studies have shown that those with addiction can benefit as meditation can serve as a substitute habit in place of the addiction.

There are many types of meditation and the origin and culture can play a large part in the differing methods and techniques.

Two of the most popular types are concentration meditation and mindfulness meditation.

The concentration meditation encourages a singular point of focus. The point of focus could be one's breath, a chant, or a physical object.

The mindfulness meditation differs in the fact that random thoughts are simply observed without a sense of judgement or additional action but to simply observe.

Conclusion

Meditation has been practiced throughout history. Although the benefits have been widely recognised by many cultures, increased technology and research in the fields of neuroscience

have slowly begun to demystify and provide concrete evidence in favor of meditation.

With a broad range of short term and long-term effects that are positive, it is evident why the popularity is increasing.

Action steps

- Make a commitment to set aside a few minutes per day in the beginning. Many are surprised at the difficulty in the beginning of focusing on a singular thing or simply observing thoughts as they float in and out of one's mind.

Do not give up. As you get better, you can increase the amount of time per day. 20 minutes or so is a good starting point, though even that can prove to be a difficult task at first. Many people that have experience and practice do up to an hour a day.

- Make sure your environment is conducive to meditating. Find a comfortable chair or other spot and eliminate all distractions, especially noises.
- Close your eyes and do your best to just breathe naturally and observe your breath as you breathe. Notice how your body reacts to the breathing.
- Focus will be difficult, especially at first, make a commitment to simply refocus when this occurs. It is natural for this to happen, it happens to everyone, but it will improve with practice.

Finding a mentor

"No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent." - John Donne

While we often find ourselves embarking upon projects on our own, there will come times when we need additional resources to help us get to the next step or level in the process. The resources can include a mentor, someone who has knowledge and experience in our chosen field.

We should not be afraid to ask for additional help because it is a natural part of the process.

How can mentors help you?

It is inevitable that as one tries something new, there will be a lack of confidence until there is some success achieved. A mentor will give you the confidence that you can succeed from firsthand experience. This can help to alleviate the doubt that creeps in.

Also, while there is value in learning the hard way, through mistakes, an even better way to get to the next step is to learn from the experience of the mentor.

This can keep you from making mistakes that you would have made without the help of the mentor.

Mentors can offer much needed encouragement when needed. There will always be times when you hit the proverbial "wall" and will need encouragement.

Sometimes just a kind word or offer of encouragement is all that is needed to keep someone going down the right path.

The ideal mentor is someone that genuinely has the student's best interest at heart. This will give the student the opportunity to gain trust in the mentor. This will lead to a strong relationship that will benefit both the student and the teacher.

In this type of relationship the student will feel comfortable in bouncing new ideas off of the mentor who can provide invaluable feedback.

How can you find a mentor?

Mentors can be found both on the internet and also offline. The internet has made it much easier to find the mentors needed for specific type of knowledge needed in today's environment of countless niches.

Do not be afraid to ask!

While it may seem intimidating to reach out to leaders in a given field, especially if there is not a personal connection already, however, the worst thing to do is not step out.

Do not be afraid to ask! The truth is, even high profile people are usually flattered to be asked for help. There will occasionally be an exception, but this is often not the case. If the person first reached out to does not have the capacity to help at that time, they can likely point you in the direction of someone very capable of helping with the project.

Being a mentor

What if someone asks you to be a mentor? While we all need help every now and then, you may have a chance to pass on some of the knowledge and experience you have accumulated. This can be a very rewarding experience for both people. Being a teacher can also help to reinforce the knowledge he or she has and also give the teacher a different perspective from the student's point of view. If possible, spend some time coaching others. It can be a fulfilling experience.

Free versus paid mentor

Many times, finding a mentor can happen naturally if you are in an environment such as an office.

What if you are an entrepreneur or there is not someone readily accessible to help you?

If you can find someone to help you without compensation that is great. However, there is nothing wrong with paying a mentor as a consultant. People should be compensated for their time and knowledge and this can show the mentor that you are serious.

This will set you apart from those that are not as serious and will show the mentor you are ready to go to the next level.

Conclusion

In the beginning, our mentors are family and teachers. Once out in the real world, we seek out those that have much more specific knowledge that can propel our knowledge and skills to succeed in the business or field you have chosen. The key is finding a good fit of someone that has the right knowledge and skills to pass on and also has a genuine interest in seeing you succeed.

Action Steps

- Do a search on LinkedIn or Twitter and look for a leader in your field that you can reach out to. Send them a message and let them know what you need help with. Do not overwhelm them and make them think you are going to take a lot of their time. Start slowly.
- Respect their time and if they ask you to do something, respond accordingly. This will prove you are ready to learn.
- Utilise your current network to see if they know someone that can help. People generally like making connections that are beneficial to both sides.

Goal setting

"Stay focused, go after your dreams and keep moving towards your goals"– LL Cool J

"A goal without a plan is just a wish." - Antoine de Saint-Exupéry"

Let's face it, the science behind goal setting and the best practices for goal achievement is not something one learns in school.

For the most part, growing up, we just have one goal, finish school and go from there. So, when we finally start thinking about setting and achieving goals, we haven't exactly had much practice.

Then there is that fear of failure, after a few years of setting New Year's Resolutions and having failed sometime before spring every year, we just stop altogether, because "What's the point, anyway?"

Most people simply are not going about it the right way. There are some things you can do to keep from going down in flames quickly.

S.M.A.R.T goals

While people have been setting goals for ages, SMART goals take it a step further and try to keep us on the right track with our goals and keep setting the right types of goals.

To say, "I want to lose weight" sounds like a goal to some but further examination reveals this as a wishful statement.

Now let's try it again in a more effective manner. "I am going to lose 10 pounds in the next 8 weeks through walking at least one mile a day, cutting my daily caloric intake to 1700, and drinking a half of a gallon of water per day."

This is a big difference from the first statement and contains the elements of a SMART goal which is as follows:

SMART Goals explained

- **Specific** – can't be vague here. What is it exactly that you want to achieve?
- **Measurable** – There must be a way to measure the desired progress, if not how do you know when you arrive at your destination?
- **Achievable** – If you are 52 and a novice basketball player, you will likely not be playing against LeBron James or Steph Curry anytime soon
- **Realistic** – I am deciding today to run a marathon next week....might be pushing it a little
- **Timely** – Someday I will....we all know how this story goes. If there is no time pressure we will never get around to it.

Increasing the probability of succeeding

Okay so now we know how to set goals, that was actually the easy part. When things go awry, and not if, what can you do get the train back on the track? Here a few tips:

- ***Believe in yourself*** – This one sounds too obvious but believe me I have heard some goals where you thought, “He doesn’t even believe he can do it, much less anyone else.”
- ***Visualise*** - See yourself finishing the race, see that brand new body, and see yourself holding the club championship trophy. If your mind’s eye can create the image, you are ready to give it your all. You can even do a vision board or cut magazine photos of the new Lamborghini. Hey we can have some fun, right?
- ***Know your purpose*** – Simon Sinek, the great marketing author might say “know your why”. What is your motive behind the goal? You want to live longer to see your grandkids grow up? You want to ditch the 9 to 5 for greener pastures and one less irritating boss? Your motives can keep help you keep the eye on the prize.
- ***Write it down!*** - This is a no-brainer, there are so many studies that say your chances of succeeding jump when you do this and there is not a lot of effort involved. Pro-tip: Post where you can see every day.
- ***Stay focused*** – Everyone fails or falls off the wagon now and then. Don’t let that be the end of the story or you will be just like everyone else. Keep getting up and good things will happen for you.
- ***Have accountability*** – Get a workout partner so you can be accountable to one another and have some comradery. Get a coach or mentor to help keep you on track.

Even gurus have coaches – true story!! Set deadlines and keep them.

- **Review** – Review your goals regularly to make sure you are still on track or if anything has changed organically forcing a change of the original plans. It happens all the time so do not fall behind because you did not stay on top of it.

Conclusion

The truth is if you have goals at all, you are actually ahead of many. Most people do not even bother attempting to design theirs in any way. They feel that whatever happens will happen and that they are like a leaf in the wind.

We have much more control than that. Take a while to think about what you would really like out of your life and write it down.

Develop a plan to attack and be ready to persist through some mistakes and failures. Those mistakes prepare you for future success. You do not have to know how to do everything in the beginning, but you must take action on the next step.

Action steps

- Write down your goals
- Make a plan to achieve them and incorporate SMART goals
- Break them down into smaller pieces if necessary
- Persist through letdowns and refine the plans as needed
- Take action. You don't have to know it all at first. Just take the next step and the next.

The Importance of Exercise

"Exercise should be regarded as a tribute to the heart"
– Gene Tunney

This one really is a no brainer. The benefits of exercise are almost countless. Exercising is good for your mind, body, and soul.

People through the years are exercising less because of television, internet, and other distractions. If you want to live a long life, exercise is probably the number one things that increase those chances.

The American Heart Association cited a study on their blog that said that "those that watch four hours or more of television per day have an 80% higher risk of death from cardiovascular disease."

If this doesn't get you to exercise, I don't know what will.

Note: With any exercise program, one should consult a physician before starting.

The Benefits of Exercise

The following is not a complete list, but you get the idea:

- Weight control – Eating better and exercising will help you lose those unwanted pounds
- Helps to combat potential diseases

- Helps boost “good” cholesterol
- Helps fight type Two diabetes
- Helps with depression as a natural mood lifter
- Helps fight off potential cancers (many types)
- Helps to lower high blood pressure
- Helps to increase blood flow
- Helps to prevent bone loss – therefore fighting osteoarthritis

- Helps manage stress.

- Can help in maintaining a positive attitude.

- It is a natural mood lifter – when you exercise, your body releases endorphins, which is the body’s own “feel good” drug.

- It is a natural energy booster – Warning though – Do not exercise right before bed because it may keep you up a while.

- Can improve your sex life – With an improved self-image and stamina, you will naturally be primed for sex!

- Increased self-confidence and self-image – You will feel better and lose weight so you will naturally just feel better about yourself.

- Helps you get to sleep sooner and helps you sleep better too.

This list is not all inclusive, there are many more benefits, and so what’s stopping you?

How do you get started?

If you are exercising, you may already have a routine that works for you, if so that is great! If this is new, or it has been a long time, you may wonder how to get started.

Think of it this way: every little bit counts.

Take the stairs instead of the elevator, park far away at the mall so you have to walk further. You can even exercise in your house if you can't get out. Going to the gym is great, but it is not the only way.

There are many apps out now that give daily exercise routines. Perhaps the easiest way to get started is just go for a walk. You may not be able to go very far at first, but that is just fine.

Slowly increase how far you go per day and you will soon be up to a mile, then two, and so on. Many doctors say that 30 minutes is the magical minimum that will get your heart rate up and start to maximise the benefits.

Have fun while you exercise

If you get bored easily, that does not have to be an excuse to get out of exercising.

There are many things you can do that are fun and not monotonous.

Take a dance class if you want a good distraction that will keep your mind off of the exercise part and your mind on the fun.

Ride your bike or take a spin class, that is a great workout and you are usually surrounded by friends and fun.

Do you like swimming? Swim some laps, swimming covers all the muscle groups.

Take a tennis or golf lesson. Tennis is lots of fun and if you are trying golf, you can walk the course instead of taking a cart for added exercise.

Be creative here and you can truly find ways to keep it fun and still enjoy the benefits of exercising.

Types of exercise

The main types of exercise are aerobic and strength training. Aerobic exercises are essentially endurance exercises and are designed to get your heart rate up and blood pumping.

Strength training can include free weights but do not have to, it could also be resistance bands, or using one's own body weight as resistance.

Other types of exercise are core building exercises such as yoga that also include flexibility.

There are also balance improvement exercises such as tai chi.

A combination of the different types can keep your routine from getting stale and keep your body guessing while working different areas with different exercises.

Conclusion

Exercising can be your ticket to a longer life and can also keep your mind sharp. The increased blood flow can help both your brain and your body. With the myriad of benefits from exercise, there is really no excuse. This is something you *make* time for. Your family will appreciate you being here longer!

Action steps

- Analyse your current level of exercise. Strive for 150 minutes per week at least for exercise.
- Get started today, even if it is just a brisk walk. Work your way up as stamina improves.
- Mix up your routine, find something fun if walking or lifting is not your thing, it all counts.

Nootropics

"It is necessary to relax your muscles when you can. Relaxing your brain is fatal" - Stirling Moss

Nootropics are gaining in popularity rapidly because people are trying to compete with others on their level in order to try and gain an advantage.

You have likely heard of nootropics but may not know exactly what they are.

Simply put, they are either natural or synthetic substances that are consumed to bolster cognitive performance. They are also sometimes referred to as "smart drugs."

While nootropics sounds very exotic, some are simply naturally occurring substances that are in things we consume on a routine basis.

Here are a few nootropics that are literally all around us:

Caffeine – You can easily relate to this one. If you rush to the coffee machine first thing in the morning or grab a Starbucks before you get your day started, you are consuming the most common nootropic.

Caffeine is also frequently found in soft drinks, energy drinks, teas, and supplements of all types. Caffeine makes you feel less tired and increases alertness and attention. Caffeine is obviously a naturally occurring substance.

Creatine – Your body uses creatine to produce proteins. Creatine is also used in the fitness world as a muscle booster for bodybuilding and other disciplines. It is a substance found naturally in the body but can be enhanced through eating steaks.

Supplements that contain Creatine are quite common and Creatine has been linked to improved reasoning and also better short-term memory.

One should remain vigilant when it comes to Creatine because of potential side effects such as stomach issues. Low doses seem to be relatively safe but larger doses have not been studied sufficiently to make assertions.

L-Theanine – Another naturally occurring substance is an amino acid called L-Theanine. It is found in tea. Some studies have shown some promise in increased creativity. The combination of caffeine and L-Theanine seems particularly effective. For this reason, supplements often contain both of these substances together. Approximately 200 mg of L-Theanine can have a calming effect.

Nicotine – This one is controversial since one of the most common forms of consuming is through smoking cigarettes.

Nicotine occurs naturally in many plants but especially in tobacco.

The potential health issues with smoking are well known. However, what many people may not realise is that nicotine can have some positive effects as well. Nicotine can help improve alertness and also attention.

Nicotine can be absorbed through patches, lozenges, and even chewing gum.

The major issue with nicotine is its extremely high addictiveness. Many people are simply unable to break the habit over their lifetimes.

Synthetic Nootropics

Some have turned to science for the increased short and long term cognitive benefits in an attempt to gain incremental advantages.

Amphetamines – As prescribed by a physician, this is known as Adderall. This medication is a high stimulant given to students for ADD and ADHD. Adderall can help improve both focus and short attention spans.

Amphetamines works by boosting dopamine and noradrenaline in the prefrontal cortex, which is the portion of the brain that controls behavior, attention, and also memory.

There are also other effects such as increased alertness and attentiveness.

As with other nootropics, the side effects can be extensive. For this reason, the benefits must be measured against the potential side effects when determining the prolonged usage.

First, it is highly addictive, and many college students use it without a prescription to prepare for tests and pull “all-nighters” when studying.

Unwanted side effects can be low sex drive, sweating, and anxiety. It can be an appetite suppressant, leading some to use it as a combined brain booster and weight loss pill.

Alcohol can exacerbate issues, causing severe problems such as heart attacks in some cases when abuse is present.

While there are clear evidence cognitive functions can be improved, one must use caution due to the plethora of side effects and potential for abuse.

Noopept – Noopept is another synthetic substance available as a supplement. The main differentiating factor with this substance is the fast-acting effects that can be present within mere minutes and go on for several hours.

Animal studies show that memory retrieval and the speed of brain formation can be benefits of noopept. So far research on humans have shown that this nootropic can help humans speed up the recovery from brain injuries. This is an exciting potential but far from definitive until additional studies are available.

Phenotropil – This is a synthetic supplement currently marketed as a “smart drug.” The structure is similar in nature to noopept and early studies on rats show similar promise on enhanced recovery from brain issues like brain injuries or neurological issues such as epileptic seizures or even strokes. There are very little studies with humans currently, so it may be years before scientists uncover the true potential benefits of phenotropil which is also referred to phenylpiracetam.

Ritalin – Ritalin is similar to Adderall in both benefits and side effects. It is a very powerful stimulant drug that can improve short-term memory functions, alertness, and attentiveness.

It is often prescribed for ADD and ADHD patients and is generally received by the body well in small doses.

The list of side effects can be extensive however, and include stomach issues, sleeplessness, seizures, heart arrhythmias, and even high blood pressure to name a few. One must be careful when using this substance.

Conclusion

There are many substances that show promise in helping both long and short term cognitive performances.

The key is to research the various supplements and drugs to see what the desired effects are and weigh the potential side effects and potential for abuse versus the benefits.

One must use caution when using any substance and consult professionals when deciding the best courses of action.

Action Steps

- Determine what areas you would like to improve such as creativity, alertness, focus, or others and write them down.
- Research which potential nootropics could help you improve on the specific areas you determined could be helped. Be sure to weigh the side effects.
- Speak with a professional or others that have experience in this area so that you can make an informed decision on which ones to use

Supercharge your brain with healthy foods

"To eat is a necessity, but to eat intelligently is an art."

- François de La Rochefoucauld

The human brain weighs about three pounds. That is not a lot, relative to total body weight, but the brain uses around 20% of the daily caloric intake using around 100 to 110 calories per pound per day. On a 1300 calories diet, this is over 20%.

In order to stay super sharp, and have your brain operating at peak capacity, it is important that you are giving your brain the right nutrients for performance. There are many different things that have shown promise as brain superfoods.

Avocados – This one shows up on most trusted lists as one of the top brain foods. Avocados contain healthy fats that help keep the arteries that feed the brain from getting clogged. It also makes you feel satisfied longer which has additional benefits beyond brain health.

Wild Salmon – Wild Salmon is also a favorite go-to brain food. Not only is it delicious, it contains a kind of Omega 3 fatty acid that is known to improve both memory and the time it takes to remember things. Unfortunately, many people do not have enough Omega 3 fatty acids in their daily food intake. Just a small amount of DHA can make a significant difference in results when it comes to recall.

Broccoli – This green tree resembling vegetable is totally packed with Vitamin K. When your mother told you to “Eat your greens” she likely often meant broccoli. Vitamin K can help in recalling verbal instructions.

Blueberries – Depending on who you ask, blueberries can be considered a superfood for both the brain and the body. The flavonoids in the sweet fruit has shown promising laboratory tests on rats in spatial recall. If that isn’t enough, antioxidants help decrease inflammation, which potentially can harm the overall memory function of the brain over the long haul.

Walnuts – Many different nuts have shown promise in brain health. Walnuts is near the top of the nut list because of the Omega 3 fatty acids similar to Wild Salmon that was previously mentioned.

Coconut oil – This product has a long list of potential uses despite having a high concentration of saturated fats. It is prevalent in the beauty industry for skin health and reducing stretch marks among other uses. In supercharging your brain, coconut oil contains what is known as medium-chain triglycerides which eventually turn into ketones in the body. Ketones are a fuel source for brain cells!

Coffee – This should make many people happy that coffee makes an appearance on the list. Coffee contains antioxidants which can help curb the development over the long-term of neurological diseases. In addition, there are some short-term benefits as well such as increased focus, better mood, and alertness. This probably doesn't come as a surprise to the many people who say they simply can't function without that first cup of coffee in the morning. The caffeine also aids in brain certain brain functions.

Green tea – Green tea is becoming increasingly popular for both its taste and health benefits. Much like coffee, the caffeine can definitely prove as a booster for cognitive function. Green tea contains several brain-boosting substances. L-theanine is an amino acid that can aid in relaxation and it can also cross the blood-brain barrier to increase the activity of neurotransmitters. Green tea is also rich in antioxidants.

Eggs – Eggs contain a plethora of nutrients conducive to brain health. Egg yolks contain a large concentration of choline. The body uses the choline micronutrient to create acetylcholine, which is a neurotransmitter that regulates both cognition and mood factors. Eggs are packed with Vitamin B6, Vitamin B12, and also contains folate. B12 helps regulate sugar levels in the brain and is part of the process of synthesizing chemicals in the brain. Deficiencies in folate and B12 have been linked to depression. It is difficult to ignore the potential of eggs for both short-term and long-term brain health possibilities.

Beets – This red veggie renown for weight loss potential also has folic acid which is known to help stabilize mental and emotional health.

Conclusion

Hopefully you saw some foods on the list that you like and can make them a part of normal diet. Many of these foods are good for the body as well as the brain of course.

Drinking water also helps keep the brain and body hydrated properly. Try to drink about 8 glasses of 8 ounces of water. This is a total of 64 ounces. 8 X 8 makes it pretty easy to remember.

Many experts agree that this amount is sufficient for body hydration daily needs. There are other foods not on this list, so do a little homework to find additional foods that can be go-to favorites for your brain's health.

Action Steps

- Start incorporating some of these foods (or others) that are healthy for the brain and make them a part of your normal diet. Educate yourself on the short-term and long-term benefits of some of the nutrients.
- Do some research in order to find more foods that are good for brain health as part of the education process. Eat the brain healthy foods in place of some of the ones not good for the brain or waistline.
- If you are not already getting enough water daily for hydration, work up to around 64 ounces so that you can stay hydrated and properly lubricate joints among other benefits.

Final thoughts...

As you can see, there are so many ways to boost your brain functions. Pick up a few of those and turn them into daily habits. You will be surprised how this will affect your brain performance.

Then pick up a new habit and make it part of your daily routine. Embracing those habits and making them part of your life will keep you sharp.

About Tim Meagher

Tim is a leading expert in the development of human potential and personal effectiveness. He is both a dynamic, entertaining speaker and highly sought-after business coach and performance management trainer.

As a business coach specialist Tim offers the business owner the best of both worlds; the ability to transform the thinking and actions of their staff and create massively improved business results.

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