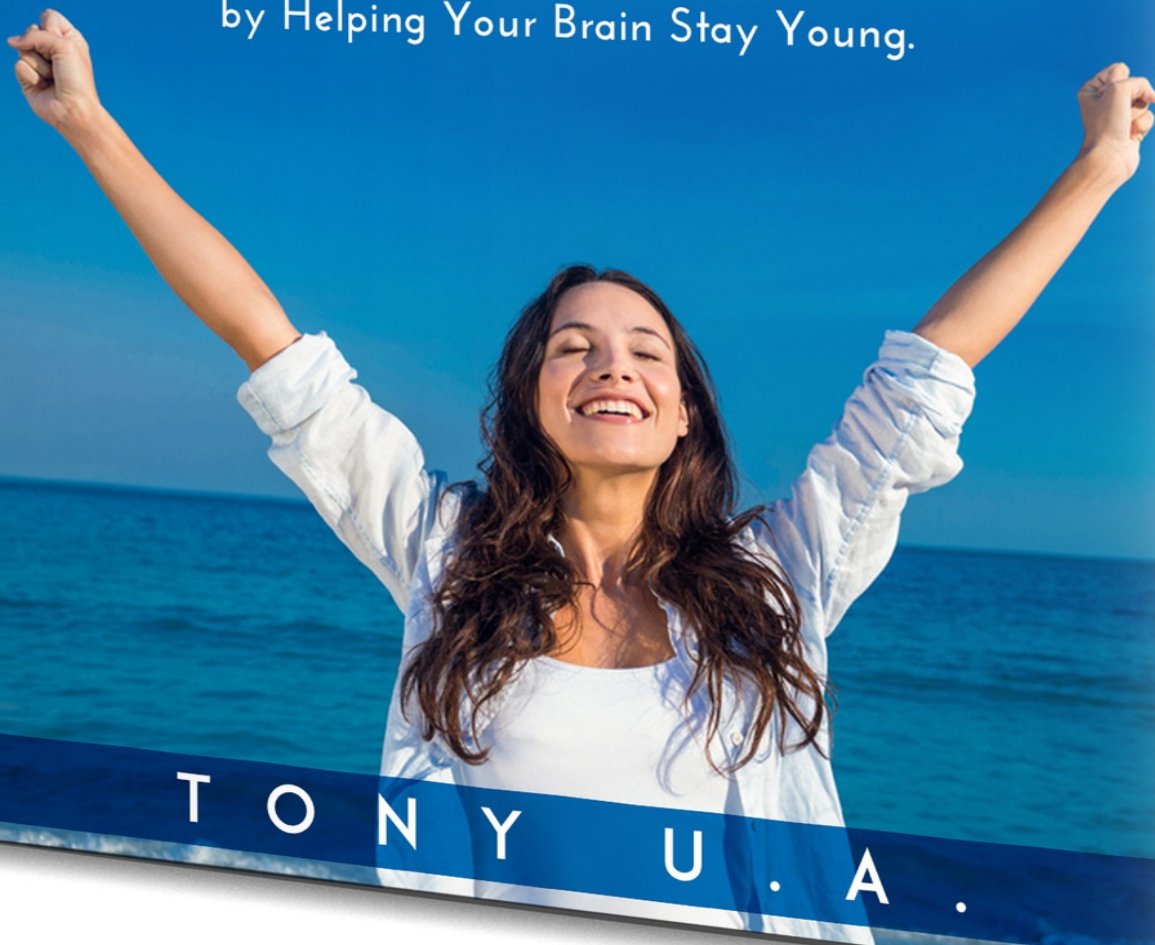


BUILD A BETTER  
**BRAIN**  
AT ANY AGE

Find More Than 7 Tips to Help You Make Your Mind Sharp by Improving Your Mental Skills. Win the War by Helping Your Brain Stay Young.



T O N Y U . A .

# **BUILD A BETTER BRAIN AT ANY AGE**

Find More Than 7 Tips to Help You Make Your Mind Sharp by Improving Your Mental Skills. Win the War by Helping Your Brain Stay Young.

**Tony U. A.**

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# SUMMARY

## Preface

## INTRODUCTION

## CHAPTER 1

### *The Magical Power of Reading*

#### Why Does Reading Help You?

Promotes Mental Stimulation

Promotes Stress Reduction

Reading Increases Your Language Skills, Improves Your Social and Memorization Skills

Reading Improves Sleep Quality

## CHAPTER 2

### *Hydration: Don't Let Dehydration Damage Your Brain. Drink Enough Water!*

#### When Does Dehydration Occur?

#### Effects of Dehydration on the Body and Brain Function

#### Dehydration May Affect Brain Efficiency

1. Affects Mood

2. Dehydration Reduces Cognitive and Motor Skills

3. Dehydration Affects Memory

#### How Do We Know How Much Water Is Enough to Rehydrate Us?

#### Is There a Simple and Effective Trick to Replenish Fluids and Improve Our Brain's Performance?

## CHAPTER 3

### *Practicing Creating Mind Maps and Concept Maps*

#### Mind Maps

How "Mind Maps" harness the power of your brain

Benefits of Mind Maps

#### Conceptual Map

The Basics of Concept Maps

Why Use a Concept Map?

When to Make a Concept Map

Building a Concept Map

Weaknesses of Concept Maps and Mind Maps

Concept Maps

Mind Maps

Final Tip on Concept Maps and Mind Maps

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **Brainstorming**

**The Four Basic Principles of Brainstorming**

**Benefits of Brainstorming**

It Offers a Different Point of View

Helps Improve Critical Thinking

It Fuels Creativity

Improves Team Cohesion

**Actions Needed for Effective Brainstorming**

Preparation

Present the Problem

Lead the Discussion

Action

**How Brainstorming Can Help Our Mind**

## **CHAPTER 5**

**Physical Training: Do at Least 20 Minutes of Aerobic and Anaerobic Activity per Day**

**Exercise and the Brain**

How Aerobics, Sports, and Exercise Make the Brain Work Better

Boost Your Memory and Improve Your Concentration

Tips for Choosing the Right Exercise

## **CHAPTER 6**

**Learn to Relax: Do Meditation, Do Mindfulness**

## **Brief History of Meditation and Mindfulness**

## **Neuroscience and Meditation**

## **How to Learn to Meditate and the Benefits**

Benefits

Learn to Meditate

## **Tip**

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **Listening to Music**

#### **Music Improves Your Life**

Music Therapy and Dementia

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **Try to Sleep Through the Night**

#### **Quality Sleep Is Vital**

#### **Sleep**

How Much Sleep Should You Get?

Sleep Cycles

#### **Sleep and Cognitive Abilities**

Relationship between Sleep, Learning, and Memory

Quick Tips for Better Sleep

## **CHAPTER 9**

### **Learn to Ask, Be Curious**

#### **What Happens to Your Brain When You Feed Your Curiosity**

#### **Curiosity Is the Secret of a Healthy Mind**

#### **Three Must-Know Facts That Can Improve Your Life**

Three Curiosities You May Not Know

## **CONCLUSION**

### **I Want to Offer You a Gift**

## Preface

First of all, let me introduce myself. My family and friends call me Tony. I love to read, I love to cook, I love to walk, and I have a few other hobbies. Also, I have practiced martial arts disciplines in the past.

Few people know that for over 20 years I continued, almost daily, to train to develop my knowledge and skills. Even when I was working for more than 12 hours a day, I continued to improve myself.

A few years ago, I had an accident; I was hit while walking down the street. After that accident, I had several permanent consequences. I started having very severe migraines, more than 120 per week, various post-traumatic pains, and several other things; all of which contributed to drastically and negatively affecting my ability to sleep for the first two years after the accident. I began to notice several cognitive problems that recurred repeatedly and randomly over the course of the weeks and months following the accident.

Here are some of the problems I suddenly found myself facing during my days:

1. I had difficulty thinking, presumably because I was exhausted, especially on some days. It became complicated for me to stay focused, given also the constant aches and pains that assailed me.
2. I could have dizziness and sudden vertigo with its consequences
3. At times, I had memory lapses that did not allow me to recall events that had just happened.
4. Reading, even mentally, had become a bit of a chore and the constant migraines made it even more difficult.
5. Various other things.

When I realized what was going on, I began consulting many doctors and qualified professionals in various disciplines, as well as documenting myself extensively on the Internet.

For about a year, the number of daily hours of sleep I was able to get was averaging between two and three and a half hours total, depending on the week.

So you can imagine why I thought it was critical to improve the quality of my life. I decided to start working on my mental skills to strengthen my brain again. So I started creating some operational strategies that I hoped would help me. Thankfully, they worked!

I started taking constructive action. For example, I also began to train myself in the conscious use of RAS (Reticular Activating System). It's a system I now use daily to seek beauty in life: I choose a well-defined goal to achieve in a specific time, and I let my mind free to use its abilities in accomplishing that task.

I was fortunate enough to be supported by my family, who chose to help me by letting me work on myself as I saw fit. This was crucial for me.

As time went on, I was able to improve.

I am aware that I still have objective limitations. I still have severe migraines and other very severe pain from the trauma of the accident, which recurs every month. But fortunately, my cognitive abilities have improved greatly. In addition to this, I am convinced that having been able to increase the quality of the hours I use to sleep and recharge, has been essential in allowing me to get stronger and allow my chosen exercises to do their job better.

I have chosen to cure myself by working with homeopathic, natural and ecological methods for my psychophysical health that have allowed me to recover discretely; only in exceptional cases have I chosen to integrate everything with some painkillers. Now I am much stronger, in fact, my "EEG" (Electroencephalogram) showed some alterations after the accident, but my last "EEG" finally resulted regular. Reaching this goal, after some years, has been a wonderful reward for me.

I have utilized:

- Valuable consultations from qualified physicians who have been attentive to my needs



- Various breathing techniques
- Bach flowers
- Meditation and Mindfulness
- Empowering foods for the mind and body
- Proper hydration
- Constructive and useful sessions with qualified psychologists and counselors
- Continuous research through the web to find new ideas to experiment with
- Long walks
- Sports and rehabilitation activities adapted to my needs
- Games that stimulate body and mind
- Reading exercises and quick learning techniques
- Creation of mind and concept maps
- Training courses of various kinds.

I feel endlessly grateful for the progress we have made over the years.

I believe that we cannot effectively and efficiently use and recall the resources we possess without sufficient life energy. At the same time, I think that our brain, in order to properly use the input it receives, needs to not feel exhausted and to be able to process the information it receives. Come to think of it, no car, not even a Ferrari, can run at its full potential with an engine that has structural defects or is out of fuel.

A low level of vital energy is the main obstacle to achieving our goals. I have learned that you can recharge by strengthening your mind through meditation, rest and movement. This makes it easier for me to appreciate the beauty of life. For me to be able to accomplish such a goal is wonderful!

I created this book with the intention of offering you a quick, practical, and functional guide that will help you increase your mental capacity and life energy. All this in the hope that it will allow you to avoid my "Odyssey" in terms of research, in order to guarantee you the possibility of having insights, through the reading of some chapters, that will allow you to develop your potential faster. In this way, you will become more and more aware of your abilities and learn to manage them better, optimizing your time, which I assume is invaluable to you.

Each individual journey is different, as unique as you are. But I believe that being able to draw on the experience of others who have achieved good results can make the journey you take easier, making it much more feasible. This, often, allows you to make tangible improvements in less time.

I've included topics in the book that can improve your life quality by slowing, reducing, or reversing the progression of cognitive problems inherent in human nature, which for some people can become particularly crippling as they age. In addition, if you work to keep your identity alive and nurture your vital energy at the same time, you will also increase your self-esteem and consequently also your self-confidence; this will help you feel better, stronger, and able to enjoy every moment regardless of the circumstances you face each day.

### ***Note***

- I want to remind you how important it is to recognize that each reader manages their own choices and decisions
  - ✓ Suppose you have particular health problems that can drastically affect the quality of your life. In this case, it is vital to your health that you seek the advice of qualified, specialized, and legally recognized physicians. They will do everything in their power to help you find the best solution for your particular case
- For writing convenience, I adopt a fairly confidential form expressed mostly in the masculine singular. However, it is undeniable that this book was written with the intent of helping all types of readers
- This book has been formatted in a fully conscious manner with left alignment. The goal is to make the reading experience smoother and less stressful on your eyes. In fact, the left-aligning text avoids awkwardly spaced diversified spaces between words and keeps words whole without splitting them at the end of a line. This reduces eye fatigue while reading allowing for a better experience through smoother reading.

# INTRODUCTION

Would you like to develop your mental abilities in a manner similar to Stephen Hawking, Marie Curie, Albert Einstein, Anne Sullivan, Sigmund Freud, Rita Levi Montalcini, or Zygmunt Bauman?

I imagine that, at the very least, you have a burning desire to have a mind that is always young and efficient.

The human brain weighs at most 1.5 kg, which is equivalent to 2% of a 75 kg man's weight. Almost 90% of the brain is composed of about 73-77% water and about 11-12% fat. The brain consumes about 20-25% of our daily energy needs.

The human mind contains over 86 billion neurons, which through their interconnections and release of neurotransmitters, allowing brain activity to work incessantly every moment of our lives. Our mind allows us to do endless things: perceive external stimuli, think, understand emotions, communicate, learn, and much more.

So now I'll rephrase the question, "Do you want to be able to develop, as much as possible, at least some of the mental skills of the people who have positively influenced human history?"

If your answer is yes, and you decide to work on increasing your mental skills, you will be able to succeed in:

- Improve your ability to learn quickly
- Gain a greater ability to concentrate
- Improve your critical thinking skills
- Increase your problem-solving skills
- Become more effective and efficient
- Develop your imagination by amplifying your creativity
- Increase your emotional and cognitive awareness.

Creating specific, constructive, and empowering habits is the first step in

training your mind and bringing out your brilliance. It can be easier than you think to improve your brainpower - you can leverage many activities to improve and increase your efficiency; activities such as:

- Attending training classes
- Train yourself to do some math without a calculator
- Learning the art of copywriting, improving your creative and persuasive writing skills
- Read
- Listening to podcasts and more.

Each of these things is great training to develop your creativity and logical skills. In order for your mental potential to increase, it's important that you commit to consciously and continue using your brain, taking advantage of every opportunity that allows you to try to overcome the mental limitations you've placed on yourself throughout your life.

If you're reading this book, you're probably interested in making the most of your mental resources. Maybe you want to strengthen them in order to restructure some cognitive processes, and I imagine you want this to happen in the most environmentally friendly way possible for you.

So I'm going to immediately reveal to you some secrets that are easily accessible to everyone, but that only a small percentage of people use consistently, and that will allow you to achieve better mental and physical health:

- Practicing a healthy and balanced diet
- Do sports
- Learn a new language
- Learning strategy games.

George Bernard once said, "Few people think more than two or three times a year; by thinking once or twice a week, I have made an international reputation."

With this quote, you can sense how important it is to exercise and use your thinking skills whenever you can.

Your brain is perhaps the most dynamic and excellent resource you can have, along with your heart. Training yourself by staying healthy and mindfully developing your potential is one of the greatest gifts you can give yourself. To do this, you must choose to invest daily energies in constantly updating the supercomputer in your possession: your brain.

In an urban legend, it is said that scientists claim that humans usually only use 10% of their brain capacity.

Although it's a story someone made up, this legend contains a profound truth: humans only use a small fraction of their brain's true potential.

The good news is that you don't need to be a millionaire to increase your cognitive or memory skills: being able to improve is a meritocratic thing, in fact, it depends only on you, in 99% of cases.

Now I ask you to imagine and compare your brain to a specific muscle that you want to train in the gym, and I ask you to read carefully and try to experiment with these steps:

1. Imagine you are in a gym
2. View the workout sheet that has been prepared in advance for you and choose an exercise to start with
3. Imagine how the equipment you want to use and your surroundings are arranged
4. Visualize yourself doing the exercise you have chosen
5. Now imagine yourself doing the muscle workout you want to do.

Now that you have imagined and visualized the scene described, you have implicitly reminded yourself how easy it can be to train your mental skills: to do this, always start with one exercise at a time and repeat it periodically.

Moreover, in these moments, whether you chose to do the guided visualization exercise or not, you unconsciously strengthened your self-esteem; because you exercised your freedom of choice and, in that moment, acted accordingly. However, suppose you decided to do the suggested exercise while imagining and visualizing the various steps. In that case, you were also strengthening your ability to construct excellent mental

representations, and in the process, you exercised, more powerfully, your freedom of choice:

- Imagining the environment in which you train
- Imagining training a specific muscle group
- Imagining yourself doing a specific exercise
- Leaving your creativity free to visualize and recreate the desired scene.

All of this allowed you to be consistent in a constructive way with what you wanted, creating a series of unconscious positive feelings in your mind that made the visualized experience more meaningful.

An individual's mind is one of their most powerful weapons. Yet only a percentage of people act intentionally to improve their mental abilities. Several hundred million people, perhaps even billions of people, spend their lives believing that their mental abilities cannot improve, so they avoid improving them.

Seneca said, "There is no favorable wind for the sailor who does not know where to go."

There are undoubtedly many methods by which mental potential can be developed. However, books have historically been one of the primary methods of acquiring formal knowledge, and they still are. If you choose not to read, it will be much more difficult to succeed in developing your mental abilities. Even when you need to understand an unfamiliar appliance's workings, if you avoid reading its instructions, it becomes very difficult to quickly learn how to use it properly.

If you want to learn new skills, improve your mental performance or keep your mind young, it's essential to create a training and coaching program that allows you to achieve your goals.

A good memory is based on the health and vitality of the brain. Through thinking you can succeed in learning. Through this, you can better metabolize your feelings, emotions, and perceptions. Only through greater awareness of yourself can you choose and act to be the master of your destiny. I believe that it is essential to be able to improve our mental performance and to be

able to make the structure of our brain stronger in order to protect us from diseases that result from aging so as to reduce the possibility of being victims of degenerative brain diseases.

The human brain has an incredible ability, even in old age, to adapt and evolve. This ability is called neuroplasticity. Through the right stimuli, the brain can create new neural pathways, improve existing connections, and adapt to respond more and more efficiently to our needs.

When you learn new skills, you amplify your mental agility and strengthen your brain structure. This allows you to improve your resilience as well. Through a variety of workouts that update and improve your cognitive processes, you create the best antidote to prevent degenerative brain diseases like Alzheimer's and various forms of dementia.

So, how can you increase your brain power and improve the structure of your brain?

You certainly took an important step in that direction today when you bought and decided to read or listen to this book.

This book is structured to offer you the opportunity to generate different ideas that can inspire you; it provides you with the essential information you need to make your desires come true more easily. After reading the book, I ask you to consider delving into at least one of the suggestions I have included. By doing so, you'll better digest the topic you've decided to focus on, and this will, over time, allow you to gain as many benefits as possible.

Always remember that whatever path you choose, it's important to learn to enjoy the journey. And that achieving your goals is 99% dependent on your attitude, determination, and ability to keep yourself motivated. So the more aware you are of your whys, the more effective results you'll be able to achieve by taking constructive, focused and repetitive action. All of this will allow you to achieve many small successes throughout the year. Sometimes, you'll even achieve incredible successes, which added up over time will help you live an unforgettable life full of wonderful moments.

Now your journey begins. Happy reading.

# CHAPTER 1

## The Magical Power of Reading

Many people can read, yet they prefer to do it when it is strictly necessary. I even know many college graduates who have almost completely stopped reading. Most people only read if they feel compelled to do so. Often for many of these individuals, reading has been limited to an occasional click on their favorite social media sites such as "Facebook," "Instagram," "Twitter," reading "billboards," directions from "street signs," "GPS," or the classic "monthly bills."

Many people believe that they have to read a book in sequential order, from beginning to end; however, from personal experience, I can say that it is possible to read first the parts of the book that interest us most and then, if you wish, read the whole book. Above all, when we particularly liked some parts of a book, it is nice to be able to pick it up again after a few months, to reread those words that moved us positively.

I read more than 53 books every year, but unfortunately, I have several books in my personal library that I haven't started reading yet: every year, actually, many authors publish good books, and I buy some of them. This, I think, is something that all book and reading lovers have in common.

For many years, I have been reading and studying mainly personal development books: "self-help, behavioral psychology, counseling, coaching, strategic problem-solving, rapid learning techniques, non-verbal language, human brain enhancement, etc." I also enjoy reading "Fiction" books that help me develop and improve my mental visualization skills and emotional awareness.

When I was a child, my parents would read me fairy tales and help me learn to read them. These are memories that, even today, as I write these words, soothe me and make me feel wonderfully good.

So, I think it's important for people to join a book club; I think it's wonderful



to have access to excellent and beautiful public libraries. In my opinion, there is something magical and harmonious about the quietness of a library and the smell of books.

Anyone can choose to read for a variety of reasons:

- Informational purposes
- Learning
- Pleasure.

However, I think it's important to clarify that not all methods of reading and not all products that allow you to read are equivalent or serve the same purpose. Reading using a paper book or through a computer, iPad, or the like can provide the reader with very different sensations. Imagining that all people have the same ability to learn the information they read, the ability to memorize while reading can be different depending on the reading tool we use.

I read both paper and digital books. Reading books using the internet has some advantages, such as the ability to have an entire library within a smartphone.

I read an article once, it pointed out that reading a book in paper format can offer a better ability to immediately metabolize the subject matter, compared to someone reading it through a digital tool.

In my opinion, people while using digital tools tend to get distracted more easily, so in those moments of distraction, the ability to understand and store the information read is drastically reduced. Moreover, when we leaf through newspapers and books and the classic visual learning, we can, through touch, and movement increase the number of stimuli involved during reading, which allows us to be more effective in remembering and assimilating the information read. So much so that using touch to feel the paper between my fingers while reading, using my hand to turn the pages of the book, and performing the movements to perform these actions gives me the opportunity to simultaneously exploit multiple areas of my brain which, by relating to each other, increase my chances of memorizing the concepts that are most relevant to me.

I even love to read using a wooden chopstick that I often use as a pointer.

When you use the pointer technique, you make full use of tactile learning (movement learning), which is in addition to visual learning and other useful cognitive processes to enhance your mental abilities. Many rapid learners use this little trick to double, triple their reading speed.

In addition, using simple tricks, such as the pointer, in your daily life allows you to more or less consciously train yourself to simultaneously use every resource at your disposal to achieve your goals. Over time, this psychological approach will become an empowering habit firmly ingrained in your mental automatisms. In fact, you will train yourself to optimize more and more of your internal resources and, above all, with time, you will become more and more natural to manage day and night the art of inclusive strategic thinking: the thinking that all successful people master more or less consciously.

Our society is getting used to a very hectic life; many people overload themselves with daily tasks, mismanaging their time, and avoiding getting enough rest. This attitude, if prolonged over time, reduces productivity and makes life more stressful. Continuously overloading the brain and body with stressful stimuli without allowing it to recover adequately makes the individual weaker and weaker as the weeks, months, years go by.

Reading is one of those exercises that allow the brain to increase concentration and attention and improve productivity. When you're focused on reading, your "stress-negative" levels decrease. So reading is a great workout for learning to be a master of single-tasking (the art of doing one thing at a time). I usually feel completely relaxed in less than 7-8 minutes when I read.

Reading affects the physical structure of the brain and also the development of its potential.

"Carnegie Mellon University scientists Timothy Keller and Marcel Just discovered the first evidence that intensive instruction to improve reading skills in young children causes the brain to physically reconnect, creating new white matter that improves communication within the brain."

*(sciencedaily.com)*

# **Why Does Reading Help You?**

## **Promotes Mental Stimulation**

The brain is a muscle and must be trained to develop its full potential. Reading is a simple, inexpensive, and powerful method of brain stimulation. Stimulating the mind through reading is one of the most powerful exercises that help prevent or slow down brain aging, decreasing the chances of having neurodegenerative brain diseases. Reading is a mental process that improves our cognitive abilities and positively stimulates our analytical and creative thinking. When we read, our brain allows us to decipher ideas, thoughts, and information that is represented in visual or tactile form. Our mind can understand and analyze the story we read, creating a new action in our memory, a new experience obtained, constructed, and realized while we are reading.

## **Promotes Stress Reduction**

Reading a topic or book we enjoy is one of the most effective ways to improve quality of life by lowering stress.

When we read a good book, we can focus and quickly immerse ourselves in the reading. We live in the moment intensely without realizing that we are having an experience totally involved in the present. In that specific moment, the past and future fade away. There is only the experience of the present. As we have this experience, any state of muscle tension dissolves, which allows us to relax.

This wonderful feeling is something that every reader experiences.

A team of researchers studied what actions can have a significant impact on reducing stress. What has emerged is extraordinary!

This research conducted in England in 2009 at the University of Sussex found that stress levels while reading decreased by 68% in about 6 minutes.

Cognitive neuropsychologist Dr. David Lewis-Hodgson co-authored the research and said, "It doesn't really matter what book you read; [...] When the words on the printed page activate your creativity and propel you to what is basically a modified state of consciousness, this is more than just a diversion, it's an active engagement of the imagination."

## **Reading Increases Your Language Skills, Improves Your Social and Memorization Skills**

I have seen a few movies that portray people who love to read. They identified them as shy, lonely, sometimes grumpy people with poor social skills or low self-esteem.

I imagine these preconceptions have led many people over time to believe that reading is useless.

In reality, reading is one of the most functional exercises for boosting the brain. A well-trained brain offers a better chance of avoiding degenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's. By allowing your memories to be preserved in old age, you ensure that you can live with greater awareness and consciousness in your old age as well.

"As mentioned earlier, reading is a simple, inexpensive, and powerful way to stimulate mental faculties. It also helps improve your quality of life by reducing accumulated stress very quickly."

Through reading, you can increase your language skills. As you read, you engage in deciphering, listening and understanding the writer's message. This improves your communication skills, allowing you to be more proactive and productive socially. Reading and learning to listen helps you better express your thoughts and rephrase them in the most appropriate way; in fact, when a person speaks or writes, they are trying to formulate a message appropriate to the content and context.

Reading strengthens your ability to create more effective mental representations, through which you assimilate the message the author has written, and increases your logical and emotional intelligence. This helps you

become a good active listener, formulate constructive feedback, and become a more charismatic person.

By reading we can expand the number of words we know, thus increasing our communicative and reflective talents. Also, by learning new words or a new language, we promote the development of different brain areas by creating new neural connections.

From Swedish Armed Forces Interpreter Academy Johan Mårtensson:

"Although we can't compare three months of intensive language study with a lifetime of a bilingual person, there are many things that suggest that learning languages are a good way to keep the brain fit." (sciencedaily.com)

Reading stimulates the mind by activating different parts of the brain that work to adequately harness numerous cognitive processes that allow you to achieve an excellent quality of life:

- Language
- Associative learning
- The ability to observe from different perspectives
- The ability to create excellent mental representations
- The ability to recognize emotional stimuli and become more aware of them
- The ability to reprocess and metabolize information
- The development of creative thinking
- Much more.

Even as you read I want to remind you that you improve your social-emotional skills.

Every time you decide to read you can rediscover and develop social-emotional skills that belong to you:

- Even reading I want to remind you that you improve your social-emotional skills.
- Every time you decide to read you can rediscover and develop social-emotional skills that belong to you:
- Creativity in the art of problem-solving

- Stress management, which is embodied in the ability to recognize and manage with balance the situations that generate an excess of emotional tension
- Self-awareness
- Relational skills, thanks to which one develops the ability to relate to others in a constructive way
- Effective communication, which allows one to know how to communicate adequately in any context
- Critical thinking, which is the ability to properly analyze events and situations
- Assertiveness, which is the communication skill that allows you to express yourself clearly and appropriately while respecting yourself
- Empathy, which is the ability to understand others emotionally.

## **Reading Improves Sleep Quality**

Reading improves sleep quality. We have previously noted that by reading we can relax and reduce stress by about 68% in just a few minutes. So it is easy to see that when we are tired and relaxed, it will be easier to fall asleep.

However, it is important to note that if we create a routine in which we read to fall asleep, our brain will start to associate the two actions. Therefore, it will increase the likelihood that we will associate that action with the need to fall asleep every time we read.

So, when you read make sure you use proper posture, with good lighting to avoid eye strain. This will allow you to read the time you set. You will relax and go to sleep later, with more serenity.

So reading stimulates your mind and improves the quality of your life!

## CHAPTER 2

### **Hydration: Don't Let Dehydration Damage Your Brain. Drink Enough Water!**

A popular maxim recommends drinking 6 to 8 glasses of water a day to keep our bodies well hydrated and healthy. Drinking enough drinking water helps preserve our brain function.

The human body is composed of a high percentage of water. Muscle mass has a higher percentage composition of water than fat mass. As humans age, they have a lower and lower percentage of water in their bodies.

Men and women have a different percentage of water in their bodies; because men, at the same weight, often have more muscle mass than women. An adult man of the average build consists of about 65% water relative to his body mass, while a woman has a lower percentage of water.

All of the cells in our bodies, including those in our brains, need to be continually rehydrated to perform their vital functions properly. Therefore, our brain cells cannot function efficiently if their water percentage is too low, as this would facilitate the onset of cognitive problems.

When an adult performs cognitively demanding tasks while dehydrated, some specific tests may show elevated synaptic activity, suggesting that the brain is working harder to complete the assigned task. This increased effort can alter a healthy adult's cognitive processes during the dehydration phase, which is often made evident by clear signs of fatigue and possible mood changes. Thus, excessive dehydration can lead to decreased cognitive abilities, particularly in potentially more vulnerable groups such as the elderly.

As dehydration increases, you are more likely to decline in your ability to quickly achieve your desired goal when performing cognitively demanding tasks throughout the day.

Neuroscientist "Joshua Gowin of the University of Texas" said, "Brain cells

require a delicate balance between water and various elements to function [...] When you lose too much water, that balance is disrupted. Brain cells lose efficiency."

When a healthy person performs an intense and prolonged activity, whether physical or mental, it is possible to observe that at some point they will feel the urgent need to rehydrate. However, it is essential to note that it is a mistake to believe that the sensation of thirst indicates the beginning of the dehydration phase: when we feel the stimulus of thirst, we are already in the dehydration phase.

The causes of dehydration can be different. Dehydration occurs when we lose more fluid than we replenish through food and drink. Staying hydrated is vital to our bodies' overall well-being and is essential to protecting the efficiency of our brains.

## **When Does Dehydration Occur?**

Dehydration occurs when the body loses more water than we replenish. We excrete fluids through urine, feces, sweat, breathing, etc. Dehydration can be caused by an unbalanced diet, excessive physical activity, adverse weather conditions or excessive sweating, and more.

Although moderate dehydration is a loss of 1.5 percent of a body's average water content, a hydration level slightly below optimal can affect mood, make concentration more complicated and cause headaches.

"According to HH Mitchell, Journal of Biological Chemistry 158, the brain and heart are composed of 73% water, while the lungs are about 83% water. The skin contains 64% water, the muscles and kidneys are 79%, and the bones are also watery: 31%." (universewayhealing.com)

So it's easy to see that if we want to perform at our best and be healthy both physically and psychologically, drinking enough water is vital.

## **Effects of Dehydration on the Body and Brain Function**



As mentioned above, the human brain is composed of approximately 73-77% water; slowing blood flow is the first consequence of dehydration. Oxygen within our bodies travels through the blood, so a significant increase in dehydration means slower blood flow and less oxygen to the brain. Therefore, it is essential to be responsible and aware in knowing how to wisely interpret the help signals our brain sends us through bodily cues and know how to prevent them just as wisely.

Dehydration can lead to mood swings, cognitive difficulties and, in very serious cases, can cause dangerous and permanent damage to our brain.

The brain, composed of about three-quarters of water, uses water to provide cells and tissues with adequate metabolic and structural support and to allow neurons to function properly.

Each person has a potentially different resistance and can become dehydrated more or less quickly. However, it is undeniable that each individual undergoing dehydration experiences more or less consciously decreased effectiveness of their cognitive processes as they go about their daily activities:

- Less concentration
- Difficulty memorizing
- Mood changes
- Fatigue
- Muscle cramps
- Difficulty rephrasing thoughts
- Difficulty coordinating movements
- Much more.

## **Dehydration May Affect Brain Efficiency**

Many people are alert and informed about the importance of proper hydration. Our brains regulate almost every action within our bodies through the power of the unconscious mind. So it is important for our bodies' health, for our lives to have proper hydration so that the brain remains efficient at all times. This is one more motivation to keep our body and mind hydrated every day.

## **1. Affects Mood**

Some studies have established a correlation between dehydration and mood disorders. In a 2012 research study, researchers at the University of Connecticut voluntarily caused some healthy volunteers to become dehydrated through exercise and diuretics. During the research, they monitored the effects caused by dehydration on the volunteers' mood. They observed that dehydration contributed to a substantial increase in mood alteration.

## **2. Dehydration Reduces Cognitive and Motor Skills**

Many people underestimate the effects of dehydration on the proper functioning of motor and decision-making skills.

Researchers at Loughborough University conducted studies to evaluate the effects of dehydration while driving. What they found gives pause to the importance of proper hydration.

Said Professor Ron Maughan of Loughborough University, "We all deplore drunk driving, [...] In other words, drivers who are not properly hydrated make the same number of mistakes as people who overdrive."

## **3. Dehydration Affects Memory**

A useful example to better understand how dehydration affects memory skills in a negative way is offered by researchers at Ohio University.

That study shows a correlation between hydration, declarative memory, working memory capacity, and blood pressure.

In 2010, research was conducted on a small sample of elderly women. The researchers assessed their hydration status and also appropriately assessed their declarative and working memory.

Ohio University researchers concluded, "The findings underscore the importance of considering hydration status and blood pressure when interpreting cognitive performance in the elderly."

Declarative memory or explicit memory is a term coined in 1987 to identify the memory that allows us to evoke our memories regarding the world around us.

This memory is composed of episodic memory and semantic memory:

- Episodic memory offers the possibility to evoke memories of the past and to store information associated with a specific event at a given time
- Semantic memory allows remembering a series of codes and their associations, such as the code of communicative language or the code represented by a drawn map.

Working memory or procedural memory is short-term memory. Basically, it is the memory that automatically allows us to perform tasks: playing basketball, swimming, driving, skiing, dancing, etc. automatically.

## **How Do We Know How Much Water Is Enough to Rehydrate Us?**

To figure out how much water to drink, a rough and theoretical consideration can be made. Because several factors can affect the amount of water we need for our rehydration:

- Age
- Gender
- Physical build
- Health status
- Body temperature
- Work activity (physical and mental)
- Sports
- Temperature and climate of the place where we are
- The type of nutrition and diet
- Sleep over a 24-hour period.

So, assuming you're a healthy adult who has moderate energy expenditure throughout your days, the following tips can be considered helpful in getting

adequate hydration:

- Drink about 6 to 8 glasses of water per day, for an equivalent of about 2 liters per day
- Drink different types of water to make the most of the beneficial properties of water from different places
- Include foods in your diet that help hydrate your body, such as fruits and vegetables
- Seek advice from qualified and legally recognized physicians.

In healthy people who are not taking medications and have no illnesses, usually looking at their urine color helps to assess whether they need to be rehydrated. In fact, in healthy individuals, a straw-yellow color of urine shows that the person is probably well hydrated.

Avoiding excessive water intake is equally important because overuse can create several health problems over time.

In practice, in healthy people, the most appropriate rule is to try to equate fluid loss with a balanced replenishment of fluids throughout the day.

However, it is always advisable to go to legally recognized doctors to get specific advice for your health.

## **Is There a Simple and Effective Trick to Replenish Fluids and Improve Our Brain's Performance?**

The easiest way to achieve proper hydration is to avoid and prevent dehydration. One of the most effective tricks to avoid dehydration is to hydrate by drinking before feeling thirsty strategically.

When you have the chance, take at least one sip of water every 20 to 25 minutes or so, even if you don't feel like drinking. Alternatively, you can try drinking a glass of water at least every hour. All of this will help you rehydrate further and will add to the fluids you get through the foods and drinks you use throughout the day.

Suppose we know that we won't be able to hydrate due to not being able to

find drinks for several hours. In this case, we can plan ahead by getting at least 2 0.33 liter bottles of water to make sure we can drink.

When you hydrate wisely, it is easier to stay focused, and you will automatically be more productive in what you want to do.

It's important to note that in the case of excessive sweating to functionally and properly rehydrate, it's also advisable to replenish minerals and vitamins to rebalance our hydrosaline and vitamin levels.

Below are some benefits of being properly hydrated:

- Increased blood flow, which makes the brain more efficient due to the increased amount of oxygen it receives
- Positively affects our attitude to be more resilient
- Improves the ability to stay focused
- Improves the likelihood of getting quality sleep.

## CHAPTER 3

### Practicing Creating Mind Maps and Concept Maps

Our brain is a formidable organ. It has virtually unlimited potential. However, in order to develop the potential of our mental faculties, we must continuously train ourselves with the best tools available to us.

Living old age, having no memory of your life, not being aware of what is going on around you, forgetting completely or occasionally who you are and what you love, I think is a possibility you want to avoid.

Creating maps, using a sheet of paper, a pen, colors, or taking advantage of the internet through a computer or similar, is one of the best tricks you can use to facilitate your mental training. Creating maps using optimal strategies allows you to develop different brain skills and safeguard them, making them faster, more effective, and efficient.

Building a map allows you to intentionally generate a subjective graphical representation to enhance your understanding and learning of a specific topic. It also allows you to refine quickly through planned revisions, the assimilation of memorized information, and its reworking, sometimes bringing out new insights.

At different times in human history, many people have felt the need to improve their study and learning techniques to make the most of their brain potential. Around the 1970s, two men presented to the world their idea of how to improve learning, contributing significantly to improving and facilitating the study process:

- **Tony Buzan's** "Mind Maps." First officially unveiled in 1974 with Tony Buzan's book "Use Your Head."
- **Joseph Donald Novak** "Concept Maps." Officially they were conceived in 1972 during a research project at "Cornell University" by Joseph Donald Novak and his team.

Novak invented concept maps to improve the understanding of concepts through a series of strategies, which allow the reformulation of old and new acquired knowledge, represented graphically in a hierarchical and sequential way.

Tony Buzan invented mind maps to allow the mind to be used to its fullest potential during the study process. He worked with his brother to create an increasingly powerful method that anyone, even a child, can master in minutes. Mind maps are a graphical representation of our notes, our ideas created to enhance learning; they also help improve self-esteem by promoting and encouraging the individual's full freedom of creative expression.

Graphical representations through maps are an efficient strategy to reprocess and reformulate desired information across the brain's two hemispheres. Currently, many scholars agree that each hemisphere has a greater propensity for different skills:

- Left hemisphere
  - ✓ Logic
  - ✓ Practice
  - ✓ Pattern organization
  - ✓ The treatment of acquired information
  - ✓ The formulation of communication codes
  - ✓ Mathematical calculation
  - ✓ Sequential information, etc
  
- Right hemisphere
  - ✓ Artistic tasks
  - ✓ Creative thinking
  - ✓ Instinctive
  - ✓ Ability to synthesize
  - ✓ Global vision
  - ✓ Emotional and non-verbal communication
  - ✓ Visualization skills, etc.

Learning to use maps allows, metaphorically, a natural alliance between the two hemispheres of the brain, which work together to create graphic

representations through logical thinking, creative thinking, organizational and visualization skills. Maps allow you to use your visual memory and better remember certain concepts that you might forget if you took notes in the traditional way.

Maps are perfect for producing or collecting ideas and for scheduled brainstorming sessions. They allow you to reorganize your ideas and enable you to generate winning insights. They allow you to improve your strategic planning to formulate ideas and help you make your communication more fluid. Using maps improves your learning skills.

## **Mind Maps**

Tony Buzan introduced "mind maps" in the 1970s as a tool to help people improve their learning. Probably after all these years, at least one in six people in the world has seen or heard of mind maps and their effectiveness.

Mind maps help you quickly memorize the topics and ideas you want. As you build a mind map, you look for images and colors that excite you and associate them with the topic you want to learn about. This allows you to strengthen your memory skills.

Mind maps make it easier to discover innovative solutions and improve your problem-solving skills. When you make mind maps with a sheet of paper and colors or with innovative systems, you allow your mind to unleash all the ideas that can germinate, and then, if it seems appropriate, you plan how to optimize them.

Creating mind maps is fun, relaxing, motivating, and keeps you focused on achieving your goal. When you finish creating a mind map and review it, you have the opportunity to get to know yourself better and become more aware of your decision-making processes. By looking at a mind map you have made, you easily remember the reasoning used to create it. You also train your logical and creative skills while strengthening your ability to memorize desired concepts, using a system that stimulates the cooperation of associative thinking and creative thinking through radiant thinking.

**How "Mind Maps" harness the power of your brain**



Mind maps allow you to prevent your mind from getting bored while learning or collecting notes. When you create notes, mind maps give you the opportunity to unleash your creativity; using the selected topics, you insert images and colors that you think are best suited to assimilate the desired content. The whole process uses your ability to visualize, imagine, schematize and represent an optimal solution in order to achieve your goal. Mind maps harness a very creative process that also involves your emotions, which allows for better learning effectiveness.

The human brain has billions of neurons that collect the stimuli and sensations we perceive. Each piece of information received from outside creates a series of stimuli that involve certain areas of our brain by stimulating our neurons.

Each neuron is composed of a central part (cell body). From the central part of the neuron originate extensions similar to the tentacles of a polyp, which extend like the branches of a tree. Taking a cue from this system and how neurons assimilate and release information, the idea of "radiant thinking" and "mind maps" was born.

Our brain receives information, stimuli, then processes them through a series of associations and ideas that allow the formulation of our response.

From the book "Mind Maps" by Tony Buzan and Barry Buzan: "Radiant Thinking [...] refers to associative thought processes that originate from or connect to a central point."

Our brains have a multidimensional thinking system.

Mind maps exploit the mind's natural tendency to fill in the perceived blank, giving it full meaning. These maps artistically depict the way our thinking works and moves. Graphically, our thinking is represented by starting with a central idea that develops into a series of new ideas, which radiate outward to form the map. This allows us to be more efficient and improve our cognitive processes that enable:

- a) Insights
- b) Logical and strategic thinking
- c) Creative thinking

- d) Associative thinking
- e) Awareness
- f) Self-esteem (the internal view you have of yourself)
- g) Self-confidence (the external view that emerges in the relationship between yourself and others)
- h) Much more.

With its structure, a mind map allows you to amplify mental abilities. Some essential features to create a mind map:

- a) Always use a central image, with multiple colors (at least 3)
- b) The primary branches always radiate from the main image, from its keyword positioned in the center of the map
- c) Follow a hierarchical, ordered structure, avoiding making the map chaotic
- d) Each primary branch and its branches have the same color
- e) Each branch level tapers off from the previous one
- f) The shape and length of the branches can be different
- g) Each branch must be connected to the previous one
- h) Use images by varying their color and size
- i) Enter the keywords for each branch and always write them in block capitals.

If you wish, here are some other small tips that can help you:

- a) Create a numbered sequential order of primary branches that are always connected to the central image. Or insert them in a clockwise direction
- b) Use arrows when you want to highlight a certain connection between different branches
- c) Choose a white paper to create mind maps
- d) Use "basic association" to create and choose the images to insert in the mind map.

"Basic Association" is a logical association that allows you to make a connection between two elements, between two words. You use this logic to transform and represent the associated words and concepts in an image.

For example, let's take the word "Memory":

- a) You can associate the word memory to the image of an elephant
- b) You can draw an elephant with glasses reading a book
- c) You can color the created image with more colors
- d) You can color the elephant in spots of 3 different colors
- e) You can color the drawn book with 2 more colors
- f) You can draw the book bigger than the elephant, to represent the huge potential of our brain.

Probably, while you were reading this example, your mind started to visualize the drawing and represented it according to your subjective reality. In fact, the elephant could have big ears, small tusks or vice versa. I didn't specify it, but in your mind, when you recreated the example, you had depicted it with some unique characteristics assigned by you. This is all thanks to your artistic genius.

So synthetically when you have to memorize a specific word, apply this sequence: imagine the chosen word, visualize it in motion, create it with colors, make it exaggerated, unique and exciting.

Now you can better understand why learning how to create mind maps allows you to train and improve your brain skills.

## **Benefits of Mind Maps**

Tony Buzan initially created mind maps because he realized he had several learning disabilities during college. The more Tony took notes and studied them with standard strategies, the more information he had to study and review, and the harder it became to do well in college. Tony Buzan then went to the library to find books that could help him understand how to improve his learning system and make the most of his brain's potential. But he found nothing that could help him. So he made a choice and decided to take action by starting to study everything that could help him understand and improve his knowledge on how to develop the brain's capabilities.

### ***1 They help to promote meaningful learning***

Mind maps stimulate meaningful learning. When you create a mind map, you

want to transfer the knowledge you've learned to a piece of paper or mind map software. This type of learning allows you to make meaning of the experience you've gained, metabolize it, and integrate it constructively with your old knowledge. By taking advantage of meaningful learning, you learn to properly master the information you have just learned. This contributes to the formation and further development of various reasoning skills, such as critical thinking, problem-solving.

With mind maps, you produce notes by making connections between what you already know and what you have just discovered. They are an effective learning tool. They stimulate your radiant thinking through the alliance of logical thinking and creative thinking, giving you the opportunity to transform your thoughts, your knowledge into real skills.

## ***2 Improve memorization and assimilation***

Currently, we have several tools that can help us retain the desired information. We can use recorders, electric printers, countless digital tools, modern pens that allow you to write in different colors, etc. However, these tools have not always been as readily available as they are today.

These tools were created and invented to help support learning, spread information, and education around the world. Unfortunately, many people stop properly training and strengthening their brains as they purchase more and more powerful and technological tools.

In the past, humans had few useful tools to help them transcribe and store information that was important and vital to their survival. Therefore, many people, understanding the importance of having a well-trained memory to increase their chances of staying alive, have tried, over time, to learn various mnemonic techniques.

One of the most powerful mnemonic techniques, dating back to the Greek and Roman philosophers' time, is the "Loci Technique," or "Memory Palace." This technique is also called the "Technique of the Ciceronian Loci" in honor of the great Roman orator and philosopher who mastered this mnemonic method: Cicero.

The "Loci Technique" has been around for over 2000 years. The "Palace of

Memory" is a powerful memory technique that is based on certain concepts:

- The power of visualization
  - ✓ We use specific places that we know perfectly well and are able to visualize in every detail to put the information we want to remember in the desired sequence
- The power of some key memorization principles
  - ✓ The ability to create exaggerated, exciting, and bizarre images is used. To then associate, through a story, the chosen images and the information to be memorized.

Basically, the information is associated with the specific locations desired through a story. We then access the stored information when we see fit.

Mind maps are a tool that uses a strategy similar to the "Loci Technique."

Mind maps use a graphical representation that is created on a sheet of paper or through software, taking full advantage of the two pillars that allow the application of the "Loci Technique." In fact, paths and places can be metaphorically represented by the branches that radiate from the main concept to reach the other ideas depicted. In addition, creating and producing mind maps allows you to use multiple brain skills, making this an effective tool for developing your cognitive potential.

### ***3 Mind maps are an engaging and creative form of learning***

Making mind maps allows you to unleash creativity and have confidence in your abilities and artistic choices. Mind maps also allow you to improve your organizational and strategic skills.

In addition, when multiple people collectively participate in creating a mind map through a continuous brainstorming process, the collaborative spirit of the participants is nurtured and their communication and interpersonal skills can improve significantly:

- Communication skills

- ✓ These are all the skills that enable a person to communicate effectively with others
- Interpersonal skills
  - ✓ Sense of responsibility
  - ✓ Problem-solving
  - ✓ Ethical behavior
  - ✓ Collaborative spirit
  - ✓ Empathy
  - ✓ Much more.

So learning and producing notes and ideas through mind maps is an exciting, engaging, and challenging experience.

#### ***4 Help improve verbal communication and writing skills***

Mind maps allow you to reformulate your collected notes and place them in a conscious manner. They allow, through associative learning, a connection between concepts with a fluid structural hierarchy. This process requires subjective assimilation and reformulation of learned content.

By increasing your experience in producing information made with mind maps, you improve your ability to produce notes through a communicative code composed of several elements:

- colors
- keywords
- images
- Lines
- Connecting points
- Radiant Thinking.

All of this allows you to have concepts clearly represented through a mind map. As a result, it is easier to express them verbally or in writing.

Each time you examine a certain topic through your mind map, your mind assimilates it better, allowing you to become even more aware of the topic.

Considering that the moment you create a mind map, you train yourself to use your knowledge efficiently, it is possible to say that your mind will become more and more effective as time goes by.

## ***5 Improve productivity***

When you make mind maps, you learn to quickly recognize concepts, the most salient keywords in a topic that will allow you to assimilate more effectively. As your experience increases, it becomes easy to make useful associations and reasoning to achieve your goals and learn or create new content. In this way, you become more and more self-aware and as you learn to better understand your thought processes, you can more easily explore new opportunities.

When you apply scheduled reviews of specific topics, reviewing will become an extremely fast-paced action thanks to the mind maps you've created earlier. As you increase your experience, you can also further rework the mind maps you had already created, consolidating old information with new information. The more experience you gain with mind maps, the more benefits you can achieve in different areas of your life. Because usually, the more efficient you are, the more productive you become.

# Conceptual Map

A "concept map" is a graphic representation made and used to reproduce assimilated knowledge of a given topic. Most concept maps are reformulations of concepts and ideas that are hierarchically ordered and attached to lines or arrows (also called arcs). To further clarify the relationships between definitions, these lines are supported with connecting terms and phrases.

## The Basics of Concept Maps

"Concept maps" are also known as "logic charts" or "concept diagrams." They are tools that were created to help organize our knowledge through a system that is read vertically (from top to bottom) and represented graphically.

Concept maps allow for a better overview of topics and of knowledge learned. Two elements characterize each type of concept map:

- Concepts
- The relationship between concepts.

Concept maps have unique characteristics, which differentiate them from other visual tools used to reproduce learned information.

### *Distinctive features of concept maps*

#### **1 Concepts (concept nodes)**

Concepts are represented by a label, they are shown on the map with boxes or circles. Within them are inserted from 1 to 3 keywords, which allow you to immediately identify the desired idea.

Human communication occurs through words or symbols, which can be reproduced graphically, used to narrate learned experiences. These communicative codes represent "concepts."

Joseph Donald Novak "concept: perceived regularity or pattern in events or



objects, or in accounts/symbols/representations of events or objects, defined through a label."

## **2 Propositional Structure**

Using "bond words," two or more concepts are related to each other, generating a proposition. These propositions within the concept map become fundamental units of meaning that we learn and store in our minds. Semantic units or units of meaning represent a statement, which allows us to understand the meaning of the knowledge acquired and reproduced graphically.

Concepts and ideas are fundamental to generate new information, the more they are assimilated and understood, the easier it becomes to be accurate in their graphical representation, ensuring a better quality of meaningful learning through concept maps.

A concept map visually conveys to you a series of ideas about a specific topic.

## **3 Linking-Words / Phrases**

On the lines that connect objects in a concept map are terms or short phrases. These words define the connection between two or more concepts. They are direct words or simple phrases that often allow you to indicate specific situations:

- A Sequence
- A Result
- A Motivation
- An Example
- A Comparison, etc.

## **4 Hierarchical Structure**

Concept maps can be composed of many concepts, so their organizational structure is a fundamental element to obtain an excellent result. Therefore, the inserted topics are added following a hierarchical structure.

Usually, concept maps take life and develop from a single general concept,

which identifies the whole topic. More specific and exclusive concepts are grouped hierarchically at the bottom. The ideas included follow a vertical structure, which can also expand laterally. The result is a map that is read from top to bottom.

## **5 Cross-Links**

Cross-links are connections in various areas of the thematic map between concepts, which help to imagine how ideas are connected. Creative thinking is encouraged by both cross-links and organizational structure, and these cross-links also suggest moments of creativity.

## **6 Focus Question**

To create a concept map, you need to ask yourself the right questions that allow you to understand the problem you want to examine or the topic you want to explore. Developing a focused question encourages you to plan an operational strategy to achieve your goal. So asking the right questions that allow you to focus better is essential to creating an efficient concept map.

It would be helpful to draft a list of key ideas that need to be incorporated into the concept map. This is often productive:

- Find a number of ideas, of concepts varying between 10 and 20
- Set up an ordered list from most general to a most specific definition
- Begin to identify the most general concepts
- Group 2 to 4 more specific concepts under the most general concepts.

All this can help you better visualize how to set up the concept map and first find the most appropriate main concept to use.

## **Why Use a Concept Map?**

Concept maps are designed to help teachers and students in education. They are tools that allow for better evaluation of acquired knowledge. They allow us to represent our learned experiences through a graphic representation of

our ideas, which are placed in a logical order using our cognitive and creative abilities.

According to J. Novak, to be effective, teaching must avoid focusing only on "mechanical learning," and the development of "meaningful learning" must be encouraged.

Meaningful learning occurs when the student chooses to take action to integrate new experiences with his or her old knowledge. A concept map is designed as a graphic tool to coordinate and represent information and help imagine connections between different concepts. It also allows us to assess understanding of complex topics.

Visual content attracts our attention better and is processed more quickly by our brain. An image is processed by our mind tens of thousands of times faster than textual content.

Thinking about and representing relationships between concepts physically forms conceptual associations that allow for better retention of information.

With the passage of time, concept maps have spread all over the world and are used in various fields of work.

- A concept map has the following advantages:
- Facilitates interpretation and understanding of concepts due to its visual style
- Allows you to schematize and organize learned information
- Encourages brainstorming and reasoning at high levels, stimulating creativity
- Improves problem-solving skills
- Encourages exploration of new ideas and their relationships
- Encourages cooperative learning
- Allows for easier memorization of schematic and sequential arguments
- Provides an excellent assessment tool to determine the quality of knowledge acquired
- Allows you to understand what knowledge needs to be deepened.

# When to Make a Concept Map

Concept maps are an ideal learning method for students and educators, trainers.

They are effective for schematizing and graphically simplifying very complex topics. Through the practice of linking "concepts" and "linking words" you get "propositions, meaningful statements" that allow you to consolidate the information and skills learned.

Making a concept map can be useful when you want to:

- Synthesize a topic, to begin to understand it better
- Memorize information while preparing for an exam
- Evaluate the acquired awareness of a certain topic
- Consolidate knowledge during the learning process
- Stimulate collaborative, constructive learning.

It must be understood that concept maps are designed with the purpose of enhancing meaningful learning, and that some concepts present in one map may be present in another map, but their statements of meaning may be very different, because the meaning expressed within the acquired experience depends on the entire context.

Therefore, to create effective concept maps, you need to act with the intention and desire to improve your knowledge's quality, creating a synergy between what you have just learned and what you already knew.

## Building a Concept Map

Here are some basic steps to building a concept map:

- Identify the main topic you want to represent
- Ask questions and stay focused on the desired objective
- Identify and insert the idea, the main key concept, the one that we consider most suitable to develop the concept map and guide the layout of the hierarchy

- Identify all the key principles related to the main theory you have defined, i.e. identify the existing relationships between the various labels
- Realize the hierarchical structure of the concept map
- Insert line and word links, which relate to the main and more specific concepts
- Construct a tentative concept map that ties the ideas together. To illustrate how the definitions are connected, remember to apply linking words or phrases to the lines
- Add cross-links
- Review your concept map and improve it prior to the final draft
- As the months go by and your knowledge increases, you may consider reworking your concept map and making it perform better and better.

## **Weaknesses of Concept Maps and Mind Maps**

### **Concept Maps**

The concept map can contain many concepts, especially if it is implemented with new labels through periodic updates. We know that they are read in a vertical sequence, but as concepts increase they can expand laterally as well as in-depth. Often it is single-color. This can make a very structured concept map seem chaotic, making the process of memorizing topics more complicated.

### **Mind Maps**

Mind maps can be less effective when necessary to learn, memorize topics that present concepts in a well-defined sequence, as in mathematical formulas.

## **Final Tip on Concept Maps and Mind Maps**

When you learn through a book or through information gathered at training

events, you may encounter ideas that are expressed with concept maps or mind maps. Learning how to make these types of maps makes it easier for you to understand the message their creators wanted to convey.

Both concept maps and mind maps are very useful in improving your awareness of your own thought processes.

So, as your experience increases, you might consider using both concept maps and mind maps for your own learning or to produce new topics.

For example:

1. You might consider creating a concept map, which allows you to identify concepts and develop them through a logical hierarchical connection. Then you might consider creating mind maps that allow you to represent the various relationships of meaning present in the concept map to maximize the assimilation and memorization of newly acquired knowledge.
2. If you come across a concept map in a book but are better at using mind maps, you can figure out what the author wanted to represent graphically, and you can create your own mind map or vice versa
3. You may decide to create a hybrid that takes advantage of the rules of both maps using your creativity and problem-solving skills, which you have improved through the use of mind maps and concept maps.

# CHAPTER 4

## Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a term for a technique used to find solutions, optimal ideas. This working methodology is often used when we have difficulty in finding effective solutions for specific situations, for example, it is widely used in advertising. Brainstorming is a method that takes advantage of creative intelligence. It is carried out with groups of people, but the more enterprising may consider the idea, with the means at their disposal, of doing brainstorming sessions on their own.

Brainstorming allows you to unleash your imagination and discover new ways to achieve your goal. This expression is now widespread in the world. It is a mode that stimulates "collaborative learning" within groups; it allows you to generate ideas through creative thinking that awakens the use of your associative skills.

Brainstorming has many applications, in fact, it is also used to develop ideas for new products or to improve them.

Advertising executive "Alex F. Osborne" created this working strategy in the late 1930s, roughly between 1938 and 1939. Osborne experimented with alternative ways of working. He realized that by working in teams, following certain rules, finding creative and winning solutions were possible. Later Osborne wrote books in which he explained brainstorming and its guiding principles.

Osborne established 4 guiding principles so that brainstorming could be an effective tool:

1. Prioritize quantity over quality
2. Every idea is perfect, even the craziest and most bizarre ones
3. Criticism should be avoided
4. Combine ideas, refine and enhance them.

Brainstorming is a method that harnesses the collective imagination, which is mainly used to find a solution to a particular problem. This is done quickly and freely by collecting and recording new ideas from team members. Usually, brainstorming sessions consist of a number of people, who are led by a manager, a facilitator.

## **The Four Basic Principles of Brainstorming**

Brainstorming is an exceptional technique suitable for developing creative and unconventional ideas; over the decades, many people and business teams have created their own customized versions of this wonderful working tool.

When running your own business, the four basic principles of brainstorming allow you to hold a meeting with your employees, allowing you to express the full creative potential of the group.

These guiding rules are 4:

1. **Prioritize quantity over quality.** The principle is that when ideas are refined, combined, and further developed, and quantity inevitably generates consistency with the set goal
2. **Any idea is perfect, even the craziest and most bizarre.** Encouraging staff members to step outside the box and come up with varied ideas opens the door to fresh, creative strategies that could be the ticket to success
3. **Criticism should be avoided.** Team members should be able to embrace and expose all the opinions on their minds. This serves to preserve the most accurate analysis, which comes into play during the proposal selection phase so that there is no "blockage."
4. **Combine ideas, refine and enhance them.** It serves to facilitate the problem-solving process, build ideas and draw connections between different suggestions.

Brainstorming strategies and practices allow a team to evolve and work



collaboratively.

There are several ways to conduct a brainstorming session. For example, there are reverse brainstorming sessions, others reasoning with friends, and so on. Each of these variables adapted to your needs and means can be beneficial to produce new ideas and reach your desired goal.

Figure out which brainstorming mode can be the most effective for you or your team; it should always be your priority.

## **Benefits of Brainstorming**

When working to create a project, whatever it may be, that needs to be marketed, finding the winning idea can be difficult. Performing scheduled brainstorming meetings can bring out new ideas that could be the winning ones.

Brainstorming is a collaborative tool that allows participants to expand their imaginative capacity, train their associative and creative skills. It also increases their sense of responsibility through ethical behavior that values the freedom of opinion of each individual within the team. This allows for an exchange of ideas among participants that enables them to gain new perspectives, stimulating individuals' associative logic, visualization, imagination and listening skills.

The purpose of brainstorming, in the initial phase, is to bring out as many ideas as possible, stimulating the imagination, the creativity of the team.

Now let's look together at the benefits that scheduled brainstorming sessions can offer you.

### **It Offers a Different Point of View**

In any job, you need to get up to speed, and some ideas will probably become obsolete after a while.

Sometimes you can be so focused on work and specific issues in your daily life that it becomes difficult to use the time to expand your knowledge.

Therefore, it is helpful to have suggestions from other people who have had other experiences. Since it is assumed that your friends or colleagues sometimes have different experiences, interests, and motivations, they can offer you interesting points of view. The ideas you gather may sometimes seem strange, seemingly useless. However, they can generate new insights that you can turn into a winning idea.

## **Helps Improve Critical Thinking**

The more brainstorming sessions you have had, the more you will learn to listen and analyze the thoughts highlighted and expressed by all team members. You'll learn not to criticize other people's ideas, but to consider and examine them more impartially. This involves taking a range of considerations and analyzing them without any bias.

All of this is the basis of excellent critical thinking, which is thinking that aims to evaluate every aspect of a given topic, considering each perspective as logically as possible, analyzing it, and evaluating every possibility we can consider.

Critical thinking improves by drawing its information from experience, phenomenological observation (observing experience without making judgments), active listening, the types of reasoning implemented, and the communication expressed.

Thus, it is easy to see that through the four basic principles of brainstorming, the entire team will tend to train their logical thinking skills, the ability to listen without judging, and then consider every possible aspect of a given situation. All of these are useful skills to train critical thinking.

## **It Fuels Creativity**

The benefits of brainstorming include the ability to perceive the transcribed and listed ideas generated by teams through the senses of hearing and sight. By observing and listening to the ideas created, the mind is stimulated. This allows you to train visual, auditory, and associative learning. Stimulating your mental visualization skills improves your logical and associative skills; this allows you, through the experience you just had, to stimulate and enhance your creativity.

## **Improves Team Cohesion**

Through brainstorming, you also develop a sense of team membership. Brainstorming groups often learn how to work together more effectively. The positive results of brainstorming sessions encourage you to recognize specific skills or abilities in yourself and your colleagues that you may not have been aware of yet. This helps your self-esteem, helps you learn to trust others, and allows you to build good relationships with your colleagues.

# **Actions Needed for Effective Brainstorming**

Effective brainstorming implies that it needs to be planned. Below you can observe some very useful tips to help you have a better chance of success during your meetings.

## **Preparation**

You need to prepare properly for a brainstorming session even if it was just for a drill.

It becomes important to choose the right place to hold the business meeting, it must be as quiet a place as possible to get maximum effectiveness from the brainstorming technique.

This task is taken on by a person who plays the role of a facilitator (also referred to as a conductor), a conductor who will arrange to:

1. Prepare an environment that makes participants feel comfortable
2. Create a seating arrangement that is circular in shape within the meeting. This serves to implement the perception that everyone is of equal value within the team. This concept is portrayed effectively in the story of "King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table."
3. Have a whiteboard or similar, allowing all participants to see the ideas gathered during the brainstorming, which will be transcribed by the presenter
4. Have water ready just in case
5. Ensure that there is no outside interference of any kind during the session
6. Consider making a recording of the session
7. Formulate the central question of the meeting, for the issue to be resolved. "The central question of the meeting should be clearly stated; it should be a direct question that serves to immediately frame the desired objective."

## ***Essential Facilitator Characteristics***

The facilitator or conductor is like a guide who makes sure that the whole working process is carried out correctly. At the same time, it transcribes without censorship every idea generated that will then be analyzed.

Therefore, he/she will skillfully use his/her emotional intelligence and make sure, thanks to his/her management, active listening and problem-solving skills, that the brainstorming becomes an excellent experience for the team, which brings the expected benefits during the preparation of the work event.

The brainstorming facilitator or host, while taking note of each idea, makes sure that everyone's conduct is ethical. Everyone's ideas are respected and considered a great contribution to the work done by the team.

Whoever organizes and leads the work event, it is important that they do not have dominant hierarchical roles in the company than their colleagues on the team.

The facilitator must be impartial, ease the emotional tension that the event generates, and put the whole team, as far as possible, at ease. It is not a matter of moving forward with a mission or achieving a single goal. It's all about creating the right conditions for finding the most potentially effective creative ideas for solving the question, while ensuring that the team becomes increasingly close-knit, for the future well-being of the firm.

## **Present the Problem**

In this step, the facilitator needs to make sure everyone is in the right mood. Explain to them the topic you are trying to solve so that everyone is on the same wave frequency. The goal is to make sure that everyone is working together for the overall well-being.

It is a good thing to welcome so-called spontaneous, crazy, extremely creative ideas. Such spontaneous ideas have a high probability of generating, through the association of ideas, excellent thoughts that can offer, once exposed and noted, a solid basis for finding an optimal solution.

It is necessary that the question be clearly formulated and that everyone

understands it perfectly. The facilitator explains the reasons for brainstorming.

Transcribing the objective is also helpful, so that everyone can review the question during the session to generate a sort of planned review of the question posed. So that the brain can unleash its creativity to generate various responses for the whole team to hear.

## **Lead the Discussion**

Begin the brainstorming session.

After presenting the dilemma, the facilitator clearly states that each team member should actively participate in making suggestions.

During the first round of brainstorming, he reiterates that the important thing is to produce a winning solution, however, the goal in this first part of the meeting is to get as many ideas out as possible.

The facilitator emphasizes that it is the team's responsibility to respect everyone's ideas and to behave ethically.

Everything needs to be effective at this early stage of the meeting. So the facilitator also makes it clear that any ideas that come to mind should be put out there.

During the first part of the brainstorming session, the facilitator will use a few moments to review the transcribed ideas, praise the initiative and collaborative spirit of the teammates; he will make sure that everything is done in the best possible way, using his management and communication skills.

## **Action**

It becomes very important for the whole team to understand that the first phase of brainstorming has a set time in which ideas are generated and transcribed.

After a momentary pause, each generated idea is verified through precise analysis. An evaluation of each idea will begin with the logical abilities of the

group. The best ideas will be considered more thoroughly in order to achieve the desired solution.

## **How Brainstorming Can Help Our Mind**

Brainstorming is a tool that can be used in a wide range of different circumstances. It will help you discover new ideas and solutions, both in your personal and professional life. Because of this versatility, brainstorming is a commonly used business technique.

When we use brainstorming with other people in our work environment, we can see how our creative abilities are stimulated. In addition, attending these meetings boosts our self-esteem. Because everyone's ideas are respected. All of this often translates into winning results that are realized because of our contributions.

When we are on our own, thanks to our creativity and the means at our disposal, we can have brainstorming sessions through the internet, also using a timer, sheets of paper, and a pen or colors.

We can also train our organizational skills in preparation and time management that normally fit the various stages of conventional brainstorming.

Once we are aware of what we want to find, we can set up research timelines, through a timer, to generate new ideas.

Through the internet, we can get ideas using different methodologies:

1. Using tools that generate keywords
2. Using the vocabulary of synonyms and antonyms
3. Typing keywords into image sites to see images that can stimulate our creativity.
4. Typing keywords in our browser, YouTube, evaluating words that generate search bars; saving videos, sites, blogs in the favorites bar, to review them later
5. Leveraging sites like Amazon, eBay, through their search bars we can notice new keywords or their product pages, and then

we will evaluate them later.

After the research phase, we can start considering what ideas and keywords seem useful to us and what sites, blogs, images, or products can best inspire us to find the ideal solution.

During the brainstorming process, you'll expand your vocabulary, learn new ideas, and even look at images you hadn't noticed before. You will also improve your mastery of time management, visualization, idea association, creativity, and logical analysis skills. By analyzing various sites, blogs or YouTube channels, you will be able to generate fantastic ideas and stimulate different areas of your brain. You will train yourself to be responsible for your choices, evaluate and select what information to keep and what to eliminate in the most correct way possible. This is possible thanks to the alliance between logical thinking and creative thinking. Therefore, brainstorming helps you improve your mental abilities by stimulating different areas of your brain.



## CHAPTER 5

### **Physical Training: Do at Least 20 Minutes of Aerobic and Anaerobic Activity per Day**

There is a famous Latin phrase written about 2000 years ago by Juvenal, a Roman poet: "Orandum est ut sit **mens sana in corpore sano**," that is "we must pray for a **healthy mind in a healthy body**."

This phrase contains a profound truth; in fact, a healthy human being is a collection of billions of cells in which each cell cooperates for the survival of the whole organism.

We can deduce that the weaker the cells become or the more unable they are to help the system survive, the more difficulty the other parts of the system will have in ensuring the survival of the entire ecosystem.

The strengthening and development of mental abilities, in healthy individuals, depends on their proper training and proper oxygenation of the brain brought by the blood. It is also vital that the brain has as few stimuli as possible that can interfere with or slow down mental abilities, such as "severe back pain, which prevents one from being lucid because of the strong interfering stimuli generated by pain."

This Latin expression, "mens sana in corpore sano," is extrapolated from the phrase quoted above. Many people often use it to indicate that it is essential to take care of their mental and physical health. In fact for your mind to be strong, it can also help to train your body and vice versa.

By studying "neuro-linguistic programming," we can see that the body and mind influence each other. In fact, through the study of neuro-linguistic programming, we show that our internal communication can influence our external response and that the reverse is also true. It can be observed that our thoughts influence our body's physiological response. From this assumption, it is possible to strategically choose, in specific situations, to implement

certain physical behaviors to positively influence the cognitive processes of our mind or vice versa.

Now through all the known information that can also be found thanks to the web, we know that through a healthy sports activity, we get several benefits within our body that allow better functioning of the blood flow.

From all these considerations, we can guess that a correct daily physical activity helps our body to be healthy, energetic and positively stimulates our thoughts as well as our self-esteem.

There are many legitimate reasons to get active and do at least 20 minutes of sports and functional activity every day:

- Through exercise, we improve our physical and cognitive abilities that regulate the coordination of our movements
- Chances of having heart disease, degenerative brain disease, and diabetes are reduced
- Can stabilize blood pressure
- Can reduce joint pain and improve joint mobility
- Based on the exercises performed, different brain areas are stimulated, creating a better connection between certain regions of the right and left hemispheres
- The developed cells positively stimulate the mood
- Improves breathing capacity and resistance to fatigue
- Improves vital energy, and there is a positive effect on brain cells and our memory and concentration skills
- Much more.

## **Exercise and the Brain**

Exercise aids memory and thinking. The benefits of exercise stem directly from its ability to minimize insulin resistance, reduce inflammation, and promote the release of chemical factors that affect brain cell health, the growth of new blood vessels in the brain, stimulating longevity, and the growth of new neural connections.

So physical activity stimulates "Neuroplasticity" in the brain. Neuroplasticity,

I repeat, can be summarized as "the brain's ability to change and adapt as new experiences increase."

Exercise implicitly improves mood and sleep quality and reduces stress and anxiety. Whenever you do a proper physical workout, whatever it is, you are aware that you are taking care of yourself, which makes you more emotionally satisfied.

Neuropsychologist Aaron Bonner-Jackson, Ph.D.: "We know that exercise, and aerobic exercise, in particular, is very helpful in maintaining brain health, even in people who are at risk of developing dementia and Alzheimer's disease (AD), [...] You can make a big difference in terms of how your body works and, consequently, how your brain works."

By improving your emotional state, sleep quality, positively stimulating your brain's neuroplasticity, and reducing negative stress through healthy physical activity, you also implicitly strengthen the mental abilities that allow you to focus on achieving a specific goal.

For example, you can strengthen:

- Visualization skills
- Strategic thinking, through time management, or exercise planning
- The ability to store useful information to better carry out the desired workout
- Mental elasticity, and resilience, adapting and changing training routines, or experimenting with new exercises if needed, etc.

## **How Aerobics, Sports, and Exercise Make the Brain Work Better**

Our brain is the main organ of the central nervous system. But identifying it metaphorically as a muscle allows us to understand that the brain must be

continually trained to be efficient.

Thinking that the brain can only be trained through studying, or going to school, is like creating a puzzle in half. In some cases, it can be helpful to think through a less conventional approach. When we compose a very complex puzzle, and find ourselves struggling, looking at the puzzle from different perspectives can allow us to complete it more smoothly. Allowing the body to exercise stimulates certain areas of the brain, and through certain cognitive processes, improves specific brain skills, which allow, for example, to develop:

- Motor learning
- The control of motor functions
- Better adaptation of movement
- Proactivity
- Awareness through physical perception during training
- Focusing, etc.

Over the past century, our understanding of everything we know about the human brain and body has increased considerably. As technology has advanced, many researchers have begun to explore the links between physical and mental training.

## **Boost Your Memory and Improve Your Concentration**

The hippocampus is the part of the brain that is most affected through aerobic exercise.

Various research on humans shows that when individuals exercise physically and perform better physically, they develop their brain structure.

The hippocampus is at the center of the brain's learning and memory systems.

This finding partly explains the memory-enhancing effects that have been found with cardiovascular improvement from healthy physical activity.

Cortisol, called the "stress hormone," helps our bodies when it is present in adequate amounts. For example, it helps regulate blood sugar levels, helps regulate metabolism, allows us to maintain better concentration, helps

improve our memory skills, etc. So moderate levels of stress are the ones that allow you to achieve your goals and make you activate constructively when action is needed.

Therefore, a daily workout done properly positively affects the physical structure of your brain.

However, creating prolonged and highly stressful training sessions that last for weeks or months, without the proper rest cycles, can produce a constant and high release of cortisol in your body. This negatively interferes with your cognitive processes, causing you to have difficulty staying focused and impairing your ability to store information.

### ***Improve Your Mental Health and Slow Cognitive Decline***

Your analytical skills are affected by what you do with your body. It is not very healthy to lead a sedentary life, especially if you avoid any physical activity during the week.

Exercise positively boosts your mood; it allows you to increase your physical endurance, positively affecting your body's vital energy. In fact, exercising for about 30-45 minutes, 3 days a week, helps invigorate the mind, improving blood flow and significantly reducing mental fatigue, as well as physical fatigue.

Doing healthy exercise, in addition to strengthening and invigorating the body, as the years go by, helps to hinder the onset of various diseases, such as degenerative brain diseases, such as "senile dementia."

### **Tips for Choosing the Right Exercise**

Anything that is healthy for your emotional state helps your brain.

Physical activity is vital: it strengthens the musculoskeletal system, improves brain function, and serves as a "first aid kit" to restructure and strengthen certain cognitive processes.

Any form of cardiovascular conditioning is an aerobic activity. Aerobic exercises can include activities such as brisk walking, swimming, biking, or

horseback riding. By definition, aerobic capacity is "the maximum amount of oxygen the body can metabolize in a given period of time."

During aerobic exercise, breathing and heart rate increase. Aerobic activity helps maintain the health of the heart, lungs, and circulatory system.

Aerobic training varies from anaerobic training. Rapid bursts of energy require anaerobic activities, such as lifting weights or sprinting. They take place for a limited period of time at full effort. An anaerobic workout can strengthen your body and reduce your risk of injury.

It is important to stay physically engaged. Try to get at least 35-50 minutes of exercise 3 or 4 times a week; when you can, try alternating the sequence of days you exercise aerobically and anaerobically. Have a great workout!

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **Learn to Relax: Do Meditation, Do Mindfulness**

Learning to empower yourself through relaxation may sound like an oxymoron, which is a rhetorical figure that consists of combining, in the same set of words, words that express opposite concepts. However, through meditative practice, as you relax, you can strengthen your mental abilities.

Over the past few decades, several studies have been conducted to scientifically prove the benefits of meditation on the brain, which are reflected in the body.

These countless researches have shown, through methods such as Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI), Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), that meditation, and mindfulness if practiced over time, positively affect the way different areas of the brain work and collaborate, effectively stimulating the human body.

### **Brief History of Meditation and Mindfulness**

Meditation is an ancient practice that has been around for over 2400 years; some say there is evidence of meditative practices dating back over 4600 years.

The word meditation comes from the Latin word "meditatio," which means "reflection."

Every historical culture in the world has in its cultural traditions some form of meditative practice created to achieve moments of enlightenment and attain a state of full awareness.

Over time, meditative techniques of Asian origin, which have a religious or philosophical basis, have spread throughout the world.

The art of meditation was handed down by masters, mostly monks. Only after

many years of training did they allow their students to teach it. Meditation, therefore, has an important spiritual and religious matrix.

Thanks to an American doctor "Jon Kabat-Zinn," the world has known the spread of "mindfulness," a form of meditation more congenial to Western culture; it is a form of meditation that we could define as secular.

According to Jon Kabat-Zinn, "mindfulness": "Paying special attention: intentionally, in the present moment and in a non-judgmental way."

So "meditation" and "mindfulness," have a common root. With a more spiritual and religious approach, the former tends to influence judgment on certain thoughts. While when we practice "mindfulness," no judgment is directed at our thoughts.

Each type of meditation allows you to achieve inner balance and greater awareness in the present moment. Through full awareness, you can achieve moments of enlightenment and an overall state of well-being that allows you to enjoy your life to the fullest.

## **Neuroscience and Meditation**

As mentioned above, it is helpful to consider our brain as a muscle in a figurative sense. This system of representation allows us to intuitively understand that the brain needs to be regularly trained and hydrated to effectively develop its potential.

With the technological development in recent decades, many groups of researchers around the world have begun to better study the brain and how it works.

Researchers have observed through methods such as "fMRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging)," how brain areas are stimulated on a daily basis and in certain situations. Some research has observed blood flows in our brains and how brain areas react to various stimulations. This has allowed a more precise evaluation of how certain activities, if carried out assiduously, allow a relevant transformation of specific brain areas and their functional activity.



Thanks to the countless researches carried out, today we know that our brain allows us to perform all those functions that are essential to implement the cognitive processes that allow us to reason.

The brain allows us to perceive and evaluate all external and internal stimuli of the body. Through these evaluations and perceptions, the brain learns to shape and change itself according to the sequence of stimuli it receives.

As research has been done, many important things have been discovered about the brain. One revolutionary discovery is the one that showed the brain's ability to generate new neurons even in old age. Other research, easily available thanks to modern technology, has shown that the brain can improve the existing connections between neurons through specific and constant stimuli over time and improve the existing connections between neurons, thus allowing a better brain efficiency.

All this has allowed us to understand that it is possible to stimulate the areas of the brain that allow the development of our cognitive and emotional abilities.

Some research done while some volunteers applied meditative forms such as "mindfulness," found that people who meditate after about 6 months, begin to have positive and significant structural changes in some brain areas.

Discovering that simple meditative practices carried out to improve our awareness, mental and physical balance, allow to shape our essence through brain neuroplasticity, has an invaluable potential value, especially for those who want to fight degenerative brain diseases.

By relaxing our minds through meditation techniques, some researchers have noticed a reduction in the amygdala and an increase in the neuronal interconnections of areas dedicated to our primary cognitive abilities, such as language, memory, and attention. This increase in neuronal interconnections creates a better connection between the various sections of the brain dedicated to specific cognitive processes.

The role of the amygdala, for the brain, is critical in processing some important stimuli that are perceived.

Joseph LeDoux considers the amygdala to be the place where emotions are processed; therefore, the amygdala allows us to regulate the stimulus that predisposes us to fight or flight. Neurons in the amygdala allow us to assess and enhance our cognitive abilities to distinguish dangerous or potentially pleasant situations. This discovery can probably explain in part why people who meditate are able to assess situations more calmly.

Every week there is at least one article in some scientific journal that highlights the extraordinary benefits of a life lived with full awareness.

So it becomes natural to realize how many benefits are obtained with meditative practices, which allow us to improve our awareness and brain structure by exploiting the plasticity of the brain.

Assuming you can find out you have a degenerative brain disease. Developing and strengthening the neuronal connections of various brain areas through meditative techniques may make it easier to fight these terrible diseases. It may also reduce the rate at which these brain diseases make our lives full of enormous difficulties.

All of this is important because it allows us to understand that each of our actions activates certain areas of the brain. When these actions are exercised with constancy and periodic frequency the areas of the brain that are stimulated begin to enhance themselves by taking advantage of brain plasticity.

So practicing meditative techniques with constancy allows you to obtain many physical and mental benefits, through increased self-awareness.

## **How to Learn to Meditate and the Benefits**

### **Benefits**

It only takes a few minutes a day to immediately feel some of the benefits of meditative techniques.

Suppose you start practicing meditation several days a week; with consistent practice, your meditative experience increases, and over time, after a few

months, your brain structure will improve.

With meditation, you can quickly achieve a revitalization of your body, mind and spirit. Meditative practices improve the harmony of your thoughts, increasing your capacity for attention and awareness.

Meditating allows you to increase your resilience through better awareness while also allowing you to increase your self-esteem. Also, by increasing your mental and physical well-being, you can improve the quality of your rest. All of this allows you to rejuvenate and strengthen yourself more effectively.

## **Learn to Meditate**

There are many meditative techniques available. I believe it is helpful for you to experiment with different meditations so that you can more consciously choose the ones you feel are best for your needs. Depending on your circumstances or inclinations, you may also choose to use different meditations throughout your days.

Here are a few meditations:

- Transcendental
- Guided
- Mindfulness which, stems from vipassana, and aims to live in the present moment without judgmental thoughts
- Vipassana which initially uses the breath as an anchor and has a more religious, spiritual tradition.

There are many other forms of meditation.

### ***Transcendental Meditation***

Transcendental meditation allows for the steady growth of personal potential and the reduction of negative stress.

It is usually practiced, for about 15 minutes or so, twice a day; sitting comfortably with your eyes closed.

Transcendental meditation allows you to turn your attention to yourself. It helps you to acquire the balance of the senses and mental peace, to achieve in time a total harmony of the senses and your consciousness.

The first benefits are felt almost immediately and affect both mental and physical levels. Moreover, through constant practice, the benefits that can be obtained increase, the important thing is to practice this meditation correctly.

The main difference from other forms of meditation is that in transcendental meditation a mantra is used as a means to help the mind stay more focused. There are different types of mantras; they are essentially a word or series of words meant to help our mind. Some mantras can be translated, but many are chosen for the sound they make when we recite them repeatedly. Many transcendental meditations have a religious origin. Millions of people around the world love to use this meditative technique.

### ***Guided meditations***

By now, it's easy to see that the beneficial effects of various forms of meditation are no longer a secret.

Guided meditation is a meditative form in which you are guided by an outside voice, which through a story allows you to achieve a sense of mental and physical stillness. Guided meditations can be conducted with different narratives, depending on the desired goal. They can be done actively or passively, depending on how we will be guided. In fact, the person guiding us in this meditative technique may ask us to perform different actions such as walking, sitting, lying down, etc.

### ***Mindfulness***

Mindfulness is a form of meditation that focuses on the breath. Since our breath is a great starting point, a great anchor to start perceiving every moment of our existence.

So when your mind gets distracted, to wander freely, you will gently refocus on your breath. As you return to calming your mind and re-harmonizing the balance between mind and body, over time, you can be more and more aware of the experience you are having.

Mindfulness is usually practiced while you are sitting, in a chair with your feet firmly planted on the floor, or sitting on the floor with pillows. Your eyes are usually kept closed as you begin to focus on your breath and all the movements involved during this experience. When you feel ready, open your eyes again. Allow yourself time to feel each new sensation and thought during this meditation. As your experience with this meditative form progresses it will become easier and easier to increase your awareness in the here and now.

### ***Vipassana Meditation***

Vipassana is a deep insight meditative technique that can be used by anyone who desires it.

This technique allows you to know yourself better in order to be fully aware.

Basically, it is a meditative technique that consists of achieving moments of recollection towards external stimuli. You can use the breath as an anchoring method to be able to concentrate and refocus, to observe yourself better, and be aware of yourself in the here and now.

As you meditate, emotions, stimuli, and thoughts will come to the surface and your mind will begin to be distracted, and it is in this moment that, by choosing to observe what is happening, you become master of yourself again.

When you choose to observe yourself, you become more and more aware. When you choose to recalibrate yourself, you reuse the breath to gently redirect yourself and you begin to find your inner peace again.

As you begin to meditate, I think it's wise for you to avoid fixating on finding the perfect posture, and it's essential to be kind to yourself if you find that during meditation you begin to get distracted. This is because in that moment you are again aware of what is happening. For in that moment you are present again, and you possess the power to choose where to redirect your mind to continue, with harmony, your meditation.

Each meditation has characteristics that differentiate it from the others. All are designed to benefit those who practice them. Choosing the most congenial meditation practice for each of us turns out to be very subjective.

Some people like to practice several meditative techniques, while others use only their favorite. The important thing is to start with a desire to improve, trying to learn how to be in complete harmony in the present moment. As experience increases, each meditative action will become more and more natural and fluid.

## ***Description of Vipassana Meditation Practice***

Vipassana meditation consists of several phases in which we progressively focus on the body through the breath, on sensations, on the mind and on our mental representations.

### **Phase 1**

1. Sit in a comfortable position, ideally with a straight back.
2. Bring your attention to observe the breath, in a sense, the breath represents your anchor, so observe it calmly
3. Continue to observe the breath and if the mind starts to get distracted, gently bring your attention back to the breath again.

This phase can last, if desired, only a few minutes. In fact, 5-10 minutes is sufficient for this phase.

### **Phase 2**

In this phase of meditation, as you meditate, you begin to observe your sensations, your perceptions. If it becomes difficult to perceive and observe your sensations, you will again use your breath as an anchor that allows you to dock in a safe harbor, resuming the meditation from phase 1.

As your experience increases, it becomes easier and easier to achieve phase 2.

In phase 2, through the state of awareness you have reached, you begin to slowly observe your body from top to bottom. You can spend more than 20 minutes calmly observing your body through the meditative state.

Metaphorically, in phase 2, your mind observes your body, like a ship's radar scanning the depths of the sea.

### **Phase 3**

This is the most advanced stage of Vipassana meditation.

Here you develop a deep vision of yourself that allows you through inner peace to feel interconnected with everything around you.

## Tip

Learning various forms of meditation can be very easy. The important thing is, depending on the circumstances, to choose the form of meditation that suits you best. As you become more and more present, it becomes easy to see how important and valuable each and every moment of awareness is.

It can be helpful, before beginning any form of meditation, to pause for a moment and ask yourself questions that need open-ended answers. Let your mind be free to find the answers and begin your meditation peacefully.

Below I have included open-ended questions that can help you, which I created and often use for myself.

Preface: "Whenever you choose to use this series of questions, read them all, in the same sequence. Read them one at a time aloud and observe and contemplate them for 2 or 3 seconds. Set your mind free, allow it to find the right solutions for you. Then, start meditating. When you are done meditating, choose 2 of these questions. Reread them and leave your mind in the company of the questions you chose, until the next time you want to reread them all."

Here is a sequence of questions, which you can use before you start meditating. They are very helpful:

- Why is each of my moments unique?
- What does it mean to you to feel good?
- What is mindfulness?
- What do I want to achieve with meditation?
- Why does breathing help me?
- What is it like to be fully mindful?
- How are you feeling right now?
- Why do I improve my life when I meditate?

- Why do I love being mindful?
- What does kindness mean to you?
- Why do I love being kind to myself?
- What does friendship mean to me?
- Why do I love to be content?
- What does alliance mean to you?
- Why am I more peaceful when I am kind to my thoughts?
- What does it mean to me to choose?
- Why does meditating help me to be in harmony with myself?
- What does freedom mean?
- How do I feel when I choose to meditate?
- Why do I love to breathe?
- How do you feel right now?



# CHAPTER 7

## Listening to Music

Hearing is the sense that allows you to perceive sounds from the outside world, through a system that originates within the ear, and transmits them to the temporal cortex, which is the area of the brain suited to receive and decode them.

Through our hearing, we can hear countless sounds, some of which, when skillfully coordinated and organized, create what we call music. Music also influences our emotions, our thoughts, and our life energy, stimulating different areas of the brain.

When you hear the music you like, your posture changes, your emotions change, your cognitive processes are activated. Your head and body can start to sway. Music can take over and stimulate your thoughts, your emotions, your body; you may even feel like you're in heaven and want to start singing, dancing, crying, laughing, etc.

Finding out how music affects the brain, is interesting and provides insight into how music can play an important role in the development of the brain and mental abilities.

Stimulation of pleasure centers that produce dopamine, a neurotransmitter that brings well-being, is one of the first things that occurs when music stimulates our brains.

Our mind is able to remember what the most pleasurable moments of a known piece of music will be and therefore prepares itself in advance to produce dopamine. This reaction is extremely rapid.

Dopamine is important for our body, and our brain needs it for several activities:

- The mechanism of secretion of the hormone prolactin

- The mechanisms underlying learning
- The control of memory capacity
- The mechanisms of reward and pleasure
- The control of movement
- Control of attention skills
- The control of some aspects of behavior and various cognitive functions
- The mechanism of sleep
- The control of mood.

So listening to the music you love causes your brain to release more dopamine, which is vital to the emotional and cognitive functioning of all humans.

By improving your mood, it is easy to observe a positive change in your vitality. Therefore you also get immune system benefits. In addition, music has been shown to help improve the quality of life in people with particular disorders, such as Parkinson's disease.

If you have a disorder that negatively alters dopamine production during your daily routine, this can cause you several difficulties:

- It can increase the tendency to procrastinate
- It can decrease our vital energy
- It can alter the proper functioning of memory processes
- It can alter the quality of sleep
- It can even activate Parkinson's disease.

So through music, your brain is proactively stimulated, allowing you to feel emotions, activate your memories that stimulate your mental representations and more.

Listening to music that you love and are passionate about can effectively help you in terms of brain enhancement.

In fact, even learning to play music will activate different areas of the brain that involve:

- Creativity

- Memory
- Cognitive processes involved in communication
- The motor system
- Coordination
- Emotions
- Auditory processing
- The cognitive processes used for learning, and much more.

Since you were born and are aware of this, you have naturally learned to enjoy every pleasurable moment that positively stimulates you. Every exciting stimulus instantly activates areas of the brain that allow you to stimulate other cognitive processes. So much so, that if I ask you to remember now, what your first kiss was like, it is extremely likely that the memory will have resurfaced immediately.

# **Music Improves Your Life**

You can achieve greater awareness of your emotions and thoughts with music. A great deal of research, which you can easily find on the web, has shown that music stimulates operational productivity in certain, specific work environments.

Music activates receptors in the brain that interact with other areas of the body and can lead to a variety of different stimulus sequences that improve efficiency. In some cases it can improve concentration, allowing for higher quality performance. Music has a remarkable ability to stimulate the cognitive processes involved in memory. It often makes it easy to recall past memories associated with that particular music. Making a mnemonic process exciting improves the ability to store the desired information, and music is wonderfully useful for generating and stimulating emotions while listening to it.

## **Music Therapy and Dementia**

A lot of research has been done regarding the effectiveness of music therapy for degenerative brain diseases such as Alzheimer's.

Qualified and legally recognized specialists use music therapy to improve people's emotional and psychophysical health.

Music therapy has been used for many centuries and has very ancient origins in various cultures and societies worldwide. It was used for propitiatory rites, with the help of dances and ritual scenes to stimulate the healing of people, belonging to the community.

Many studies have shown significant benefits, through music therapy, in people suffering for example from autism, depression, Alzheimer's, sleep disorders, Parkinson's disease, psychosis, and dyslexia.

## ***Music therapy and "Mozart Effect"***

In 1993 the result of an experiment was published in the journal "NATURE." According to "Gordon Shaw and Frances Rauscher" listening to Mozart's

music produces cognitive benefits that last for a limited time of about 15 minutes.

This effect has been referred to as the "Mozart Effect."

A study conducted by Federico Sicca and Gianluca Sessa and their team at the University of Pisa in Italy, has opened up new hope for epilepsy sufferers to achieve a better quality of life. In fact, through a meta-analysis, i.e. a thorough review of 147 researches carried out on the discovery of "Gordon Shaw and Frances Rauscher," showed that listening to Mozart's music on a daily basis has a significant reduction in seizures, and their intensity.

Basically, it was found that Mozart's music, used in the 1993 research, can reduce seizures by up to 66%, and improve electrical waves in the brain for those with epilepsy.

"The findings were presented at the European College of Neuropsychopharmacology congress and published in the scientific journal Clinical Neurophysiology." ([ibsafoundation.org](http://ibsafoundation.org)).

We can easily guess that music stimulating different brain areas, and various cognitive processes, constructively influences areas of the brain that through the principles of neuroplasticity, allows to improve the brain structure. But now we know that in support of these insights there are several studies that have shown the benefits of music in positively influencing our brain.

### ***Enriches Existing Connections between the Left and Right Hemispheres***

It is now for years that we have been studying the brain and the areas that tend to be privileged within the cognitive processes of the brain.

Everyone can easily find out through a simple google search that researchers have determined that the right hemisphere is used primarily to perform tasks of a creative type, which give space to the power of imagination of creativity. While the left hemisphere is used mainly to perform logical tasks, more rational analysis of the events that surround us.

Fortunately, the structure of the brain allows us to improve the

interconnections between the left and right hemispheres. In this way, through specific actions that stimulate the brain's different areas, it is possible to promote collaboration between them. All this makes it possible to create cooperation between logical and creative thoughts, which creates the basis for better efficiency in discovering more efficient and innovative solutions.

Through music, you can significantly improve your motor and reasoning skills while also stimulating your creativity.

Playing through musical instruments or listening to music can significantly improve your emotional and mental health. Music allows you to release a number of empowering emotional stimuli, which also allows you to gain better self-awareness. In addition, playing music allows you to improve motor coordination through the stimulation of specific cognitive processes.

### ***Elevates Mental Health and Slows Brain Aging***

As we have seen previously, music has been used for centuries to positively influence people by improving their emotional state, health, and awareness. It can also be observed that when listening to music, with the intention of relaxing, often within 1 or 2 minutes, we begin to feel more peaceful and muscle tension is relieved, significantly improving our mental and physical state.

Music can also help you increase your resilience at certain times. In fact, you may have noticed that in certain complicated situations, sometimes singing or listening to your chosen music made it easier for you to find the serenity to act more constructively and cope better with that situation.

When you actively act by singing, playing, listening to music, you activate certain cognitive processes that stimulate other cognitive processes. In some cases, you temporarily improve your psychophysical performance. As a result, you activate positive and synergistic cooperation of different areas of the brain, which creates the basis for improving and enhancing the stimulated neural connections. All this repeated over time leads to very positive changes in your brain's structure, making it perform better.

So, in light of the facts, music is vital and allows you to improve and train various brain functions, ensuring better synergy between the left and right

hemispheres. With music, you can slow down brain aging!

## CHAPTER 8

### Try to Sleep Through the Night

#### Quality Sleep Is Vital

Sleep can be described as a period in which we have a temporary lowering of our level of consciousness, a special situation in which for a limited, self-directed time, our body is as if it were turned off. Metaphorically it is like when we turn off the light in the room through its switch. Then as soon as we have regenerated, we are able to wake up, to turn the light back on through our biological switch.

At this moment 2 questions came to mind to ask you:

Have you ever stayed up all night?

Have you ever sacrificed sleep for sudden, urgent events?

This has happened to me several times...

Sleep is an essential phase of life. Every living species that has a brain is structured differently, but they all need an alternation of sleep and wakefulness during their existence. There are living things that sleep about 82% of the time in a 24-hour period, and others like horses that sleep about 12% of the time, or about 3 hours a day.

In addition, there are animal species that are able to sleep while keeping one of the two cerebral hemispheres awake at the same time, such as, for example, the dolphin.

The dolphin, being a mammal, needs oxygen to breathe. Therefore, according to various researches easily found on the internet, when the dolphin sleeps, it keeps one of the two cerebral hemispheres awake to ensure its survival. This sleep management mode allows it to quickly resurface to breathe when it sees fit. In short, sleep is essential for health and allows organisms to ensure their



survival.

## **Sleep**

### **How Much Sleep Should You Get?**

The correct amount of sleep for each individual varies by age and person. The variables that can affect a person's sleep are many and differ depending on the specific situation. It is often said that it is important to get enough sleep to maintain optimal life energy. In a general sense, it can be said that the younger you are, the more you tend to sleep. This need occurs naturally and allows you to achieve optimal health. Therefore, the older you are, the less sleep you need in order to rest effectively.

An interesting theory on sleep is the "Synaptic Homeostasis Hypothesis" (SHY) by two researchers at the University of Wisconsin-Madison - Dr. Giulio Tononi and his coauthor Chiara Cirelli.

Dr. Giulio Tononi:

"Sleep is the price the brain has to pay for learning and memory." "During wakefulness, learning strengthens synaptic connections throughout the brain, increasing the need for energy and saturating the brain with new information. Sleep allows the brain to reset, helping to integrate newly learned material with established memories so the brain can start the next day again."  
(sciencedaily.com)

Getting enough sleep is an essential component of allowing the brain to adapt to the stimuli it continuously receives. Sleep ensures that the brain's neuroplastic potential is maximized. A good night's sleep allows your mind to be well prepared to learn and process information during the waking phase. Therefore, it can be concluded that with excellent quality sleep, you can get your brain's cognitive processes and neural systems working as efficiently as possible.

On average, the vast majority of humans sleep 33% of their lives. Intuitively, when you think about the number of hours we spend sleeping during our lifetime, it becomes easy to see that sleep is a vital aspect of living a healthy

and very long life.

Sleep is composed of a phase called REM and a phase called NO-REM.

The acronym REM stands for the words "Rapid Eyes Movement," in this phase, our eyes make very rapid eye movements while we sleep.

## **Sleep Cycles**

Sleep is composed of a sequence of cycles, consisting of the NON-REM phase and the REM phase. Their duration is approximately between 60 and 90 minutes for the NON-REM phase, and about 15 minutes for the REM phase.

Usually with regular, quality sleep, in adults, between 4 and 6 sleep cycles occur during the night.

Each sleep cycle consists of an initial NON-REM period, in which the vital functions of our body and mind are more at rest, and are slower, which is followed by a more active phase of sleep, which allows us to dream, which is referred to as the REM phase.

During the REM phase, a physical and chemical process takes place, within our body, in which the brain maintains maximum activity while our body is as if disconnected from our conscious will. All vital functions during the REM phase work thanks to the commands of our unconscious mind. In the REM phase the voluntary muscles, i.e. those commanded during the waking phase through the conscious mind, is as if they were in a state of temporary paralysis.

When we are in the REM phase, the only one in which we are able to dream, the information learned during wakefulness is properly consolidated in our mind.

The brain in the REM phase can be compared to both an athlete and a cell phone battery. Metaphorically it strengthens through exercise while regenerating like a cell phone battery when it is recharged. Or another metaphor might be that our brains in the REM phase can be compared simultaneously to a fabulous teacher, a great student, and an excellent

mechanic. In fact, during the REM phase, the brain while educating itself, through the visual and creative reworking of dreams, repairs and reshapes its incredible structure through the fantastic properties of neural neuroplasticity.

All of this allows for better synergy between the cerebral hemispheres' neural connections and the brain's various cognitive processes.

In subjects without sleep disorders, the REM phase has an approximate total duration of about 25% of the hours of sleep. In terms of time, the REM phase has a smaller proportional share than the NON-REM phase during sleep cycles.

The REM phase lasts approximately 15 minutes.

The NON-REM phase's duration decreases over time as sleep cycles occur, creating a slightly different effective proportion in subsequent sleep cycles between the NON-REM phase and the REM phase.

Basically, for any person over the age of 10, each sleep cycle consists of 5 stages. From this age on, the duration of each complete sleep cycle is between 90 and 120 minutes.

We can divide the NON-REM phase into four levels, so we can say that the 5th level is the REM phase.

The NON-REM phase we could define it as a series of moments when our sleep is calmer, quieter:

- Moments when we start to fall asleep, it is very easy to wake up in this stage, or level and if it happens, it is just as easy to feel unrested
- Moments in which sleep is still light and begins to perform its restorative function. From this level, we begin to approach the time when sleep is deeper
- Moments in which we are completely asleep, sleep is deep, and eye movements are non-existent
- Moments in which the deep sleep is total, it is the stage that allows the body to regenerate, and our mind is as if it were functioning at a reduced regime.

Then begins the "REM" stage, which can be considered as level number 5 of a complete sleep cycle:

- "REM - Rapid Eyes Movement," in these moments the brain works as if it was in a waking state, eye movements are activated and become very fast heart rate increases and consequently breathing rate.

## **Sleep and Cognitive Abilities**

When people do not get enough sleep, their ability to perform and concentrate decreases. As sleep deprivation increases, reaction times, both physical and mental, tend to become longer and longer. We become more and more inadequate to deal with external stimuli, because our ability to perceive our surroundings adequately alters.

For example, it becomes dangerous to get behind the wheel when you need to sleep.

In fact, going without sleep for many hours drastically impairs a person's cognitive abilities. Sudden reasoning difficulties can occur, similar to brain blackouts during wakefulness. These blackouts can cause serious accidents. In addition, reflexes can be so impaired that they can be compared to those of an intoxicated individual.

We all know that it is legally considered a crime to drive while intoxicated because alcohol negatively alters the cognitive abilities needed to drive responsibly.

So we can easily see that a persistent lack of sleep brings with it a whole host of physical, emotional, and cognitive impairments.

One of the most noticeable cognitive symptoms in people who have

particularly problematic sleep disorders is difficulty remembering information. This is because the brain, while asleep, does not have enough time to consolidate the stimuli received and information learned during the waking state.

In addition, there can also be problems with attention and difficulty in processing newly received information during a communicative exchange with other people. You may have difficulty performing very simple reasoning or even have difficulty with coordination and movement. Dizziness, loss of balance, sudden fainting, etc. may occur.

However, sleeping more than necessary can also have negative consequences. In fact, it can lead to chronic fatigue, headaches, mental confusion, and so on.

## **Relationship between Sleep, Learning, and Memory**

The quality of sleep is essential to achieve greater efficiency in the cognitive processes used for memorization.

Through sleep, what we have learned during the day is more solidified in our minds. In fact, sleep allows you to reinforce your daily experiences by creating a greater connection between newly acquired memories and the old memories you have. In fact, quality sleep is also vital for improving the productive efficiency of learning techniques.

When we have to choose and decide how to act on important occasions, or when we cannot find a satisfactory solution to a specific problem, folk wisdom often advises that we decide how to act, only after getting a good night's sleep.

A good night's sleep often allows you to develop brilliant new ideas for solving problems that seemed complicated or unsolvable. Other times, however, it allows you to gain new insights that pave the way toward achieving your desired goal.

After resting, you often feel as if you are filled with a new vital energy, your mind seems to be completely recharged and you can be more efficient in acting and reasoning. When you have particularly busy days, it's very functional to also take a nap that allows you to rebalance your mental energy,

especially if you schedule it so that the nap avoids interrupting your normal sleep-wake routine.

## **Quick Tips for Better Sleep**

### ***Create a Sleep-Wake Routine***

To improve your chances of having exceptional sleep quality and falling asleep regularly, the main advice I would like to give you is to create your sleep-wake routine whenever possible. Before your usual bedtime approaches, try to perform constructive actions that relax you. Also, although it may seem like overkill, I recommend considering the number of hours you can sleep to optimize the number of cycles you fall asleep in. This will allow you to choose when you wake up and increase your chances of waking up around the time your last sleep cycle ends. All of this will dramatically increase your chances of waking up with plenty of vital energy.

### ***11 Little Tricks to Fall Asleep and Sleep Better***

**1**

One practical piece of advice, which I feel I must include, for those who are having particular difficulty getting adequate rest is to rule out that you are having insomnia problems due to particular issues that require the supervision of specialized, legally recognized physicians. They are the most qualified to help you resolve the situation.

**2**

When you can't sleep, it can be helpful to get up and start doing something pleasant to help you relax, and later, when the tired feeling returns, you will often be able to sleep soundly.

**3**

Avoiding any form of light can be helpful in falling asleep more easily; in some cases, it may be helpful to use some sort of eye mask or cover your eyes to avoid glimpsing any form of light.

It also becomes very useful, a few hours before falling asleep, to avoid blue light from electronic devices, which tends to inhibit the production of melatonin that helps you relax and sleep better. However, you must remember that the body has a real internal biological clock, known as the circadian rhythm. This system helps us to properly alternate between wake and sleep cycles. It is important to note that sunlight, during the day, is very valuable in keeping your internal biological clock in perfect health. In fact, properly exposing yourself to sunlight can greatly improve the quality of your sleep when you fall asleep.

#### **4**

Many people recommend avoiding particularly strenuous sports or intense intellectual activities right after meals, before going to bed. So I recommend following these suggestions. However, I've also tried to fall asleep successfully after doing both sports and fairly intense intellectual activities under some circumstances. Presumably, I think it worked because I felt satisfied with the work I did.

#### **5**

Every food or drink has certain benefits if you take them with balance according to your needs. So, for you who want to rest better or get enough sleep, in order to recharge properly, I would suggest you avoid taking, 4 or 5 hours before going to bed, foods and drinks with arousing properties. In fact, if taken just before bedtime, these could sometimes make it harder to fall asleep or rest properly.

#### **6**

Avoiding alcoholic beverages for those with insomnia issues is crucial. In fact, it may seem that alcohol promotes rest, in reality, alcohol has several negative effects if taken without control. Regarding the ability to sleep, alcohol increases the production of serotonin and dopamine and this affects by decreasing the quality of sleep.

## 7

Just before bedtime taking a hot bath or shower can help you feel better. Relaxing yourself with this expedient will make it easier for you to fall asleep.

## 8

A couple of hours before going to sleep it is useful to devote 15-20 minutes to read a good book. It should be done with good posture. As mentioned in a previous chapter, reading allows you to relax in a few minutes, which will allow you to better enjoy the rest of the night. In this way, you will go to bed with more serenity, which will contribute positively to a better night's rest.

## 9

Stretching 1-2 hours before bed, even if it's just for 2-5 minutes, can help reduce mental and physical fatigue feelings. Stretching helps improve breathing, circulation and this allows for better oxygenation of the brain. Stretching is also a way to promote body relaxation and improve self-awareness through movement and has many other benefits. So it helps you feel more centered and balanced, which can facilitate more restorative sleep.

## 10

When you're particularly tired and exhausted and can't sleep, the art of tidying up can work. If you have a tidy room, you'll have an easier time having positive unconscious feelings that will help you feel more relaxed and satisfied. If your room is a bit of a mess, focus on quietly and calmly tidying up your room. Stay focused and concentrated and observe, while breathing calmly, every movement you are making to tidy up your things. This can be compared to a form of meditative art in motion. This allows you to be completely present as you tidy up, helping you to be more aware and relaxed. This makes it much more likely that your rest will be of the highest quality.

## 11

Countless variables can occur during a day. Some of which can put you in a state of agitation, apprehension, or worse. While each situation may be as



different and unique as you are, it can be functional to remember that every human being is composed of a high percentage of water. So, metaphorically, you can imagine that you have the same ability as water to adapt and change shape depending on the situation faced: the water in a river continually adapts to the path it faces and manages to reach its destination, which is the sea. By visualizing that you have this wonderful ability to adapt in you, it can be easier for you to deal with the daily events that arise. If you consider each situation for exactly what it is, that is, an event that has already happened, it is easier to understand that it is part of the past. By understanding that our power lies in the decisions we make in the present since we can choose how we act, you can transform everything to create a series of events that will lead you to a better life. The knowledge that you can create a series of events that can positively revolutionize your life can help you relax and allow you to rest. That way, you can face the next day full of energy and with a constructive attitude.

## CHAPTER 9

### Learn to Ask, Be Curious

Learning to ask with sincere curiosity is an approach that can stimulate your mind. Possessing this cognitive process training methodology in your arsenal also allows you to train confidence in yourself and others. This allows you a constructive attitude that fuels your desire to discover new perspectives and opportunities through the skill of active listening, which will also reflect positively by improving your social interactions. By being able to better assimilate the information you receive, it also becomes easier to increase awareness of yourself and improve your self-esteem.

When you ask for something with a healthy curiosity, try to learn new knowledge through the experiences of others. Demonstrate your willingness to accept help from others, be a person who makes decisions based on circumstances, and know how to cooperate for a team's well-being. Also, as you learn to ask for your needs to be met, you train yourself to listen to your own emotions and thus better understand the people around you. Over time you will learn more and more, become more aware of your abilities, and it will become easier and easier to respect yourself and your needs effectively. Using questions is a practical system that allows you to win together with the person who wants to help you by answering your question; symbolically, it is like completing a puzzle by collaborating with another person. This approach helps you over time to achieve better emotional and cognitive awareness.

Having a healthy curiosity that allows you to develop your full potential is vital, as is learning to train yourself to ask while respecting yourself and others.

Sometimes, many people are unconsciously afraid to ask questions, fearing that they will appear weak or unintelligent. However, I'll let you in on a secret: people who have learned to ask judiciously are the ones who get the most out of their skills because they can learn faster and can observe themselves using feedback from others as well. Learning to be good active

listeners is also an essential skill for those who aspire to develop the attitudinal aspects of leadership exponentially. There is a famous saying that we have one mouth and two ears because we must learn to listen twice as much as we speak. Listening to people who have more experience in a particular topic that is relevant to you is one of the main keys to improving your skills faster. It's equally important to know how to ask questions properly, though. The easier the question is to understand, the easier it is to arrive at the best possible solution.

## **What Happens to Your Brain When You Feed Your Curiosity**

When you are intrigued by a certain topic, it is as if you start to activate a switch through your thoughts, which are triggered by other cognitive processes that allow you to perceive your feelings, your emotions and involve you more or less intensely. This creates, depending on the case, a kind of passion for the specific topic that can be temporary or permanent. In short, all this allows your brain to work through different brain areas. This stimulates many cognitive skills, such as ingenuity, communicative language, memory, etc. When you decide to take action to satisfy your desire, your curiosity, you are trying to engineer yourself to find the missing pieces of the puzzle you wish to complete. At the same time, you activate a parallel form of emotional reward, which your subconscious perceives as a kind of victory for having chosen to satisfy that particular curiosity. In addition, when the action is completed and allows new benefits, it generates a kind of additional internal reward that is metabolized as a real goal achieved: symbolically, it is seen as another success added to your collection of small and large victories that have been collected in the course of your existence.

## **Curiosity Is the Secret of a Healthy Mind**

The definition of curiosity is as follows, "curiosity is a behavior or instinct that arises from a desire to know something and can be habitual or episodic in nature."

Curiosity, understood as a desire for knowledge, is a healthy curiosity that

allows you to discover new and useful things, allowing you to have wonderful experiences and meet exceptional people.

This thirst for knowledge drives you to grow, to be observant, and to experiment in order to evolve. A healthy curiosity allows you to stimulate your cognitive processes by creating questions that allow your brain to be activated to solve the challenges you set yourself and find the ideal and increasingly effective solutions.

The satisfaction you can have when, thanks to your curiosity, you get the benefits you expected can be immense. Curiosity is one of your most interesting instincts, in some cases thanks to curiosity you may be able to overcome emotions such as fear. When you become curious your senses can almost instantly seem more developed. All this allows you to activate different areas of your brain, so curiosity allows you to actively train your mental faculties with huge benefits. Being curious allows you to feel the desire to inquire, to travel, to meet new people, to experience new projects, and doing all this allows you to activate many cognitive processes that allow you to train many essential skills: creative thinking, logical thinking, communication skills, strategic skills and much more.

# **Three Must-Know Facts That Can Improve Your Life**

## **Three Curiosities You May Not Know**

### **1**

Laughing during the day makes you feel better, and you can intuitively understand that. However, laughing while listening to a funny phrase told by another person is a task that requires the use of 5 areas of the brain. So laughing while listening to a person who wants to try to make you smile by telling you a joke is a good workout for your brain. When someone wants to do this to you, be grateful for their help in trying to make you smile; in addition to trying to brighten your day, they are also helping you keep your brain healthier.

"There is no better way to manage your own life than to touch the life of another, with love and a smile" - Og Mandino.

### **Extra facts about Og Mandino**

Pseudonym: Og Mandino

Born 1923 / Died 1996 / Nationality: American

Profession: motivational counselor, speaker

### **2**

If you wake up during a dream or shortly thereafter, you are more likely to remember it. Suppose you get organized almost immediately and write down what you dreamed, writing it down without including logical explanations, as the minutes pass. In that case, you will remember more and more details of your dream as you write. So you can keep adding dream details whenever they come to mind, and later you can re-read them and reflect on them constructively. This allows you to improve the synergy between the different cognitive processes of the 'right and left hemispheres of your brain.

"The meaning of dreams intrigues us more than the things we see while awake" - Diogenes the Cynic.

## **Extra Curiosity of Diogenes the Cynic**

Pseudonym: Diogenes the Cynic

Born in 390 BC / Died in 323 BC / Nationality: Greek

Profession: philosopher

### **3**

The brain is biologically structured to learn. The more information you can metabolize, of a specific topic, through various learning processes, the more your brain structure improves, making it easier and easier to learn the chosen topic.

Thanks to Howard Gardner's "Theory of Multiple Intelligences," it has become clear how much the schooling of the past has limited the true potential of many people: they were often not adequately prepared to make the most of their cognitive abilities.

Every person has multiple intelligences; realizing you have them is as important as knowing how to use them. By improving your awareness, you can better understand your overall intelligence, in a general sense, and use it more effectively in your daily life.

This is an incredible age and anyone can learn how to use their talents better. By leveraging the theory of multiple intelligences, you can discover and train your abilities.

You can develop and transform your skills through constructive learning to hone and enhance those talents that will allow you to create the best version of yourself. Through well-structured learning, you will be able to create the talents that best suit you to develop your enormous potential. This will allow you to accomplish amazing things that will surely improve your life and help improve the lives of the people you love.

"Everyone is a genius. But if you judge a fish by his ability to climb trees, he

will spend his whole life thinking he is stupid" - Albert Einstein.

**Albert Einstein's extra facts**

Born in 1879 / Died in 1955 / Nationality: German

Profession: physicist

Awards: Nobel Prize in Physics in 1921

## CONCLUSION

Today I am increasingly convinced of the close relationship between good awareness, a good quality of life, and the ability of our mind to work efficiently.

Our mind can offer us the privilege of freely choosing where to focus our thoughts and then reprocessing and metabolizing them. This can allow us to fully enjoy our emotions and life experiences. When we can understand that our emotions have all a utility, they become the tool that gives us the opportunity to live wisely, managing to maintain respect for ourselves and remaining, in the meantime, in harmony with what surrounds us.

Many people are luckier than others because they have a brain that has all the necessary characteristics to realize their potential. However, some people often forget that they have this gift and when they do, they neglect it.

So realizing that there are practical and useful tricks to preserve the proper functioning of your mind and that there are methods that can amplify your life energy by improving your abilities through stimulating the brain's plasticity is, in my opinion, very important.

I congratulate you on taking constructive action by reading this book. Now, however, it is imperative that you take increasingly concrete action by choosing at least one of the tips you have read so far and, if you have not already done so, begin to put it into practice and learn more about it, perhaps through the web. As your experience grows, you'll be able to create your own way of executing certain routines, creating solid and empowering habits over time as you perform the actions you've decided to take.

You may later choose to use other tips you've read in this book. In doing so, you will begin to build a series of additional new constructive habits that you can begin to apply more and more consciously, as they are excellent tools that will help you enjoy the rest of your life more.

I believe that knowledge combined with awareness is an indispensable part of improving anyone's life. I also believe just as intensely that creating many



small positive actions that add up over the course of our days will suddenly grant you wonderful and sometimes unexpected goals. Every choice and positive action you make can help you achieve greater peace of mind, greater resilience, and prevent you from having regrets in the future. Every action you take will begin to be consistent with your personal vision of success. And you will become more and more unstoppable.

Over the past few years, when I have had very difficult times, I have used many famous phrases, several poems and read many books that have been helpful. Below, I have quoted an outstanding poem, which is infinitely helpful to me even now, and which I consider very powerful and invigorating. I hope you like it, I put it here so that when you want and need it you can find it immediately by opening this book:

Out of the night that covers me,  
Black as the pit from pole to pole,  
I thank whatever gods may be  
For my unconquerable soul.  
In the fell clutch of circumstance  
I have not winced nor cried aloud.  
Under the bludgeonings of chance  
My head is bloody, but unbowed.  
Beyond this place of wrath and tears  
Looms but the Horror of the shade,  
And yet the menace of the years  
Finds and shall find me unafraid.  
It matters not how strait the gate,  
How charged with punishments the scroll,

I am the master of my fate:

I am the captain of my soul.

**"Invictus - William Ernest Henley."**

## **One Last Thing to Do**

First of all, I'm glad you chose to take time for yourself by reading this book.

I created "Build a Better Brain at Any Age" because I want to help as many people as possible improve their lives. I want to help everyone who chose this book and decided to boldly follow their instincts by purchasing it. Like you did.

It means a lot to me that you chose to read this work of mine, and I hope that by reading it you found useful information and ideas that helped you and will help you achieve your goals.

I hope I was able to make at least a small positive contribution to improving your life with "Build a Better Brain at Any Age."

I would like you to read at least 5 more times in the next 12 months the parts of the book that inspired you the most so that you can remember those positive thoughts you had while reading them and make them more and more firmly in your mind. This way, you can create a kind of positive and immediately available emotional anchor that can help you whenever you need it.

## **We Need Your Help**

If you found useful information in this book, it will undoubtedly help you in the future. With "Build a Better Brain at Any Age" you can build the foundation for a mind that is always clear, agile and you will probably be happy when you notice the first visible and positive benefits in your life.

So if you're feeling inspired right now and want to help others with "Build a Better Brain at Any Age" here are some wonderful things you can do right away:

1. Write a short 5-star review; your words, your feedback are very important.
2. Teach some tips that you learned through "Build a Better Brain at Any Age." This way, you get the benefit of metabolizing your knowledge better, training your cognitive processes and you will also receive the gratitude of the person you chose to help.
3. Recommend this book to anyone who wants to improve their life.
4. Gift a copy of "Build a Better Brain at Any Age" to a family member, friend, or colleague who wants to learn how to better express their mental abilities and wants to live a long and peaceful life.

I personally read all reviews to learn about your feedback and to make this book better and better.

Thanks again for your support!

## **I Want to Offer You a Gift**

So use the link below to leave me your email address, and you'll be notified when there are exclusive benefits for you. In addition, by using the link below to leave me your email address, you will also receive a free PDF that I have made to help you improve your skills with a few simple actions. In addition, you will find something in this free PDF that can be especially enjoyable not only for you but also for your children or grandchildren.

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