



The Organized Mind: Thinking Straight in the Age of Information Overload

A Mente Organizada

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"The Organized Mind: Thinking Straight in the Age of Information Overload", is a guide to achieving greater mastery of our cognitive ability. Through brain studies and day-to-day methods, the author gives several advices that will help us gain greater mastery of our minds.

Score

8

8 Aplicability

10 Inspiration

7 Innovation

9 Impact on results

8 Structure

Main ideias of the book

- We live in an age of information proliferation that can hinder our organizational skills;
- The human brain is amazing at storing data when we can focus on the right information;
- We must simplify the information we consume to be more effective;
- We need to develop daily systems that minimize the pressure on our stunned minds;
- Attention is the largest organizational component of the mind.
- Through daily discipline, we can organize our minds.

For whom is this book suitable?

For anyone who yearns to improve their level of organization and daily productivity by increasing cognitive ability to perform tasks. If you got tired of having a disorganized life, this is the perfect book for you!

Overview of the book

Introduction

In this introductory part, the author spells out his general idea about how our brain works and how we can improve our productivity. This takes place from the moment we find the production system that is best for us. For this, you will need to exercise your mind daily.

There is no magic formula that will work equally for everyone since we are unique beings. The author even organizes human differences into five categories:

- Extroversion;
- Kindness;
- Neuroticism;
- Openness to new experiences;
- Conscientiousness.

The brain can't be organized the way you might tidy up your home office or bathroom medicine cabinet. You can't just put things where you want.

The way brain architecture has evolved is random and disjointed, incorporating multiple systems, each with its own mind.

But some principles, applied according to their uniqueness, can help rearrange your mind and maintain a cognitive order that will increase your productivity.

Much Information, Too Many Decisions

In the first part, the author gives an overview of how cognitive overload can affect our minds. We must learn to deal with this extensive flow of information present in our society.

Too much information impairs our cognitive processing. While we have to deal with so much information, we need to make faster and faster decisions.

According to the author, our brain focuses more on vivid and social reports than on cold and boring statistics, and we make a lot of reasoning mistakes due to cognitive biases. He explains how brain categories are formed:

Category I: Overview

General-looking categories are more flexible and expansible, subjected to many levels of resolution or granulation. We follow a general level of matching the items.

E.g.: Grouping all pencils in one case without separating by color and shape.

Category II: Functional Equivalence

When we cannot categorize objects for missing similar-looking objects.

E.g.: If you have ever used the back of a stapler or a shoe to hit a nail, then you have used the functional equivalent of a hammer in its absence. We use functional equivalents several times during our daily lives.



The neurologist and writer Oliver Sacks goes one further: If you're working on two completely separate projects, dedicate one desk or table or section of the house for each. Just stepping into a different space hits the reset

Category III: Particular Situations

They are conceptual categories made in improvisation.

E.g.: When we keep childhood photos, money, keys, among others in the wallets even if they have no physical or functional similarity.

These three categories represent how we organize our homes and workplaces, how we arrange things to be able to find them more easily, and how we organize the information in our minds.

Transferring Part of Your Mind Out of the Body

The brain organizes information in its own way, so it may not be so useful sometimes when it generates an information overload. For this reason, the author gives some tips so that we can circumvent this situation:

- Not all information is important: be more insightful and allow only important information to be kept in your mind. Do not store what you do not need.
- Develop a system of mind organization that works for you and that serves to download information. For example, write things down so you don't have to spend mental energy worrying about remembering them, create to-do lists, sort them easily so that the note doesn't cause mental confusion as well.
- Define your tasks in fields such as "things to do today", "things to do this week", "things to expect" and "mess drawer".
- Try to jot down on 3x5 index cards everything you need to do and everything you've done. Unwind as much information as you can.

Methods to Organize Our Minds, Homes, and Lives

When we compare our lives to those of our ancestors, we realize that we need to deal with far more information than they did. We have to deal with situations of extreme stress that affect our physical and mental health.

When we lose organizational control, our cortisol (stress hormone) levels peak, especially in women. High cortisol levels can lead to chronic impairment of cognitive ability, fatigue, and suppression of the body's immune system.

Stress is heightened by the feeling, common to many of us, that we have lost the ability to organize our belongings. The fact that our brains are inherently capable of creating categories is a powerful tool for organizing our lives.

How should we organize our homes and work environments?

We can organize the environments of our home and our work in such a way that they become extensions of our brains. To do this, we must accept the limited capacity of our main executive.

The standard report for many years was that memory and attention were at their limit when dealing with five to nine unrelated items. More recent experience has shown that, in more realistic terms, this number is probably closer to four.

The author gives some tips for achieving a healthy organization without breaking our cognitive limits.

See below some examples given by the author:



As the old saying goes, a man with one watch always knows what time it is; a man with two watches is never sure

- Don't compulsively check your email or social media. Check them a few times a day;
- Have a “junk” drawer where you can place general category items but organize them whenever you can. And have file folders or specific subjects, arranged alphabetically or by subject;
- Avoid multitasking: it increases the production of the stress hormones cortisol and adrenaline. These chemicals can overstimulate the brain and cause scrambled thoughts. Multitasking puts the brain in a feedback loop that rewards you for losing focus and hurts your mind;
- Turn off external distractions (TV, cell phones, emails, etc.) when you are focused on doing something
- Hide a copy of the house key in a neighbor's garden or house, just as you should have a copy of the car key on the desk;
- Load a flash drive with all your medical history.

Organizing Our Social Relationships

The organization of our social world depends, like everything else, on identifying what we want from it. According to the author, a part of our primate heritage makes most of us want to feel like belonging to a group, to fit in somewhere.

The group we become part of is less important for some people than for others. What matters is that we are part of a group and not entirely isolated.

Although there are individual differences, being alone for a long time causes neurochemical changes that can result in hallucinations, depression, suicidal thoughts, violent behavior, and even psychosis.

Social isolation is also a risk factor for cardiac arrest and death, even more than smoking. However, social interactions are complex, and a number of experiences have shown that we either act on our own behalf or simply do not want to get involved.

This tendency to be uninvolved is driven by three powerful interrelated psychological principles:

- Adequacy: a strong desire to adapt to the behavior of others in the hope that it will help us gain acceptance of our own social group;
- Social comparison: we tend to examine our behavior in terms of others;
- Diffusion of responsibility: it is based on the natural and innate sense of justice and wanting to punish others.

Understanding the complexity of our relationships and knowing how to manage them in order for them not to damage our mental state is crucial.

Your social world is your social world and only you can say how it should be organized. We are all increasingly interconnected and our happiness and well-being are increasingly interdependent.

One of the measures of a society's success is the degree of citizens' commitment to the common good. If you see the police warning about a car license plate on the road and then an identical license plate is spotted, call the police.

Try to be supportive. Despite all the digitalization of our social life, we are still all together on this adventure.

Keep your relationships organized. Avoid them becoming obstacles to your mental health, but don't avoid having them. We are social beings and we need to be in society.

Organize Your Time

Do you usually sleep late and get up early? Do you take naps whenever you can? For Levitin, a daily time management tactic that we all use and barely notice revolves around this large time block of lost time that can make us feel unproductive: sleep.

A huge load of cognitive processing happens during our sleep and therefore plays a vital role in the formation and protection of memories.

It is in the process of sleep that memories are retained in their original form, as well as we extract features and meanings from experiences. This allows new experiences to be integrated with more generalized and hierarchical representations of the external world that we hold inside our heads.

The three types of information processing that occur during sleep:

Unification

It is the combination of discrete elements or pieces of an experience in a unified concept. For example, musicians and actors learning a new song or scene may rehearse one sentence at a time; unification during sleep welds all these elements together.

Assimilation

That's when the brain integrates new information with existing network structures about the other things you already knew. By learning new words, for example, your brain works unconsciously building sentences with them, examining them, and experimenting with how they fit into your preexisting knowledge. Any brain cell that has used a lot of energy during the day shows an increase in ATP (adenosine triphosphate) during sleep and this has been linked to assimilation.

Abstraction

This is where hidden rules are discovered and then inserted into memory. If you learned English as a child, you learned certain rules about word formation, such as "add s at the end of the word to form the plural" or "add ed at the end of the word to form the past".

You may have thought at one time or another that if you could sleep less, you could do many more things. Or it would be great if you could borrow time, sleeping an hour less tonight to sleep an hour later the next day. Although seductive, these ideas are not supported by research.

Sleep is among the most critical factors for optimal performance, memory, productivity, immune system and mood regulation.

Even a slight reduction in your sleep can affect your cognitive performance for several days later.

Do not devalue your sleep. Sleep well. For an adult, the workload can be 6 to 10 hours of sleep a day. Do not change this time as it is precious to your mind. Organize your day so that you have productivity and rest times.

Run Away from Procrastination

Procrastination is, by definition, the postponement of an activity, task, or decision that would help us achieve our goals. It is something that affects us all to varying degrees.

We rarely have the feeling of being up to date with everything. There are chores to do around the house, thank-you notes to write, synchronizing and doing back-ups on computers and smartphones.

Some of us are only slightly affected by procrastination, while for others this is a serious problem. In the variety of its manifestations, all procrastination can be considered a failure of self-organization, planning, impulse control, or a combination of the three.

Focus on your activities and don't let go of what you can do now.

Perpetuating Our Organizational Knowledge in Our Families

For Levitin, as soon as the child is old enough to understand the process of tidying and organizing, we should teach them by our example of organization, just as we should encourage their organization.

We can work on their organization using examples such as the storage of objects such as stuffed animals, clothes, pots and pans in the kitchen.

Make it a tidying up and rearranging game, by color, height, brightness, name - all as an exercise in seeing the attributes one by one. We must remember that when learning to be organized early, it will lead to a number of good results, even decades later, in terms of longevity, health and job performance.

Being organized is extremely important in our society. Procrastination is a more widespread problem among children than it is in adults, so they need the help of adults to maintain a more organized life.

Adults need to practice the author's directions with children as well. Demonstrate to them the importance of having an organized mind and life.



No other species lives with regret over past events, or makes deliberate plans for future ones

What other authors say about it?

Ryder Carroll author of "The Bullet Journal Method" shows that, according to studies, about 70,000 thoughts pass through our minds every day. That would be enough to write a book every day. It's too much!

However, unlike a book, our thoughts are everywhere, making it difficult for us to understand what is most important. So we can't focus directly on these things and we may end up disorganized and overwhelmed.

Therefore, the author emphasizes the importance of creating a way to put an order in this chaos of thoughts. One of the best ways to do this is through writing.

In psychologist Carol S. Dweck's "Mindset" book, it is discussed how our beliefs shape our behavior and growth. While mindsets produce definitive worldviews, people can change by learning new skills. Human beings can be taught to respond in different ways, how to face challenges and think differently.

In the book "Dream Big", Cristiane Correa complements the idea of personal strategic planning and stresses the importance of maintaining a continuous improvement process to achieve your goals.

Okay, but how can I apply this in my life?

The reflections this book passes to the reader are:

- Give importance to your mental health;
- Filter the information you receive daily and keep only what is important;
- Write down information and tasks so you don't have to spend your cognitive thinking to store it;
- Do not devalue your sleep. It is extremely essential for good cognitive performance. Rest more;
- Be organized in all areas of your life, including your relationships. Do not isolate yourself from the world and keep healthy relationships;
- Avoid multitasking. Focus on one task at a time and avoid distractions;
- Keep your home and work environment organized;
- Teach your children to be organized too. They are the future of the world.



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