DECLUTTER YOUR BRAIN
Retrain Your Brain & Organize Your Life

Justin Moore
Copyright © 2020 by Justin Moore

All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without written permission from the author, except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

Created with Vellum
“I forgot about that meeting, I have to run to get there. I’m going to be late paying that bill. Where did I put my keys? Why can’t I remember anything these days? I feel like I’m going crazy!”

Does this sound familiar? If you, you have the symptoms of a cluttered brain. This means you are juggling a lot in your life and it is pulling you in a lot of different directions. This leaves your thoughts jumbled up into an incomprehensible mishmash. This will leave you stressed and exhausted, which will keep you from putting your best foot forward in your daily life.

You don’t need to worry. You are not going to go crazy. Nothing is horribly wrong with you. You just have too much noise playing in your head right now, and some of it needs to be shut off or quieted down. It will be easier to do than you might think.

To make your thoughts come to you in a more organized way, you need to create order in your mind. This means you need to reduce your stress, which is the major force driving your brain to the cluttered state it is in now. This might seem like a daunting task, but this book is going to take you through the process. You will find out why this happens to you and how to make it stop. If you commit to it, before you know it you will find a sense of inner peace.
Do you ever have those days where you feel like you cannot put two thoughts together? You have a lot on your mind and are trying to fulfill all of your responsibilities, and it does not seem like there is any way to accomplish everything you need to. You might have some problems in your interpersonal relationships and you are worried about whether or not you are going to be able to find a solution for them. Something might have slipped your mind and you are trying to figure out how to correct that mistake. You feel like a million thoughts are running around in your mind at once and you cannot keep up with them. You are stressed to the high heavens and you feel like your mind is a car that is driving straight off of a bridge at a hundred miles per hour.

If this is happening to you, it means you are suffering from a cluttered brain. You might have been worrying that you are losing your mind and are going to have an inevitable breakdown because that is what prolonged stress does to your mind. That is the source of all of your troubles- a term you have probably been hearing your entire life. It is one of the most common problems in the world and yet it still has a way of sneaking up on people, and that is understandable. Everyone feels pressure from society to always have it together. Those who seem like they do are lauded for doing so. Picture that “supermom”- she goes to work looking perfectly put together every morning and is the most productive member of the team, and then she goes back home to cook dinner for the family, and even then she still has the social life and energy to go out with friends. Everyone wants to be that person. Unfortunately, they are aspiring to live up to an impossible standard. That person is a fictional character. You are not always going to be at your best. Stress
gets to the best of us. Many times we do not share when we are feeling overwhelmed because that comes with a sense of shame. You might think you have failed and have concerns about others not thinking you are mentally stable.

The fact that you worry about this proves that you are sane. You know that there are limits to what you can give out per day. The mentality that is actually “crazy” is when someone thinks a constant fast-paced lifestyle is sustainable. Think about a time when you had to exert a great deal of physical or mental force for a long period of time, such as renovating a room in the house or staying up all night working on a project. It takes every ounce of life force you have to complete your task, and all you want to do afterward is go to sleep. When you wake up, it will probably be late in the morning and even after sleeping for a long period of time, you will still not feel like getting up, probably feeling tired or sore. After you finally manage to get out of bed you come to the realization that it is going to be a slow day. You need to have time to recharge. If you do not rest, your body’s immune system will be unable to fight infection and your mind will be vulnerable to stress.

You might think it’s strange when I tell you stress is not actually the big bad monster it is made out to be, but it is true. Life naturally comes with stress. Everyone deals with it on a daily basis. There are things we have to do that we would rather not do. You will have a lot of expectations placed on you at once. You will run into unexpected problems. Our relationships are not always harmonious, and when they are not it is an uneasy time. How we respond to stress is the key. It becomes overwhelming when we internalize it, which is why it is so important to learn how to handle it in healthier ways.
Prioritize Your Mental Health

You need to prioritize your mental health for many reasons. First, you want to do this for yourself. A person with a cluttered mind tends to loathe to put themselves anywhere on the priority list because they fear being selfish, so just humor me for a minute and think of it in another way. You are helping the people in your life when you prioritize your mental health. We only give what we can. It is a romantic thought to believe we can give everything we have and then still find a way to give some more, but it is not realistic. When you are low on fuel, you will feel tired. This means even small donations will seem like too much.

Imagine a printer that has run out of ink. You can order it to print out well-defined pictures all you want, but it is only going to produce less colored and more faded content until eventually, you will not be able to get anything from it. That is because something that has not been given good things cannot be expected to put out good things. The same thing goes for yourself. When you are overwhelmed by stress and do not feel like you could ever get everything done that you need to as you come up with more responsibilities to pile onto that already impossible list, there is no way that you are going to be giving your best performance.

There is a common misconception that a higher level of stress will lead to increased productivity. Actually, the opposite is true. Some people will even go as far as to say they work the best pressure, not realizing that what that really means is that they procrastinate, meaning they have to put everything together at the last minute, and because they did a lot in a short amount of time they confuse that for motivation. The two could not be any more different. Motivation is what will cause you to go the extra mile in your work life. There are stimulated
nerves involved, but that is different from anxiety, which comes out when we feel like we need to fight for our well-being on some level. This means you are in survival mode. This does not bring about the sort of creativity and feeling of freedom needed to be productive.

When you are feeling stressed, you will actually be much less likely to do the things you need to do. We do not like feeling negative emotions and will avoid them if at all possible. That is what causes you to put off a big project until the last minute. You look at it as this impossible task and this is how you end up discouraging yourself from working on it. This is because the project is a source of stress, so you would rather look away from it and take part in something that does give you joy. You tell yourself “I’m just going to take this one night off, and then tomorrow I am going to power through the entire thing. However, when tomorrow comes, you feel no better about taking on this challenge than you did yesterday. In fact, you probably feel even worse, so you tell yourself you are just going to give yourself one more day off. The cycle repeats itself until there are not any more days to put it off and the deadline has arrived. Any task that is done in a rushed and panicked state is going to be riddled with errors.

This means while you created a lot of content in a short amount of time, you were not productive. True productivity comes from a place of caring about your work, putting thought and effort into it, and considering the best possible way to present your idea. You do not have that option when you are throwing something together at the last minute. You will not remember much of what you did because you were just trying to achieve the bare minimum in a strict time constraint.
Why You Should Declutter Your Brain

There are a lot of incentives for decluttering your brain. It is integral to becoming a happier person. You need to be relaxed in order to be happy. People who have inner peace are able to accept themselves and their lives for what they are. They allow themselves to get the most out of what are supposed to be the good times in life- quiet evenings with one’s family, celebrating holidays with friends, etc. Their time is not consumed by going over their thoughts. How many times have you been up much later than you should be, going over a checklist of worries? How many times have you felt a thudding in your chest that made you feel like the walls were closing in? Do you find that you forget things more often than usual?

This is not because you are a forgetful person. You have too much going on in your brain when it is cluttered. It would be if a bundle of items that were more than your arms can hold fell from the ceiling and you tried to catch them. You might catch a couple of things, but most of them would hit the floor. When your brain is cluttered, you will be more forgetful. Imagine you were trying to listen to one person, but different people kept pulling you aside and talking over that person. You would not be able to keep up with what anyone was saying. This is what your mind does to you when is full of clutter. You are unable to focus on anything.

When you have a million things going on in your mind, you are prone to neglecting your health. You can be tired and coming down with a cold or other illness, but ignore and suppress your symptoms because you do not feel like you have time to be sick. There is only so long that this can go on. Eventually, your body will wear out and you will get much sicker than you would have if you had recognized that
you are sick and taken some time off. When you are lost in your thoughts, you might even fail to recognize what is going on in your own body because you are placing anxiety at the forefront and yourself on the backburner.

There is light at the end of the tunnel, though, if you are willing to reach it. You can clear out all of this clutter from your mind so that your stream of thoughts make sense and lend themselves to your success rather than holding you back. When you do this, you create a solid foundation for yourself. This way it will not matter what is happening outside of yourself. You will still be doing well inside.

Decluttering Your Brain During a Crisis

It is especially important to maintain peace within your mind whenever there are times in the world where there is a crisis going on. It will be hard to do this because you are being told one frightening story after another. You are being reminded every second of the day that you could become a victim of the crisis at any moment, which causes you to feel unsafe. You are unsure that your future is going to be sound. You fear for yourself and your loved ones, and the overflowing of bad news and scare tactics can make you feel like you are seeing the beginning of the end.

When all of this is happening, you will find it hard to put two thoughts together. It is also easy to become morose because you are being led to believe that your life is going to be changed forever, and that all of it is going to be for the worse.
When you are in the middle of times like these, you need to keep your mind decluttered so you can keep your spirits up. One thing you must do is give yourself some sense of normalcy. This means you cannot spend all of your time with your headspace being consumed by the crisis. Even though it might not feel right at first, you must do things that remind you of a time that does not have anything to do with it. Make a few rules for yourself. While your family is having dinner together, do not use that time to talk about morbid things that will either inspire fear or make tempers run high, which is especially easy during troubling times. Use this time to talk about a TV show everyone likes, or for someone to share a funny story, or anything that brings about good feelings instead of just more worry. Play a board game together and only talk about the game.

Sometimes our minds fool us into believing that by obsessing about something and worrying about what it is going to mean for the future, that we are doing something about it when nothing could be farther from the truth. We are keeping ourselves stuck in a place that causes us pain and fear. That will translate to the rest of the people close to us who will be able to sense our tension which will go on to amp theirs up, eventually leading to discord.

Scattered Brain is Unrelated to Intelligence

When you have a cluttered mind you might feel like you are behind everyone else, that they have it together and you are just barely hanging on. For one, their lives may not be as stable as they are trying to make you believe. For another thing, you have untapped potential that is being suppressed by the anxiety that is causing your mind to be so scattered. You need to think better of yourself if you ever hope to reach this.
M
any times people resign to the idea that they are scatterbrained or do not have a good memory. They have learned to call themselves unintelligent, which is another way they engage in negative self-talk. This is just as the name suggests- when people talk badly to themselves. Many times people will describe it as a voice that makes them feel bad about themselves. It might feel like a separate entity, but you have to remember that this is going on in your mind, so this talk is an aspect of you. This is not meant to discourage you at all. In fact, it should give you some hope because this means you can stop this from happening. If negative self-talk comes from you, it is not like a physical illness where you can only take the treatments that are available and hope for the best.

W
hat you need to keep in mind is that you when you talk about being scatterbrained, what you are really describing is the effects that the stress has on their mind. No one’s brainpower is at its best when they are suffering from prolonged anxiety. It is a distraction and, as you have probably noticed, exhausting. That is because it consumes not only mental energy, but also physical energy to be stressed. Your heart rate and blood pressure are in an elevated state, which means your entire body is working twice as hard as it usually does. That is why you feel tired after you have been through an extremely stressful event.

D
clutter Your Brain to Improve Relationships

Let’s talk about the positive impact that decluttering your brain will have on improving your relationships, both in a work and social sense.
Now that you’ve been examining yourself and your behavior you may find that you are beginning to reap benefits such as calmness and greater clarity. You’re doing the work, starting by creating order in your surroundings and getting rid of things that do not serve a purpose. You are taking time for yourself and acting with slower, more deliberate movements. Your thoughts are clearer as you approach your day.

You notice yourself becoming more productive and that your work product has an increased quality. You may notice yourself being more dedicated to your daily tasks. It may not take so much effort to begin because you are feeling overwhelmed less often.

Your approach to people is probably changing as well. You are probably less anxious when your boss comes to speak with you. Your work has been on time and accurate so, of course, you no longer have that tightness in your chest and churning in your belly. You feel more comfortable and can be more sociable because you are not busy chastising yourself for what you have not done or done well. You may have an increased awareness of your colleagues as well. With a less cluttered mind, one can “see past his own nose” and have more healthy interactions with others in your life.

It’s almost like blinders are being taken off and you can better see and evaluate what your colleagues do well, maybe better than you do. You can also see areas of improvement and perhaps do so with less judgment because of a lessened need to self-protect.
For example, you notice your colleague always finishes his reports faster than you do. With a clear mind, you feel more comfortable asking him to show you his process. You observe with an open-heart learning that he has found a way to export information from the database so that he does not need to retype it which also increases accuracy. Instead of holding onto clutter and jumbled feelings, you have just allowed yourself to be taught something that will lighten your load, allowing you to take on more strategic aspects of your job.

This can start an exchange and you may ask your colleagues if they would like to do a “brown bag lunch” to create a place where you can each share areas that are giving you problems and tricks & tips that each person finds helpful. All this adds up to an enhanced work culture.

Your personal life is not neglected in this process either. You probably come home from work or school less tired and with a feeling of accomplishment, which is energizing. When you do not feel like you have performed well at work, you may subconsciously punish yourself by deciding you cannot go meet your friends for dinner and to play cards. Instead, you stay home and stress out.

With the improvements you have made, you feel freer to allow more good things into your life. You come home, freshen up and maybe you even make your special guacamole dip for the occasion. Instead of a mind full of projects you haven’t completed and deadlines you are behind on, you are able to focus on your relationships. Since you
have been working with your colleagues to streamline your processes and you no longer need to stay late every day to finish your work, you do more in your personal life. Your outlook is more positive, so you find yourself connecting with your friends on a more personal level. You contribute more to the conversation than you had before. You get more out your relationships when your contribution to it increases, too.

You have clearer thoughts and can see where your friend needs help and you’re are more observant so you can tell when they have had a bad day. Uncluttering your mind helps you to see outside of yourself, helping you to connect with others in a more productive way making your relationships deepen.

You Are in Control

You are in control of your thoughts, actions, and therefore your life. You might not feel like you have had any power up to this point, but consider this. You have been able to stave off feelings of panic so you can get through your day probably for as long as you can remember. No weak person could manage that. On the contrary, it means you are much stronger than you give yourself credit for. Whenever you are feeling those anxious sensations and your mind is racing, I know that you would much rather stay in bed and avoid the world, but instead you make the conscious decision to get out of bed and take on whatever the day has in store for you, even if it is unpleasant. That shows you have what it takes to regain control over your mind and what is allowed to go through it.

In this book, I will take you through the process of organizing not only your brain, but your days, and this will lead to peace in
your world. This is when you will be the most effective. Your confidence in
yourself will grow when you are no longer afraid of what could happen
and embarrassed about what already has happened. You will gain an
understanding of what it really means when all of that noise is going on
inside of your head and how to make it stop. I know that you have some
faith in yourself that you can make this happen, otherwise you never
would have clicked on this book in the first place. Everyone gets one life,
and every life gets a finite number of days. I am not saying this to scare
you, but to motivate you not to waste any more days. This is why it is so
crucial to make your thoughts your own and not the product of fear,
stress, and anxiety.
SLOWING DOWN

It’s no secret— we live in a fast-paced world. Everyone is connected to multiple forms of social media, and those are often incorporated into your job. This means you have to constantly keep up with all of them, making sure you do not miss one call, email, or message. On top of that, our lives are often a series of one thing after another. Right after school is an extra-curricular activity. You get off from work and then you need to pick the kids up from school and take them to their rehearsals. After that, you need to go home and put together a presentation that your boss will be witnessing. You are moving onto one thing after another. Before you can stop and process the most recent event you have to move on to the next one.

Change the Pace of Your Life

The first step to decluttering your brain is just to slow down. I’m talking about every facet of your physical and mental state when I say this, down to the most basic vitals. In fact, that is precisely where you need to start. Remember to breathe, because you might be holding your breath. Slow your thoughts and even your body movements down. This will help your thoughts to do the same thing. Think about it this way. When you have lost an important item and you feverishly go through all of your possessions, dresser drawers, and other places in your room trying to find it, your search will probably not reach a conclusion. This is because you are not actually looking for the item, you are just panicking. As a result of this, you will only cause everything in your room to be strewn about,
making what you are looking for even more lost than it already was. What you would need to do is slow your search, bringing a method to it. If you stopped for a moment and thought about the last time you knew you had it, you would begin to retrace your steps, your first course of action being to search in the most likely places for it to be. As you began to search this way, memories would start to come back to you about what you did with the item because there it is now silent enough in your mind that you can hear and are in a state to receive important information that it is trying to convey to you.

When we dial the pace at which we live our lives back a notch, we will find that not only will we find our days more enjoyable, but we are more effective in everything we do. You’ve probably heard the old saying “slow your roll” and you can imagine a person doing some ordinary tasks like working on their car or gardening when their friend runs up panting and hysterical talking fast and hard. The first person tries to understand the furious and jumbled up talk and suddenly puts up his hands, saying “slow your roll, I can’t understand you” because they cannot keep up with their friend’s rapid speech and frantic gestures.

You can see how cluttered the second person’s mind is and, in his haste has rendered himself unintelligible to the other. His words cannot be deciphered and he’s probably waving his arms around using them for emphasis with a little too much gusto. His friend can only comprehend his message when he slows down. Along with being a cue to speak slower to others
yourself, you can also interpret this lesson as a reminder to slow down when communicating to yourself, or thinking.

This is a powerful message and can be used for a person who wants to declutter their minds. This takes focus and dedication to the point of resolve. If you have made the commitment to yourself to clean up the living space of your mind, you might try some techniques to consciously slow yourself down. When you are doing ordinary tasks, reign yourself in from going too quickly. Walk a little slower, you’re not in a competition.

Talk less rapidly when you are explaining something to someone and see if this aids in getting your point across. You might have an elaborate idea that you are trying to convey to someone and you want to cover every part of it, but if you try to do that you will not be able to create a message that can be understood. It will also cause you to trip over yourself trying to figure out which aspect of the message to talk about next.

Imagine you are trying to recount the events of a movie you just saw to someone. You might wonder where to begin. Should you tell them what it is generally about or start from the beginning? Maybe you should tell them the piece you think will make them become interested in hearing about it? Your brain is jumping around all over the place which can cause you to become paralyzed in your speech. To avoid this or risking it becoming convoluted, handle this one step at a time. What is the first thing you want the
person to know about the movie? Why do you want them to know about it? This will give you a clue as to what to discuss next. Maybe the movie takes place in a time period that you know your friend is very interested in. This means that fact should be what you lead in with. Also, remember that you do not need to give them a recap of the entire story in one sitting. You will not have failed if you do not. If they understand the gist of it, you have communicated successfully.

Slowing down means taking time for yourself. There are things we all need to do to preserve our hygiene and cleanliness, but they should also be seen as a service to yourself. Have you ever noticed yourself performing self-care tasks too quickly and recklessly? Think about how you brush your teeth and hair. Perhaps you find yourself, pulling the brush through your hair a little hard and very quickly. If you were brushing someone else’s hair, would you do it in this way? Perhaps instead, you would move the brush more slowly and gently through the hair, take your time and make sure it was a pleasurable experience for them. You deserve that treatment too. What about your teeth, do you find yourself using too much pressure and rushing through the process?

Take it slower, ease up on the pressure and be aware of your strokes, making sure they are circular and that you cover the whole surface of your teeth and not neglecting any. Rinse longer, you deserve the time it takes to care for yourself. When you slow down the physical motions of these actions, you force yourself to focus on them. It is easy to go through these motions quickly and carelessly while using the time to think about all of the
responsibilities piled onto you, causing you to feel stressed about your day before it even begins.

**Start Your Day Earlier**

Are you waking up too late to make yourself a beverage like hot coffee or tea and a little breakfast? Do you find yourself pushing the alarm too many times and racing through an abbreviated morning routine and feeling like you’re running behind all day? Tomorrow, wake up the first time the alarm sounds and give yourself time to show yourself some consideration in the morning. Make breakfast for yourself, do a little exercise like yoga or a little walk or run, even for just 15 minutes. Perhaps instead you prefer a moment to sit outside and meditate or read the newspaper or a book you’ve like to read. Spend some time with your family in the morning connecting instead of barking orders and being in a hurry. When we are stressed internally, we also have a tendency to become short with others. You have placed yourself in the mindset that you need to take action now or something terrible will happen, which means you are going to place the same pressure on your family so that they “do their part”. When we rush, we place imaginary consequences on ourselves for what will happen if we slow down- for example, “If I lounge around before I go to work, I will become demotivated and not put out good work.” Actually, the opposite is the case. It takes a lot of energy to rush through your morning routine. This means by the time you get to work, you will not be starting fresh. When you begin your morning slowly, you will gradually build yourself up to a state of being bright and alert. Think about how when you work out, you do not jump straight for the most intense activity. You warm up
so you will have more energy to spend instead of wearing yourself out in the first few minutes.

At work, do you find your mind leaping ahead to the next task you have planned and that what you are working on now becomes an afterthought? Perhaps this is creating a condition where you are making too many mistakes, thus increasing your stress level. Just for today, try this, focus instead on the paper you are writing currently. Take a few deep breaths letting them out slowly and, if you can while at work, put on some instrumental music at a low volume. Take the time to look over your work and fix anything you find that could be improved at the time. Consciously move a little slower.

At the end of the day, evaluate your productivity and the quality of your work. It’s better, isn’t it? Think about when you are reading a book. You do not try to absorb the content of both of the pages laid out in front of you at once. You focus on one and then shift over to the other once you are done so you are taking in this large body of information one bit at a time. This makes it so that it is possible to take it all in. When you try to skim through brushing your hair or teeth, you will not have benefitted much from it. However, when you take your time, the job will be done more thoroughly, and not only will you avoid health risks, but you will find rewards for this little extra bit of effort.

If you try these suggestions for a week, you will likely want to keep going. It might be difficult to pick up a new habit
that you are not accustomed to, but once you begin to enjoy the benefits of it you will want to do it more often so as to take even more advantage of the good feelings they create. You will find your stress level relieved quite a bit and you’ll be feeling better day to day. I’ll bet you end up feeling less tired during the day and it’s easier to fall asleep. Without so much stress and with greater productivity, you will find the relationships you have with coworkers more enriching.

Other people will want to know your secret! They will want to be in on what is making you more relaxed and confident. They will notice the boss is pointing out your work as best practices or that your grades have improved. It’s okay to share this information too and you’ll want to because of your awareness that it will improve the workplace overall. You will enjoy being in a cleaner and more relaxed workspace and on a team of winners.

You will reap rewards when it’s time for your annual review as well. With a less cluttered mind, you will stand out as a leader and you will enjoy hearing good things spoken about you. This is how making your mental space healthier is helpful for your productivity as well as your peace of mind.

It is not just at work where slowing down will benefit you by uncluttering your mind. You will also find your interpersonal relationships both at home and with friends to be improved. When you are with your circle of people, take time with them more slowly. Your communication doesn’t have to serve a purpose and can be purely for enjoyment. Ask about their day. Really listen when they tell you. It will make your relationship with them better if you learn what
they like to do and do it with them. You will learn things about yourself and create a stronger bond.

Be Present

Be present for yourself, your family, friends, and colleagues. Slow down and do not miss your life as it passes by while you hurry through everything with a mind full of clutter and stress wearing away your health. Listen to what the people around you are saying. Take a look at what your environment looks like. Do whatever you need to do in order to process the present as opposed to the past, future, or a fictional scenario.

Remember this- the past cannot bring you any more harm than it already has because it has passed. The future has not happened yet so it would be illogical to try to react to it. A hypothetical worry is not worth spending one second of your time on because there is only a small chance that it will happen. What is happening in the present is what can truly impact you. You need to devote all of your energy to it because it is what will become your past.

Breathe and remember that there is a definite connection between your breath and movement. As your breath becomes slower and deeper, your movement will be deliberate. Think about the motions you are going through. When you take a breath, consciously inhale and exhale. This will go a long way in decreasing your anxiety. This is because we do not think about
breathing properly during times of great stress. This will increase the stress by making you feel like you cannot catch your breath, which exacerbates a common sensation for people when they are struggling with the feeling of being overwhelmed by panic- that the walls are closing in. This verbiage is often used by those with anxiety to describe what a panic attack feels like. Of course, the room is not actually changing in size, and they understand that on a fundamental level, but this does not stop the emotional response from happening as the result of the illusions that their mind generates. The room starts to feel smaller and smaller, causing you to feel trapped and like you cannot run from where you are at.

Right now, you do not need to run. Sometimes our minds can cause us to perceive danger where there is none. You do not need to respond to a crisis where there is none. That seems like a simple concept when you say it out loud, but it is harder to put in practice when you are in the moment and all of the symptoms of an attack are hitting you at once. Just remember that sometimes your mind creates scenarios that do not actually exist. It does not mean you are going crazy. It happens to everyone. Think about when someone tells you “we need to talk,” and you automatically feel a sense of panic as your mind goes to all of the worst things this could possibly mean. In just a few seconds, you have imagined the end of a relationship or some other extremely unpleasant discussion. Then it turns out that they just want you to pick which colored toothbrush you would prefer. This means you needlessly caused yourself stress. You are still not abnormal even if this happens to you. It just means you need to recompose yourself
and commit to not going into this mode if it is not needed. If you do this too often, it can lead to an anxiety disorder.

When we move through our actions too quickly, we will often have overreactions to things. This is because everything hits you at once and you act based on your initial emotional response to something. To paint a picture of this, think about when you first saw the death scene of your favorite character on a show. You might have cried as if you had just lost your best friend because at that moment it really feels that painful.

However, later on, you do not have that visceral feeling anymore because you realize the impact that event has on your life isn’t actually that much. It doesn’t cause any harm when you overreact in that kind of circumstance, but there will be ones that come along that need to be properly reacted to. For example, your small child tells you they got a bad grade. You might be concerned, upset, or whatever else they might feel, but this is a crucial moment for not only your relationship, but for their development. They are coming to you for help and they feel ashamed along with fear about what you will do. If you control whatever you are feeling at the moment, assure them that you will help them with the class material and tell them everything will work out alright, this will be a moment that you come closer than ever, all because you just stopped, got your breath and emotions under control, and responded in a collected and logical manner. On the other hand, if you yell at them or go into panic mode and say, “How are we ever going to bring this up in time?!” They will learn a very dangerous lesson from this
experience- that they should never ask for help and that you will react poorly when things go wrong. As a result of this, in the future, they will keep it from you whenever they have a problem, no matter how serious it is.

Not Everything Warrants an Immediate Reaction

Just because something happens, does not mean you need to react to it immediately. Sometimes our minds can fool us into thinking everything warrants an immediate response. There are only a handful of things that fit into this category. When you are driving and you see someone veering too close to your car, you need to take immediate action. However, when it is not an emergency such as this, you have the luxury of taking some time to consider what you are going to do next. This saves you trouble in a few ways. For one, you do not have to feel the pressure of coming up with a response all at once. You can have some time to think about it with a clear mind. You also will not have to correct yourself after speaking or acting when you are in a place in your mind to where you are thinking irrationally.

High emotion is the equivalent of irrational thinking. You might be convinced that you truly believe something because of an emotion. That is how people snap over something small due to pressure that has been building up within them for a long time. They have had one of those days where nothing goes right and you cannot catch a break, and someone does something that should be mildly annoying and this ends up being what causes
the person to explode. This is not good for your physical and mental health or your relationships.

**S**tress, frustration, and depression tend to come as a package deal. Even if one is dominant, you feel the others to some degree. If you are constantly feeling anxious, you will see your environment and future as grim, and when you do not feel like things will ever get better, you will become angry. These emotions will poison not only the mind, but your physical body over a long period of time. With clarity, you will find many health benefits including digestion, respiratory and mental all because of your reduced stress level. This is because stress can contribute to, prolong and even bring on health issues.

On the other hand, being relaxed can alleviate them. Whenever you have an injury or other complication that causes pain, take a note of how when you are feeling distressed about it and your mind is saying “please make the pain go away” repeatedly, you will feel it more strongly. However, if you calm yourself, you will find some relief. This is because in a way, when you are stressed your body fights the body’s natural healing process.

When your mind is calm, so is your body, and vice versa. When you have a quiet mind, you will experience a large number of health benefits. You will be able to go to sleep faster, which will mean you will wake up in the morning feeling refreshed. Your heart will stop beating so quickly, lessening your risk for blood pressure problems later along the way.
R

R

est and Check for Tension in Your Body

As you go through your day, check in on how you are postured. Stress causes us to slouch over, causing neck strain. You will also notice that your muscles are tight. Take a moment to relax them, letting your arms fall to your sides and breathing in deeply to release the pressure in your chest. Also, and maybe most importantly, check your jaw and make sure you are not clenching it. It is not uncommon to do this in the middle of the day when you have the most calls and customers. If you are not careful about this, you will run the risk of doing damage to your teeth because they are not meant to handle the strain of being ground together for longer periods of time. If this is a problem for you, make a point throughout the day to separate your top and bottom teeth and relax your jaw. This only takes a few minutes.

S

ometimes we refuse to slow down because we do not think we have the time to. What if I told you that you don’t have the time not to? Pushing yourself isn’t always the answer. Know when it is time to rest. If you think this will take time away from doing your work, try to put another spin on that thought. Let’s say you are trying to create a PowerPoint for a presentation. Consider the quality of work that you would do on it if you are feeling tired. Your performance will not be up to par. You will not be as vigilant about checking for errors and making sure your sentences make sense, and you will work more slowly than usual. You are not going to be motivated to do anything, and no matter how hard you try to hide it, a lack of enthusiasm about a project will show in the quality of it.
Whenever we are overly tired, we will often feel resentful of anything we have to do and therefore you will feel like you are just enduring one thing after another. This is not a way to create a healthy and productive life for yourself. When you get into these modes, there will be times that you need to crack the whip and keep going, but this is not always the way to go. Throughout our lives, we run into times where we need to be kinder to ourselves. We are more than willing to give other people a break, even when they have done something that caused us harm, understanding that they were going through a hard time. However, when it comes to us, we hold ourselves to a standard that could never be reached. People also have a tendency to push themselves to give more, but then neglect to give back to themselves. That would be like expecting your phone to keep running but never put it on the charger. You have to allow yourself some recharge time and treat yourself to some things that replenish your reservoirs. It does not have to cost money. You can just draw yourself a bath and take time to savor how your skin and joints feel immersed in the hot water. These simple comforts sometimes give you the strength you need to keep going.

When you are in the middle of all of the chaos your days can throw at you, it is easy to underestimate the toll that mental and emotional clutter combined with stress can have on you. It is the way of most people to just keep going on about their day, ignoring their problems and resolving that they aren’t that bad because they can still go through all of the things they need to do every day.
Just because you are not visibly distressed, doesn’t mean your mental well-being does not need tended to. The longer you put it off, the more of a mess you will have to deal with. It’s like when you let the dishes pile up in the sink and you look away from it because you do not want to deal with it. Eventually, they will be overflowing. The sink will not be able to hold one more dish, so when you finally go to clean it out, not only will you be there for a long time because you have such a hefty job to do, but you will also be trying to maneuver around the precariously-placed dishes so that they do not fall and break. When we ignore a mental health struggle, that will not make it go away. This will only make it get bigger until it is something that is impossible to ignore, and you will likely have effects from it that you did not expect or want.

Whenever you feel yourself thinking too fast, just remember to stop for a minute. You do not have to completely pull yourself out of whatever you are doing or make a scene. You just need to take a moment to pull yourself together. Take note of the muscles in your body that are tight so you can relax them. Get your breath under control again. Breathe slowly and deliberately. Take a substantial breath in, hold it inside for a second, and then let it out slowly. Slow your roll. Your internal dialogue is probably making about as much sense as a person who just had surgery and is still under the effects of the anesthetic.

Our Brains Are Like Computers
There are similarities between the way our brains work and how computers operate. Think about when you have too many programs being run on a device. A number of games are all logged into at once. A large number of tabs are open. At some point your screen freezes. You wait a few minutes for the situation to work itself out, and your only recourse is to turn the computer off, wait for ten seconds, and turn it back on again. You might be worried that your device has broken and that you will not be able to use it anymore, but when you log back on it is business as usual. What happened in this situation is that your device became overstimulated and needed to be reset. It was performing too many tasks and therefore did not have enough energy to do everything it was being asked to do. We can do the same thing with our brain. That is how you end up living with that strange phenomenon where you have so many thoughts going on but you cannot focus on a single one of them. You cannot handle everything that is being thrown at you so you become numb.

In order to slow down, remember this - there is nothing that needs to happen right now. There is no emergency. You do not have to do anything except bring yourself back to a state of mind where you can actually think. Don’t let your mind jerk you in any way it wants to.

I am going to ask you a question that is going to sound out of the blue at first but will make more sense as I explain it - what makes you happy? What do you look forward to? I am not asking this in a deeply philosophical sense. There are things in this world that give us warm feelings inside while others bring our mood
down. What does the latter? It might be something as simple as playing with your pet. If this is so, then for just a moment, go to a place in your mind where you are with your pet. Think about what it looks like and how it feels to touch its fur. If there is a person you feel a lot of affection for, whether you know them personally or they are a famous person, or even if they are a fictional character, picture this person in your mind. Think about things they did that were endearing to you.

**Emotional Crutches**

These are what can be referred to as good crutches. In the past, the concept of emotional crutches has garnered up a bad reputation because when people hear of them their mind often goes to abusing alcohol or even an illegal substance. However, this is not an accurate representation of what that concept means. A crutch does not have to be destructive, nor does it need to take over your life to the exclusion of everything else. It also does not have to cause you to avoid life. Think about what physical crutches are meant to do for a person. It is not to prevent them from walking, but to help them do so because they cannot do it on their own right now due to an injury, illness, or another issue that is causing one of their legs to be weaker than it usually is. When we use emotional crutches, we keep good things that bring us happiness close to us while we get through things that are not as pleasant. Think about when you listen to your favorite music while you are doing a writeup. It is never fun to write for work, and you would rather be doing something else because the content of this is boring. However, it is something you must do for work.
If you do not have something to look forward to, you can change that. You might not be able to purchase tickets to your dream concert or go on a getaway to a fancy resort, but this does not mean you cannot give your life some more glamour. This might come in the form of making yourself a nice dinner. It does not have to be for any special occasion. Just make it a time where you can afford a meal that is a little more expensive than what you usually get. Light some candles and put music on that pleases you. Get dressed nicely. This might seem silly to do at first, but everyone needs to stop the pace of their life for a moment to do something nice for themselves.

Take some time to get to know yourself. Think about how when you like someone, you try to find out their interests so that you can do things for them that will make them happy. Give yourself the same consideration. Our minds can become consumed by trying to figure out how we can help others, but if we ever want to do that we need to be in a position where we can afford to be emotionally charitable. When your mental bank account is full, meaning you feel calm and content, you will be able to give more to others than if you let self-care go to the wayside and therefore your account is running on empty. Don’t make life just about fulfilling responsibilities and completing tasks others assign to you. Be a little selfish and take time just for yourself.
The actions that affect yourself, the people around you and the course of your life begin from an internal place. It has long been said that what you think becomes what you do. People who do not think they are good people are going to have lapses in judgment in their dealings with others. If you don’t think you are an attractive person, you are going to avoid social situations because you do not want to be seen by others. The way you think dictates what you do, which is why you cannot take your hands off the wheel when it comes to how your brain operates. You have probably heard the saying that you teach people how to treat you- if you show someone that they can talk to you poorly without any repercussions, they will. Take this mentality with your own mind. For many of us, this is the entity that says the cruelest things to us. Why does this happen? Are we really just bad people and we have only taken it out on ourselves so far? Is there something even worse at work here?

Your Brain is Trained

I am here now to tell you that you can relax because this is not what is going on. Your brain has been trained to speak this way to you. How you might ask, is that possible? The answer is that you have been training your brain all of your life, and will continue to for the rest of your days. Think about when you learned how to write. That was training your brain. The same goes for when you were figuring out how to walk and everything you learned during your years in school. By the end of those lessons, you were probably able to name all fifty states and practically recite the United States’ Constitution off of the top of your head. After you were done with school and some years went by, your memory of these lessons became increasingly fuzzy. As you took and left jobs, the same thing happened. All of this adds up to the fact that your brain is not locked
into one form. It changes with the new information we take in and the habits we pick up- or cease to do. This ties into why our brains can become cluttered. When you mentally go through your ever-lengthening to-do list, develop fears for the future, and entertain other thoughts that creep into your mind to disturb your peace of mind, these thoughts make their permanent home here because of how often you have reviewed them. When a person faces any form of emotional upset, even if it is not one of the most mentally destructive traumas, it can still impact the way your brain works, even creating neurological differences in your brain from before they were there. At some point, the cycle of thoughts and emotions becomes just as automatic of a process as the light turning on inside a refrigerator when it is opened. This leads to a circular internal conversation that does not go anywhere, which closely mimics a couple of common disorders that affect one’s emotions as well as the way the mind works.

We cannot bring up a cluttered brain without discussing anxiety and OCD. Before you start to worry, let me assure you that I am not trying to diagnose you or even imply that you have one of these disorders. However, while not everyone with a cluttered brain has an anxiety disorder, everyone with the said disorder- down to a person- has an abundance of brain-clutter. Even if you do not actually have either of these disorders, a cluttered brain inherently mimics the symptoms. This means learning about them will give you direction in helping yourself no matter what.

Anxiety Disorders

In anxiety disorder, you are constantly in fight-or-flight mode. The feeling itself is helpful at times, such as when you are dealing with a dangerous situation that requires immediate action and you need to rely on adrenaline to get yourself out of it. However, it becomes a problem when you constantly have this feeling. It chips away at your confidence, sense of
stability, and feeling of independence. It makes you call every aspect of yourself, everyone else, and the world into question.

OCD, contrary to popular belief, is not about cleaning one's room with a toothbrush or needing pencils to be perfectly parallel. It could take this form, but it would need to be motivated by something internal. For example, the sufferer has convinced themselves that they will be responsible for a death in the family if they do not arrange the pencils just right. Your brain makes connections between events that are unrelated. They have assigned themselves the power to impact the world outside of them with their actions and even their mere thoughts- “If I get annoyed at someone and then something bad happens to them, it is my fault.” This is known as magical thinking.

People with OCD also often have an innate fear of finding out everything they thought was true about themselves was not. They question basic facts about them, even down to their religion or sexual orientation. This is not at all to say a person with these thoughts has a problem with any form of an alternative lifestyle. This is the true source of their anxiety- imagine thinking all of your life that you were attracted to one gender. You have become comfortable with this idea and it is a part of your identity. Then, one day, out of the blue, a thought invades your mind- “What if I really like the gender other than the one I thought I did?” You would feel your entire world crumbling down. You would feel like your whole life had been a lie. If you were in a relationship, you would be scared that it was not right for you. Your entire world would feel like it was crumbling underneath - why is something that was once inherent about me suddenly changing in my adulthood?
If you are affected by OCD and you are feeling this way about any aspect of yourself, let me assure you now that your entire world is not suddenly changing. All that is going on is that you had a thought that was jarring. It made you doubt yourself and conflicted with your sense of self. This made you go crazy with the thoughts. Sometimes the thoughts of sufferers cause them to fear that they could be “bad” or dangerous people and they did not realize it. These people never have and never could harm anyone, but because the image comes up in their mind of doing something morally unacceptable, they think they are capable of doing it and punish themselves as if they were. They also will constantly check themselves to see if they feel any response to the thought of committing a violent or otherwise immoral act, and that is when they go into very dangerous territory. If you try to look for a thought inside of your mind, you will find it.

You might even cause yourself to create the sensations you are fearing to have and then when this happens, you confuse it for the intrusive thoughts being true. Let me try to explain what is going on in a way that gives you another perspective on it. Whenever you are reading a story about someone suffering a severe injury that the writer describes in graphic detail, you might find yourself cringing and feeling a sensation in the place in your body that mimics their wounds so strongly that it is like you feel what they went through. That is how far the mind will go to paint a picture of something to make it real to you if that is what you want to believe.

Even if the intrusive thought is not as traumatic as the ones we have discussed, we all sometimes get stuck on thoughts that bring us discomfort. It can be as simple as driving to work and thinking “what if I get caught in a traffic jam and that makes me late, and then my boss no longer trusts me?” Because of this one thought, you spend the entire drive to work
anxious, and even when you turn your car off it does not subside until you have walked into the building.

**Anxiety Disorders vs Everyday Stress**

The similarity between these disorders and everyday stress is that they can cause a person to give thoughts more credence than they deserve and hold themselves accountable for things they have not done or were not their fault. They also try to reach conclusions for things where there is none to be found. For example, in the case of OCD, the sufferer often tries to find reassurance that their intrusive thought is not true, causing them to ask others the same questions repeatedly and needing to do a set of rituals every time the thought comes back to them. This takes time away from them and impacts their relationships because those in their circle will not know what to do to help them, as they have reassured their loved one of the same thing countless times but things always seem to end up back at square one. Clutter can do the same thing to your mind. How many nights have you stayed up trying to pull yourself out of a thought that makes you anxious but finding no way to do so? For example, you fear not completing a project in time. You try to tell yourself that you have the time and resources to do it and that everything will be fine, but then you think “but you could lose it or it breaks right before you present!” At this point, you are suffering over imaginary scenarios. The project has not even been completed, so there is no way that it could get damaged. If you have partners you are working with and are anxious about whether or not they are going to pull their weight, call them at a reasonable hour to have a conversation with them. Set up a system where each member of the group reports their progress and presents proof of it. That way your mind will be put at ease and you will feel like you have some control over the situation.

This is when you need to train unhelpful behaviors out of your brain. Psychology has brought about things such as neuroplasticity and cognitive
behavioral therapy. I will show you how you can learn what these things are and how to use them to help you. These might sound like intimidating concepts at first, but you can trust me. When you break them down to their basics, they are simple ones that can be mastered within just a few months. That is how little time it takes many patients to see dramatic improvements with anxiety and OCD-related issues. It will definitely sort out the thoughts in your mind so that they will not all come to you in a rush that you cannot handle.

**Therapy for Anxiety**

Cognitive behavioral therapy is the most widely-used model for therapy in modern times. Its idea is that self-destructive behavior patterns stem from a cognitive distortion- to put it simply, your mind upholds a belief that is inaccurate. You are looking at the world through a set of lenses that do not offer a correct view of the world.

A cluttered brain counts as a cognitive distortion because it impairs your ability to think in a logical way. Essentially, these are the moment that you feel like you cannot think straight. It has long been thought that there are certain mental states that can cause a person to things they would not ordinarily think of, and it has been proven countless times to be true. Have you ever gotten angry at someone over a minor issue because you had a lot on your mind and thought later about how you overreacted and that they did not deserve that treatment? On the flip side, let’s say you are a person who does not cry easily. Then a member of your family falls ill and you notice that lately, you cannot go through a day without crying at least once. Emotional distress can cause you to become confused about what you feel.

This is why you always need to analyze your thoughts as they come into your head to see if they are accurate. For example,
you are at the grocery store and someone bumps into you. This causes you to have an impulse to say something rude to them. At that moment, you are convinced that you have an intense dislike for that person. However, when you break that idea down, it does not hold up to logic. You have never met this person before and they did not mean to run into you. They were just not paying attention or did not see you. You then think about the kind of person you are and realize that you are not the type who would get angry at someone simply for making a common mistake.

**Transient Feelings**

In order to make your emotions more congruent with your true self, you need to realize that there is such thing as transient feelings. The meaning of this term is in the name- they are thoughts that come and go. A parent will feel a moment of frustration towards their child when they walk into the room and realize that they have not cleaned their room like they said they would, but this does not mean they hate them and want them to move out. People can have grievances with their romantic partners without wanting to break up with them. Once it leaves, you can tap back into what you actually feel. When people in a relationship have had a quarrel, they need to keep in mind that they love the other person.

Transient feelings also play a role in our success in our careers. Say you want to publish something you have written but are afraid of being rejected. That feeling of nervousness can only have the control over your actions that it is given. If you truly did not want your work to be read, you never would have gone through the trouble of writing, editing, and looking over it. You created it for a reason. This is why you need to ignore that temporary feeling of nervousness and pursue what you really want to do. You might be thinking, “how can that feeling be transient? It’s happening all the time!” What I mean by using that term here is that you are only going to have that feeling for as long as you put off showing others
your work. When you get feedback from someone, you will see that the possibility of them pointing out an area that your work could see improvement is not the worst thing in the world and should not stop you from placing it in a position to where others will read it.

Those who have any level of anxiety are notorious for thinking ten steps ahead. It comes from a need to be prepared for any possible situation. They cannot stand the thought of a problem hanging in the balance for a while and waiting to solve it. This is because the problem is causing them a great deal of stress and they feel like by sorting this particular issue out, they will get rid of and find relief from their stress, not realizing their brain will only come up with another source shortly after. Many times, when a person’s brain is cluttered, a contributing factor is a person’s need to solve all of their problems overnight and the feeling that things are horrible if they cannot manage this. We are taught that we should not go to bed with a problem standing in our relationships or other aspects of our lives. While it is true that you should do everything you can about a situation before you go to bed, once you have done that, you need to let it go for the night.

The concept of “don’t go to bed angry” can have a detrimental effect on your life and mental health. There are times where you are having a conversation with someone and it is going nowhere. Both parties are tired, stressed and frustrated. This means they do not the means to say anything productive. They will be drawn to saying things that feel good in the moment but have a negative impact on the relationship in the long run. You will also stay up for a long time having this circular conversation.

Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy and Neuroplasticity
Now we are going to get into cognitive behavioral therapy, or CBT, neuroplasticity, and figure out how they can be used with one another to achieve the outcomes you want to see. CBT and neuroplasticity are closely related and they lend themselves to each other when a person is trying to change the way they think. CBT emphasizes the theory that people can change their thinking patterns even if they have held these beliefs for most or all of their lives. Neuroplasticity states that if someone repeats the same lesson over and over again, it will become the dominant practice, taking over the one that is left behind.

When we are thinking about the connections in our brains, the term “use it or lose it” becomes relevant. The ones that are used repeatedly are strengthened and become a part of your long-term memory while the ones that are neglected deteriorate and eventually die out, causing you to forget information. This is why we do not remember lessons we learned in school that we once knew off of the top of our heads. We have talked about cognitive distortions being learned. This is from- you guessed it- neuroplasticity. If someone believes they are not intelligent, it is because that intrusive thought has gained access to their mind repeatedly until it eventually became the way they naturally think.

Another way that neuroplasticity impacts our behavior is that it can be used to influence which emotional response we gravitate towards. This plays a considerable role in a cluttered brain and an instinct to go into panic mode. People who tend to have abnormally high-stress levels jump to the worst-case scenario as a default reaction to events in their life. For example, they haven’t been feeling well for the past couple of days. Their mind jumps past the possibility that they just haven’t gotten enough rest or have a case of the common cold. They go immediately to a life-threatening illness. The entire time that leads up to them going to the doctor involves them imagining a health crisis that they might not survive.
By the time they get to the office they beg the doctor to just give them the news that they are dying and get it over with. If you live your life this way, you will be in a constant state of unrest. Every time you run into an inconvenience, even a minor one, your instinct will be to panic. It will get to a point where you do not have the ability to stay calm because your brain has been trained otherwise.

If you relate to this concept, do not lose hope. You do not have to stay this way forever. Just because you learn an unhealthy pattern of behavior, does not mean you cannot unlearn it. In childhood, we all do things that are undesirable in society- running around in the house, tracking mud onto the floors, etc. However, when a child’s parents tell them that what they are doing is not acceptable and remind them of this fact whenever the behavior takes place, the child will begin to leave this habit behind. Eventually, they will get to a point where they are checking their feet for mud before they enter the house on their own. In the example of panicking at the doctor’s office, get into the habit of holding off your thoughts just for one minute to give the doctor time to explain to you what is really happening. It will likely take them at the most thirty seconds to do this. You can put anything off for thirty seconds.

Think about what the other possible courses of action are when you are faced with a crisis besides worrying. Instead of doing that, think about why you are in this situation and how you are going to get out of it. For example, if your performance in work has been suffering because you spend too much time surfing the internet while you are at the office, the solution here is to rededicate yourself to your work. You might want to look into why you are avoiding it. It might just be a simple case of going lax. You may not be getting enough sleep. There could be a problem with a coworker. Let’s say that is the problem. Once you have realized this, you can then resolve whatever problem is going on with them so you can
have a healthier work environment, which in turn will allow you to go back to your normal levels of productivity.

While your mind may be the one that takes in, processes, and distributes information, you are the one in control. You cannot always let it have things go its way. Whenever we have developed thinking patterns that are harmful to us, our minds develop an urge to go to them even after we have decided that we want to stop them.

When applying CBT to a real life concept, let's imagine a person with stage fright whose career revolves around public speaking. This seems like quite the dilemma, right? The person might even start wondering if they cannot handle this job and should find another one, even though they are passionate about this one.

Do not decide not to pursue something you want to do based on fear. This will cause your life to become dictated by forces in your mind that do not have your best interests at heart. This problem will not alleviate itself because you give in to what the anxiety tells you to do. In fact, this will cause things to become worse. You will teach yourself that the feeling of distress means you need to run, and soon that will always be your response to it. Anxiety might serve the purpose of helping a person manage a crisis, but that is not what is happening in this case. You are responding to sensations in the mind and body. Your mind has conjured up a situation without any evidence to back up its existence. In reality, you might just be driving to a grocery store when you are suddenly hit with visions of a tragedy occurring at that building. This causes you to choose not to go to the store and drive home. The next day, you come to find out that nothing out of the ordinary happened there and you are without the things you wanted to have, all because of a hypothetical situation.
e will now go back to the example of using CBT to get over a fear of public speaking. Using this psychological model, the person has a resistance to being in front of a crowd because of the idea that doing so will put them in a bad position. They might imagine themselves getting on the stage and doing something embarrassing themselves somehow, such as tripping over the steps or jumbling up their words while addressing their audience. Then their mind plays out a scene where everyone points at and mocks them for what just happened to them and no longer being taken seriously by their peers. They might even conjure up images of being recorded and the video going viral, meaning they are doomed to spend the rest of their days as a laughingstock. Before it is even time to perform, they have decided how it is going to go. They are responding to fears about the future as if they have already happened. They feel real because they are so intense.

Herein lies the cognitive distortion- “bad things will happen to me if I get up on stage. I know this is exactly how it will play out because I thought of it. There is no other possible outcome.” The person has closed themselves off to the prospect of succeeding. They have made a prophecy about their future that causes them distress, and they are doing what they think will make them able to avoid that. If this scenario sounds familiar to you, the good news is that it proves that you think rationally. How, you might ask? Even though these acts are misguided, they do come from a place of self-preservation. What would be irrational is knowing what you were doing is not good for you, but doing it anyway out of a need to self-destruct. You are avoiding public speaking with the mindset that you are going to prevent pain or misfortune from happening to you. This means you want to care for yourself. When the willingness is there, anything is possible.
The first step in the CBT route would be to figure out where this fear came from. Maybe you did have an unfortunate incident in the past with public speaking. You got tongue-tied during a presentation and some people laughed. Before anything else, you would want to look over that memory again and see if you are remembering it accurately. You might imagine all of the other students cackling at you and whispering amongst one another about how badly you failed, but take a moment to consider that wasn’t the case.

Maybe they thought what you said instead of what you intended to was genuinely funny.

Perhaps they even thought you intentionally said that and admired your comedic abilities. Even if they did laugh at the fact that you misspoke, it was only for a moment. It does not mean they formed an entire opinion on you from that experience.

Once you figure out the origin of the fear, you have the means to make it start to crumble, because now you can slowly build up to confronting your fear. If you are afraid of speaking in front of even small groups of people, this can be a good place to start. At first, make it people who you know very well and trust, and therefore you will not feel such an immense pressure to impress them. This could include a close group of friends or family. When you present to them, you will look back on the experience and realize nothing terrible happened. Now you will have had an experience speaking in public that was not bad. You will also have taken away a portion of the fear surrounding it upon the realization that you can do it.

What you have done is subject yourself to exposure therapy, a very commonly used technique in CBT. The idea is that the more contact you
come in with the source of something that is causing you distress, the less power it will hold over you. Partially, it then no longer gets to be this big, ominous presence that looms threateningly over your head. For another thing, once we have faced our fears find that no terrible thing happened to us, there is nothing left to fear. You have worn it down until it is manageable. This is when you can develop your true feelings about something. In this case, as you grow confidence speaking in bigger crowds, you might find that you actually enjoy public speaking because you like to present information to people in a way that they might not have thought about it before. The fear of it was clouding your thoughts so that an inaccurate version of yourself was portrayed. Don’t get caught into those spirals where you are lost in your thoughts but none of them can reach a resolution. At this point, you run the risk of developing anxiety. When you feel one of these phases coming on, take a breath and sit up with your shoulders back. This will serve as a physical symbolism of pulling yourself out of it.

Dissociation

Commit to being fully in whatever moment you are in right now. When you do not do this, you will become distracted. You are at a meeting or in a conversation with a friend. You start thinking about something that happened the other day, a bill you are worried about, or something you want to get done next week. You look up and realize you have not heard a single word the person speaking in front of you has said in the past five minutes.

This is known as dissociation, and we are all guilty of it from time to time. However, if you do it chronically, it will negatively impact your life in more ways than one. For one, it will be more difficult to form close relationships with others. People like to feel like they are being heard, and if you space out while they are speaking to you, it is going to make
them feel like what they are saying to you does not matter to you, especially if they are trying to open up to you. It also means you will not hear them tell you things you need to know—“there’s going to be a mandatory meeting tomorrow.” People who do not take in what others say often miss out on important events and ask why no one told them about them. It is likely that someone did, but their brain did not receive that information.

That being said, it will be easy to miss things that happen around you. Sometimes when people are driving and they know where they are going, they will go into “autopilot mode” and think about other things. When they get to their destination, they do not remember anything from the drive. This is dangerous because, on the road, unpredictable things happen. Someone might run a stop sign or fail to yield. If you are not paying attention to the road this can result in a car accident.

Dissociation causes us to miss out on important information. Your physical body is there, but you are not a part of what is going on. Say you are behind on a project and right now you are at a meeting. If you spend that time worrying about the project and how much catching up you had to do, you will then miss out on what is being discussed at the meeting, you will be even more behind.

Sometimes we can also cause ourselves to dissociate when we are listening to negative self-talk. This is because you have to stop what you are doing and give all of your attention to it, meaning it will hold you back from growing as a person. Again, you think badly of yourself because you have learned how to do it and it has become second nature to you. Talking to yourself in a more positive way is something you will need
to train yourself to do if you have a propensity for negative self-talk. At this point, part of the reason your brain does this is that it is the routine.

**Praise Yourself**

Give yourself credit whenever you do something well. You would take all the time in the world to point out a mistake you made, so show the same level of commitment to congratulate yourself. When you get no rewards for good behavior and disproportionate punishment for doing things wrong, you have made it so that there is no carrot in the “carrot and stick” dynamic. This means there is no incentive for trying to do better for yourself, and when this happens you will remain in the same place.

Do not save praise for the great accomplishments, as we never save the negative self-talk for especially big failures. If you make a dish and it tastes especially good, give yourself credit for your skills as a cook. If you help a friend through a rough time, take a moment to acknowledge that you were a good friend to them. If someone drops something and you pick it up for them, you are being considerate, which is an admirable quality. By the same token, get out of the habit of talking badly to yourself. A big part of this is finding new ways to word it whenever you are thinking about something that did not go well.

Let’s say you had a job interview that did not go over well. Instead of berating yourself and saying things like “You’re so stupid! You blew it! Can’t you do anything right?” Try saying something constructive, like “I didn’t present myself to the interview with the right level of professionalism. Next time, I will be more well-versed in the proper etiquette for a job interview before I go in.” The next time might be the one where you do get hired, but not if you just beat yourself down and therefore become demotivated. Instead of negative self-talk, try constructive
criticism. It will work much better in getting the results you want from yourself.

It might feel like you are not going to reach a better thought pattern, but I can assure you that you will. It will take time and practice, and a commitment from you, but just as both neuroplasticity and CBT promise, you can instill or break any habit you want to if you repeat it enough times.
FOCUS AND FIND YOUR CENTER

One of the biggest challenges those with a chronically cluttered mind can be summed up with the two concepts mentioned in the title. I like to compare it to a pair of earphones that have been carried at the bottom of a bag all day long. They have been getting tossed around and tangled up with the other contents of the bag. When they are taken back out at the end of the day, they will be wrapped around each other and maybe even around another item, and you will need to take some time to untangle them before you can use them properly again. This concept goes with your mind as well. We stuff our thoughts, feelings and experiences throughout the day because we do not have enough time to look at them, so this leaves our minds in a mess, which can make it difficult to figure out how you actually feel and make sense of your thoughts.

Do not feel alone in this. Even the supposedly most well-adjusted person has to make a conscious effort to wind down at the end of the day. With everything going on in our daily lives, it is easy to lose your mental balance. This is why I am going to teach you how to clear out the unnecessary noise in their mind so they can discover their true selves.

The most integral part of finding your center is coming into yourself. This means you are not thinking about anything except what you have felt today and what you need in this moment.
When I say “need”, I am not talking about your responsibilities. I mean what it would take to bring you to a state of tranquility. To do this, there needs to be a retreat. That is why many people shut all of the blinds and curtains in their house at the end of the day. It is meant to be symbolic of shutting out the day. The world outside is happening away from you and you are here in the comfort of your home, recharging yourself so you can approach tomorrow feeling fresh instead of trying to draw strength you do not have to get up.

Protect Your Energy

To get your mind into a peaceful place, you need to push anything unrelated to you away from it so as to free yourself from distractions and prevent your energy from being spent on something that is not worth it. It is our natural instinct to hold everything close to us and analyze it as much as possible. However, this is not going to do anything except make you feel more upset. Earlier in the book, we talked about times of crisis. When you keep going over them in your mind you will find more about that you cannot control, which will go on to make you even more frustrated. When we do not feel like we have any say in anything that happens around us, our anxiety will be at a higher level than ever.

When you develop a chronic feeling of anxiety, it is easy to begin to think everything that happens around you is a direct response to you. You might see some people talking and think it must be about you, and if they have singled you out it must be a bad thing. You look at yourself in search of a huge flaw they
could be pointing out. You become self-conscious about something that likely did not even happen.

When you take things personally, you create scenarios in your mind and act based on them instead of on reality. We discussed that in a brief example above but sometimes these situations can become even more extreme. This means you put it onto yourself when terrible things happen to other people and make yourself answer for it. On the other hand, let’s say someone goes out of their way to act rudely to you when you are in private with them. For an anxious person, this will often cause them to think “What did I do? I must have done something wrong to make that person behave this way, because they do not do it with other people.” (I can assure you that this is not true. People who inflict emotional damage on one person does the same thing to everyone else who spends too much time around them. It is never just you, no matter what they might try to get you to believe.)

It is strange how most people call their own behavior into question whenever someone is rude to them. This is because they are going on the assumption that people never treat others badly without any reason to do so, leaving them with the idea that they must have brought this behavior out in the other person. This mentality is dangerous to one’s well-being because it will cause you to become a person that is easily taken advantage of. People will know that all they have to do is put some base in their voice and that will put you on your heels trying to placate them, meaning they will be able to get anything they want out of you. When you think
about it this way, casting other people’s actions back to them is a means of self-preservation.

You see a lot of people throughout the day and you do not know the state any of them are in. You do not know what kind of news they might have gotten or what circumstances they are going through. This is not to say their behavior towards you is excused, but that it is very unlikely that you are at responsible for someone you have never met. Even if it is a close friend who has been acting differently lately, keep this same thought. If they are ignoring or being rude to you, do not interpret this as something you did wrong. Do not chase them for attention or apologize for something you did not do. They are the ones who have changed. They might have started associating with a person who brings out an unflattering side of them (however, they are still the ones culpable for their behavior. Don’t get me wrong. This is not to let them off the hook. It is to show you how unrelated their behavior is to you).

Leave the things other people do where they belong- with them. They are why they took the actions they did and if they ever want to see improvement, it is going to need to come from them. That is all there is to that story.

Analyzing Criticism from Others

Now we need talk about when you receive criticism that is personally directed at you and might hold some weight to it. That is
hard to take. No matter who you are and how thick you think your skin is, we all want to be well-liked by others. At the very least, we do not want to have problems with anyone. To hear someone criticize you personally causes you to doubt yourself.

When this happens, the first thing you need to do is check what they told you for accuracy. Consider the source. Some people are negative and behave this way with everyone. There is also a chance that they are projecting. This is when a person attributes their own flaws onto someone else because they do not want to face them. Say you have a friend who you rarely talk to. They say you should call them more often but when you do they do not answer. You message them and they use one-word responses that do not provide any conversation material. This causes you to stop talking to them, and later they tell you that you are bad at keeping in touch. In this case, your friend does not want to own up to their part in the two of you growing apart, so they are putting it all off on you.

Now, if there is truth to what they say- for example, you interrupt people in the middle of their sentences- you need to let this hit you only as a constructive criticism. Know that the person who told you this isn’t saying they do not want to be your friend anymore. If that was the case, they would have just left. However, in healthy relationships, each person needs to feel like they can voice a grievance they have with the person in a way that maintains the dignity of both parties. They do not dislike you as a person. They dislike that particular habit. If you work on it and the
problem is resolved, you will be able to enjoy a closer relationship with them. People with high levels of stress can be sensitive to criticism because they interpret it as rejection. Just remember to take it in the spirit it was meant to be. You can probably name a behavior you would like to see them change, and yet that is compartmentalized from the love and care you feel for them. If they really are your friend, it is the same way for them.

Coping With Stress at Night

Let’s talk about coping with stress when it hits most often, which is at night. This is because you do not have anything left to do, which means you have a lot of time to think. This makes it so that your sleep is delayed and interrupted. If you cannot turn off the dialogue in your mind, you will be unable to sleep. This is unfortunate because nighttime is when you need to find your center so that you can get a good night’s sleep.

When we fail to do this, we do not think or perform well. Therefore, learning how to distance yourself from upsetting thoughts and stimuli from the outside world is what your health depends on. This means you must get a handle on those sneaky nighttime worries. You know the ones I’m talking about. Your eyes are getting heavy. You are just about to drift off when all of a sudden, a thought comes to you so abruptly you swear you can hear it out loud- “Did I pay my light bill?” At this moment, you sit up, wide awake now, and go to check it out. You find out that you did, and while you feel relieved, you no longer feel like going to sleep, and it could take hours for you to get back into that state. When this
happens, you were bated into disrupting your own sleep. Now we are going to talk about how to refrain from taking the bate in the future.

You might need to do something that represents putting your worries away before you go to bed. For example, you might keep a journal specifically for this purpose, preferably one that can be sealed shut. Every night, write down everything that is troubling you. When you are done, close the journal and put in a drawer. The closing of it symbolizes cutting yourself away from it. The book is shut so you cannot look at the content inside of it. Putting it somewhere that you cannot see it means it is out of reach for the night. You might look at them tomorrow, but for now you need to let go of anything that is not conducive to sleep, which is one of the most important aspects of maintaining a healthy mental state.

After a person goes a certain amount of time without proper sleep, most of the time only being a few days, a person will begin to deteriorate. For one, your cognitive function becomes compromised. This means you cannot think critically or remember information, or in some cases even taken it in. Your mood will be affected. You will become more irritable and overall emotional, which makes you more likely to make rash decisions that can affect you permanently. For example, you might say some extremely harsh words to a valued friend over a minor annoyance, and in the long run it deals damage to your relationship with them. If the lack of sleep goes on even longer, a person can start to mimic signs of insanity.
Before you go to bed, eliminate all possible distractions. This means putting your phone and computer away. The cycle begins when you lie in bed with your phone telling yourself you are only going to respond to this one text and then go directly to bed. However, one text leads to another. You might look something up in the internet. Someone could call and you decide you are just going to talk for a few minutes, and a few minutes become a few hours. In short, electronics and sleep deprivation go hand in hand. Lie down and make sure you have nothing to do. This is also not a time to think deeply about anything. Whatever has not been fixed yet is going to have to wait until tomorrow. Do not start any new trains of thought. Visualize things that help you clear your mind, and make sure all of these things are pleasant.

There is a dark underbelly to taking medication to get to sleep. If you do this for a prolonged period of time, you will become dependent on it. If you do not have it you will be unable to sleep. Also, as you go on using the medication, you will build up a tolerance to it. The amount you took before will no longer put you to sleep. This means you will need to take increasingly larger doses of it to achieve the same effect. It will get to the point where every time you go to the store you will need to buy more of it. You will start to buy multiple containers of it so you can make it last throughout the week, meaning the amount of money you spend on this will rack up. As you amp up your dosage, you will find that you feel groggy in the mornings. If you are having problems sleeping, there are many healthier and more natural means of fixing this problem. You can
listen to a relaxation audio or practice a guided meditation. As an alternative to the medication, you can also take tablets of melatonin, which is a natural substance that helps the body fall asleep. You will wake up the next morning feeling rested and ready to get up.

Manage Your Stress, Even Amidst Chaos

There will be times that there is a lot of chaos going on in this world and around these times, your life will naturally be more stressful than usual. This is why you will need to firmly establish the idea that your home is a safe haven that you go to at the end of the day to escape anything going on in your daily life that is troubling you.

There needs to be a cutoff time for thinking about heavy subjects. For one, there is nothing you can do about them right then. For another thing, you will be unable to sleep if you are plagued with worries and other negative emotions. This will cause you to get poor sleep so that the next day, you are tired and therefore unable to take on the challenges of the day as well as you would have if you had been rested enough to do so. You will never feel as exhausted as when you are trying to get up in the morning after having stayed up all night under extreme stress.

You must put a hard stop to researching morbid issues and thinking about something that brings you pain in the evening. There are bits of information that you do not need to know. As people, we are curious. When we hear of a story
that captured our interest, we can quickly spiral down into a pattern where we are trying to figure out every intimate and often gruesome detail about it. These details have no worth because you get nothing good from knowing them. It will not help you to have it and in fact you will hurt yourself by finding them out. While it is not the majority, there are some things in this world that are purely painful. There are stories that only tell of horrible things with no happy conclusion. If you let those sink too far into your mind, it can have an effect on your psyche.

**You Create Your Own Reality**

In order to gain control of your thoughts so you can organize them, you need to eliminate the idea from your mind that you cannot bring your stress down or that it will not allow you to turn your focus away from it. Think about how many times you have felt an urge to do something but did not. This goes to show that feelings cannot control your actions even if they are intense. You can make your own reality.

A major similarity controlling your stress has with raising a child is the fact that there will be times that, like a child, your mind will try to assert more power over you than it should have. Think about the parent who never tells their child no. They do not set limitations on them, or if they try they soon give in if the child starts to throw a tantrum.
hen they do this, they are rewarding bad behavior and this goes to have devastating consequences for a young mind. They learn that they can get anything they want if they just push hard enough. The parent is allowing themselves to be bullied in their own home and they are setting the child up to have a tendency towards bullying others.

How this relates to your mind is that if you follow the rules the anxiety sets for you and give in every time it tries to pull you into an overthinking cycle, you might think you are getting it off of your back for a little while just as a parent thinks they are buying themselves sometime of relief from their child’s tantrum. However, what you are really doing is making it so that the anxiety will hit you twice as hard the next time you try to deny it attention. It knows it just has to find the pitch that it has to hit to make you crumble.

ou can resist anxiety and get unpleasant thoughts out of your mind. Think about an instance where you saw someone wearing a very nice piece of jewelry that you loved the look of. You might have felt a moment of envy about it and wished it was yours, but that feeling came and went. It did not cause you to try to take the jewelry away from them. You can do the same thing with any other feeling. You have been angry at someone before without slapping them. You have been sad but resisted the urge to cry because you did not deem it an appropriate time or place to do so.

hink about what you had to do to stop yourself from crying. First, you set a ground rule for yourself and your mind- “We are not going to do
this right now. It is not going to happen and that is final.” You were firm and did not leave room for doubt about the way things were going to be. The next thing you probably did was look for a way to distract yourself from the upsetting stimulus. You might have searched the room for something to read or a picture to focus on the detail. Maybe you remembered a story your father told you that made you laugh. No matter what it was, you shifted your focus to something more pleasant, or at least that did not make you want to cry. After a little while, you got to the point where you were able to think about the story or picture instead of whatever was upsetting you until the effect wore off and you were either at a place where you could show your emotions or a time where its emotional effect on you wasn’t as great.

Whenever you feel stress coming on and its impact is becoming too much, remember that technique. You may not be able to change your circumstance, but you can mentally pull yourself to another place. As a disclaimer, this is not the same thing as dissociation. Actually, learning how to do this will help you prevent yourself from it. Thinking about unpleasant things and getting caught up in the emotions associated with them will cause dissociation. In the study of trauma, that is essentially what happens to an afflicted person when they have a flashback. It is more than remembering the event. They are reliving it as if it is happening all over again.

This same process can happen even if what the person is remembering isn’t as extreme as being in a life-threatening
situation. They might have had an intense argument with their significant other. Their boss might have told them they were on notice for showing up to work late. It can be something as simple as having spilled red wine onto their favorite outfit that they were planning to wear for an important event and now they have to figure something else out at the last minute. Whatever it was, it upset them and it has caused uncertainty about the future.

**Unhealthy Coping Mechanisms**

A common but unhealthy way of dealing with stress is through food or alcohol. You’ve probably heard someone say they need a glass of wine because they have had a long day. Everyone has something to drink once in a while to take the edge off. Alcohol is not bad- alcohol abuse is. It is meant to make you loosen up some and liven up a social event.

However, when it is used as a substitute for dealing with one’s problems, an entire set of problems will surface from this. For one, everyone knows when you drink too much alcohol, the next morning you wake up the next morning with a hangover, which feels very unpleasant. When a person reaches a certain point of drunkenness, they become out of control of what they say and do because the filter in their head is gone. This means along with feeling physically ill in the morning, you will be dealing with feelings of shame and guilt about things that happened the night before. Often the said sense of shame will emphasize the person’s urge to drink more. There is a misconception that the consumption of alcohol will help you not think about something upsetting, which is
not true. In fact, it will have the opposite effect. Any emotion you are feeling, especially an unpleasant one, will be magnified whenever your mind is influenced by alcohol.

There are also those who are self-proclaimed stress-eaters. This means instead of eating because they are hungry, they are using it as a means of dealing with their problems. One of the most commonly used phrases by Dr. Phil is that “you should never treat psychological problems somatically. What he means by that is that if you have an emotional upset that is affecting your daily life, you cannot expect to alleviate with something that has to do with your physical state. When people turn to “comfort food” as an answer for their problems, the relief will only last as long as the dish does, and after that the stress comes right back to where it was before. Then they have to face the decision of being in a state of distress or eating something else. If this pattern keeps up, the person will be burdened with a number of struggles, including becoming overweight and the health issues associated with that. Liking food is one thing, but using it as a crutch is another. The same concept can be applied to any habit. To deal with stress, you must find a productive way to do so. If you feel pain or discomfort while doing it, that is a good indicator that it is not.

Meditation for Stress Relief

Meditation has been talked about extensively over the past couple of decades as a stress relief method. It is favored because not only is it perfectly, but you do not have to pay a dime or go anywhere to do it. To get the best effects, make sure the room
you are meditating in looks nice and put together. This activity is meant to make your mind calmer and more orderly, so it wouldn’t make any sense to expect yourself to be able to do that in a cluttered room.

You will want to do this at a time where you can sink into your own mind without any distractions. This means unplugging from your technology devices and putting any work you have to do out of your sight for the time being. You do not want to have anything around you that could ask for your attention, because this time is all about you. There are different ways people meditate, and they are all valid. There are some people who prefer to do it in total silence, while others like to put on instrumental music. If you are going to use music, it is preferable that it does not come with words. This is because if it does, your mind can be lead a certain way by them.

Do not be afraid of making time for yourself. Everyone needs some “me-time” so that they can recharge. If you are always being pulled off in one direction after another, how can you expect to be able to focus? Mental health days are necessary for maintaining one’s well-being. It is hard for people with cluttered minds to give themselves a break because they place a pressure on themselves to always be “on”- ready to help and take action or working on something. They do not know what it is like to have silence within their minds.
You have to make some parts of your life fun. Your psyche will not survive being without any enjoyable moments. Even if you are low on cash for this week or cannot go anywhere, you can still find ways to put some pleasure into your life.

All Forms of Stress Relief Matter

Not all forms of stress relief are conventional. Your first thought might be about a quiet activity, but it does not have to be. Going out for a run or kickboxing count as managing stress because it provides a release of negative emotions, which you need to have. While you are doing whatever you do to destress, imagine the weightlifting and the negative energy that has built up over the day dissipating. Our minds are powerful enough that sometimes if we just visualize something, we can make it come true for ourselves. Think about how many times your mind has managed to ruin entire days over a single thought. That means you can turn that on its head.

Do not have the end result of something played out in your mind before it actually happens. This is how people create a self-fulfilling prophecy. It is not because you are singled out. It is because when we feel like people do not like us, we will grow a dislike for people that shows in our actions. If you do not think you will be good at anything, you will not try anything because you think you will fail.

Finding your center means you need to remodel the space in your mind if it does not help you succeed. To succeed, you must have
confidence in yourself. You cannot expect to have no faith in yourself and then do well. Gather things that represent the various talents and skills of yours. Maybe your boss had something good to say about you on your end of the year review. If you sew, take a picture of something you have created and post it onto your social media so you can receive positive feedback for your work. This will give you a sense of accomplishment and make you feel purpose for what you do.
MANAGING YOUR THOUGHTS

If you have a cluttered brain, it is easy to look at others who do not seem to suffer from this and think they must just be lucky and not have the same problems with their thoughts as you do. It can make you feel inferior to them and like they have a secret that is lost on you. The truth is, other people only look like they have it more together than you because you do not know what is going on inside of their minds. If you did, you would get a very different story. There is no such thing as a person whose thoughts do not come to them in a rush. What keeps their brain uncluttered is that they actively sort out their thoughts as they come. Imagine a person who takes their clothes out of the laundry and throws them all into their dresser drawers as they can be fit instead of taking the time to fold and put them away.

Get Your Thoughts Under Control

Organizing your thoughts is something you have to put effort into. It has to be a consistent thing because there will never come a point where your life stops being exposed to new chaotic events. Everyone has had moments where they wished they could go back to “simpler times”. However, while they were living said times, there were things that were bothering them. The reason those problems feel so insignificant now is that you are not currently experiencing them. You can easily forget how they made you feel. On the other hand, you feel the full effect of the problems you have now, so you think of them as the worst ones you have ever had.

However, if we spend every second of our lives thinking things are the worst they have ever been, we will live in a constant state of distress. This is why you need to get your thoughts under control. Think about how when there is a traffic jam or other crisis on the road. When this happens, there will be traffic cops on either side of the road, signaling to
drivers where they need to go, when they can move forward and when they need to stay put. They are directing the flow of traffic so that no one gets into an accident, but everyone gets to go where they were intending to.

Use this mentality when you are dealing with your thoughts. The thoughts that bring harm to you have to take a road that leaves your mind. This includes you talking down to yourself- dredging up an old memory of something you feel you did wrong, a past embarrassment, or anything to make you feel ashamed of yourself. Any form of insulting yourself is unacceptable. They cannot stay in any form.

Up next, you need to figure out which thoughts are about something that will eventually need to be addressed, but not right now. Think about when you are baking a cake. You do not try to put the frosting onto it before the batter has even been mixed together. Therefore, you put the frosting aside and wait until the cake has been baked and cooled down enough that it will not be damaged by the friction.

Then, finally, there are the thoughts that can proceed. If you are taking a test, thoughts about the subject material are welcome. You might wish you were at the pool or able to think about something else, such as when you will get to go out with your friends, but that leads to another section of traffic flow- the ones that will be tempting but are not suited for your current activity.

There will be many times in your life that you will need to get a thought to leave, whether that is a temporary or permanent thing. Let’s say you are having worries about the state of your employment because there have been a lot of layoffs lately. Without a doubt this is troubling thing to have to think about. If you are giving your best performance during your work
hours, there is nothing else you can do. At that point, it is beyond your control. Make preparations so you will be able to recover from it if the worst case scenario comes to life, but do not let it become an all-consuming force in your life. If it does happen, you will not be able to react to it with proficiency because you will have worn yourself out already. It would be like a boxer training for hours right before he had a match. He would be completely ineffective because he would have already used up all of his strength.

Role Conflict

When you participate in your life, there is a certain level of wearing a mask that you have to do. It does not mean you are being dishonest. You just need to blend to a certain theme. You are not the same person with your boss and coworkers that you are with your family. There will be times that contradicting expectations are placed upon you. This is referred to as role conflict. Sometimes this goes farther than simply having to assume a more professional and serious personality than the one you normally have. The most common form this takes is when a person is forced to make a decision between work and their family. When you have role conflict, it is easy to feel overwhelmed. You feel like you cannot make the right decision.

The harsh truth is that there is no perfect decision. No matter what you do, there will be someone who thinks you did the wrong thing. This is why when you have to make tough decisions, you have to learn to have faith in the one you made. Say you took time off of work because your child is sick. There might be a few people who say this is being an unreliable employee. However, if you were to make the opposite decision there would be people who thought you did the wrong thing by not being with your family. This is when you need to make the choice you can live with. This means either you can stand to miss out on family or work.
fter you have made a decision, there is often a new source of stress that replaces the one that comes from not knowing which path to take. You then will have some doubts about whether you made the right decision. In this circumstance, you need to make a point to let these thoughts go. They are only hurting you. You might even need to verbalize this- not pleading with them to leave but making the resolution that they are not welcome in your mind, just as you would tell someone that had showed up uninvited at your house that they cannot stay overnight.

**Prioritize Thoughts**

You need to recognize when you are giving a thought more time than it deserves. It will seem impossible to abandon a thought that is troubling you at first, but I can assure you that you can and you will. The first thing you need to do is release the expectation on yourself to do so. This will make it so that there is stress surrounding the thought. When we do this to a thought, our brains will automatically become more drawn to it. It becomes a sore that you cannot stop picking at even though you know doing this will only make it worse. When you have such a wound on your skin, what you need to do is put some ointment on it and then leave it alone. If you do this, before long it will disappear.

To manage your thoughts, you need to be mindful of what information enters your brain. When you get on a roll of thinking about negative things, it can take on a life of its own until that becomes the entire content of your brain. You cannot let it get to that point because that will color how you feel in your daily life. Since this is so often a source of both information and anxiety for many, I will discuss the news first.

**Media Management**

Keeping up with the news is a good thing because it will allow you to stay up with the times and respond to information that you need to know. However, there is only a certain extent to which you should do this.
When you have gotten the gist of what is going on, it is time to switch the channel away from the news. You will feel tempted to go through every single story and all of the theories behind them. You spend hours at a time watching videos and reading articles about it, probably losing sleep in the process. Before long, you will look up and find that it consumes your every thought. Since the big stories on the news are typically negative ones, such as a murder or serious illness, your mind will solely focused on something that brings you down. This will cause you to go through your day with a cloud hanging over your head. You will not be able to interact with your day because your thoughts are with something morose.

Social Circle Management

Another source of information you need to manage is your social circle. Yes, the people in our lives flood us with information constantly. It is in the stories and jokes they tell you. It happens when you are discussing your opinion about current events with them. Even when they are showing you a song they like, they are giving you information that will have an impact on your brain. We become the people we surround ourselves with. This is because when you spend enough time with a person, you become consistently exposed to their ideas. You will repeatedly hear them voice their opinions, and this will have an effect on how you feel. It is true that moods are contagious, both good and bad. However, the thing about a bad mood is that it is almost impossible to pull someone out of it, especially if that is where they want to be. There will be people you meet during your life that are consistently negative. They do not have anything good to say about anyone or anything. Your conversations with them will always have a borderline angry tone because any time you try to get excited or talk about something you like, you will be shot down. They like to watch your face fall when they tell you that they do not like or care about what you are talking about. They do this to feel a sense of superiority over you.
here is also the person who always has a conflict going on with someone else. The conversation can never be about something besides their latest drama. You might even make an effort to veer the conversation away from that and onto something else, but they will not have that. They want to pull you into it and give your input, putting you at risk because they might tell that person what you said.

Then there is the user. This person only calls you whenever they need something. The favor tends to be big and costly to you, whether it is monetary or simply taking up a lot of their time. Once you have given them what they want, you will not hear from them until the cycle repeats itself. The roles will never switch in this relationship, where you are the one receiving help from them, no matter how much they declare that you are their best friend and that they will give back to you later on.

You will feel exhausted after talking to any of these people. That is the one common trait between them. This is because they are something known as an emotional vampire. This kind of person gets their name because like the mythical creature gains life force by draining living people of theirs, this person does the same thing with your energy. You cannot give enough to them, and you will never get anything in return from them. It is an abusive relationship because they do not take you into consideration and you often feel bad about yourself after your interactions with them.

Do not wait for a time where things change with this person. There will not come a point where they realize everything you have done for them and show gratitude and reciprocation. You will only waste your time with them. It does not have to be a big, eventful scene for you to cut them out of your life. Simply do not talk to them- this means answering their calls and text messages. When they try to pull you into an emotional argument, stick to
whatever you need to talk about and stick to the facts— a technique often referred to as gray-rocket. Do not have conflict unless you need to. You’ve probably heard the term “pick your battles.” This is because they cause stress and you have to invest a lot of time and energy into them. You might never even see a resolution to it.

**Environmental Management**

Along with managing your relationships, make sure you are also placing yourself in a good environment that will give you more positive thoughts. These changes do not have to be extreme. If you generally keep your blinds closed, open them up for a change. Exposure to natural light will have a surprising effect on your energy levels and mood. When you spend too much time in an enclosed space with the lights off, you will begin to feel depressed about it. You will feel contained. Even though you are physically free to leave this room, you will start to feel like you are trapped in it because the space outside of it is so unfamiliar.

Much of the clutter in our minds comes from concerning yourself with what is going with other people. You do not need to take on the problems of everyone around you. This will be difficult being the empathetic person I know you are, but to try to pull an emotional vampire out of their slumps is impossible. What they really want to do is feed off of you and bring you down with them. You cannot help them any more than they want to be helped, and if they really want to see a change in their life, it is up to them to do the legwork. You can send positive thoughts their way, but after that you must let go. It is not lacking compassion to do that. It is an act of self-preservation.

**Complainer Management**
Limit the amount of time you spend listening to someone else talk about a problem. It is one thing to be there for a friend who needs to vent. However, the difference is that there comes an end to the discussion about the tough times. Eventually, they find a solution to the problem and then you move on. If they cannot do that, they will become a burden on you that is too heavy and consistent to carry long-term. It is true that with every close connection we have with others, we will deal with a certain amount of drama, but it cannot be the only thing that comes out of the relationship.

We've all had that person in our lives who just wants to complain. They'll be talking about the same friendship, relationship, or other problem that they were six months ago, and nothing has changed. They claim to wish things were different but make no move to make that so. You will spend endless hours and evenings on this, but they will never do anything about it in the end. When this happens, it is not friendship. You are being used. They don’t want to change their situation but they do want to complain about it. You do not owe it to anyone to listen to something you don’t want to. It is stressful to be that friend who is always there. It is also unlikely that they will be there for you in your times of need.

You might think someone is making a poor choice, and you might be right about that, but it is not something you can impact. It is not your place to say what they do, and if you try to insert yourself into the situation it will do more harm than good, and you risk creating conflict. Do not waste time and energy worrying about things you cannot control. The choices other people make fall into this category.

When you think about the people you associate with, you need to pay special attention to your romantic relationships. This person could potentially become the one you live with, marry, and have a family with. If this happens, you will spend every day of your life with them. This means
they will have the biggest impact on your life, so you want to make sure you are entering a relationship with someone for the right reasons. The media is infamous for making emotional pain seem romantic. Two people have a relationship that is filled with pain but they cannot stop pining over one another, and this is depicted as a great love. It is one thing to enjoy a story, but you need to make sure this stays fictional and does not become a fixture in your real life. If something feels hopeless, more often than not that is because it is.

Relationships are difficult by default, but this comes with a caveat—they should not constantly be this way. There should be sometimes where you just have a nice dinner or enjoy an afternoon together. If it is always a life-or-death struggle with one another just to keep the relationship intact, this is only hurting you. If you find that you are always thinking negatively about yourself, it is time to look at the relationships in your life with a more critical eye than you have before.

Replace Negative Thoughts with Positive Ones

It is not enough to just try to stop unpleasant thoughts from entering your mind. You need to replace them with positive ones or they will just come right back to you. Try to think of what the opposite of this thought could be. For example, you are going out with some new friends. Your mind might be conditioned to think “what am I going to do to embarrass myself this time?” This will cause you not to look forward to the event and maybe even cancel. Instead of this, try thinking of what could go right. Get dressed up nicely and imagine them complimenting your outfit. Maybe they will like your sense of humor.

One of the secrets to decluttering your thoughts is to not have so many of them. You might be thinking right now “How do I do that? You can’t stop thoughts from coming into your head!” To an extent, this is true.
However, people with anxiety tend to think about things from every negative angle possible. Try letting life happen a little. Have you ever gripped onto something extremely tight with your hands? Did you notice they were red and even stung a little afterward? When you try to keep such a heavy hold on the way things happen, it will cause you harm. If you are going out with someone for the first time, you do not need to think about whether or not the relationship is working in just one date. Think of it this way- you are first getting to know them. This is to see if you have any common interests. If you end up going on a second date, you do. If you do not, at least you got some social experience and you may even gain a friend from it.

To manage your thoughts, you must keep a handle on your emotions. This does not mean holding them in- the opposite is so. You need to express them in a healthy time, place, and way. If you have clutter in your brain, it invariably means there are feelings you need to get out. Emotions that have been bottled up over a long period of time will come out in a rush. Think about how when a container of soda is opened after it has been out in the sun for a long time and shaken around. It will overflow, spraying around everywhere and you will have absolutely no control over where it goes. Our emotions mimic this. You might not know how to express something that is bothering you, but if you wait too long to do so you will cause that choice to be taken away from you. Humans are emotional creatures, and when we are highly charged in this area, we lose the filter in our head. We will say whatever comes to our mind in exactly the way it first come out, meaning we will not take any time to see if there is a better way to word it.

Don’t Bottle Up Your Emotions

You are not doing anyone any favors by holding all of your emotions in. First, you are harming yourself. Emotions like anger, sadness and fear are poisonous to keep to yourself. In the short run, you might be
sparing them hearing something they don’t want to, but in the long run, you will hurt them just as much as you have hurt yourself up to this point.

Both fear and sadness will evolve into a more volatile form over time. You might think you are doing your friend a favor and salvaging the relationship by not letting them know that something they do hurts your feelings, but when you think about it for a moment, it doesn’t hold up to logic. When we feel like someone is doing something to harm us but does not care, it will eventually equate to anger. Even if we do not tell someone about an issue we have with them, we can often feel like they should have picked up on what we are feeling through our facial expressions, tone of voice, body language and way of wording things. When they do not, our brain will give the message that the person does not even care about us enough to notice. This will cause the resentment to build up even more. If this keeps up, it will not take long for you to develop a deep and seething anger toward that person, and meanwhile they will not have been given a chance to defend themselves or change their behavior so that it creates a better relationship.

When it does finally come out, it will be too harsh. You will likely use terms like “you always” and “you never”. There will be more force in the message than necessary and pieces of it that are not meant to get your point, but to cause emotional pain. You might feel vindicated for a little while afterwards and glad that you have finally been able to get that big weight off of your chest, but that feeling will be short lived. Pretty soon, you will start to feel guilty and wish you could take your words back, which is impossible. Your relationship with that person will be strained.

Direct Communication

In order to effectively communicate with others, you need to get out of the habit of trying to “say it without saying it.” If you want to go to a certain sandwich shop, say that explicitly. Don’t just say something like “It would be a
good day for a sandwich” and then assume the other person does not want to
do that or does not care what you want if they do not respond. You need to let
them know that is the type of sandwich you are thinking of as opposed to just
making one at home and that you have an active interest in going out to get
it. Otherwise, they might think you are just having a passing thought about it.
When you are conveying a message, you need to say exactly what it is.
People are wired to think there is no problem if you do not bring one up. They
also do not respond well to finding out there was something wrong after the
fact and then being told something like “I didn’t tell you because I didn’t want
to bother you.” Even if you genuinely mean that you were trying to preserve
their well-being, they will think this means you do not trust them or that you
are implying that they do not do their part in the relationship.

Also, when you try to go for the “beat around the bush” type of
communication, you will be consistently upset. Your words will be
vague and therefore misinterpreted. For example, you tell your partner you
want something red for Christmas, and you are expecting them to think of the
type of perfume you like. When they get you a red locket, you will be
disappointed and it will show on your face, so they will know. You will feel like
your needs are not being met, and this will continue if you do not ask for what
you want. Think of the saying “the squeaky wheel is the one that gets the
grease”. This means if no one will think you need anything if you do not say
so.

Now that we have discussed the thoughts that need tended to, let’s
talk about times where a thought needs to be ignored. In order to
keep your mind healthy, you must not hold yourself to every thought that
passes through your mind. If someone does you wrong and you have a
momentary wish for them to have misfortune, you do not need to punish
yourself over this. We are only humans, and we have more thoughts per day
than we can process. There are going to be times where you have thoughts
and impulses that do not sit well with you.
Bad Thoughts Do Not Make a Bad Person

Not every time you have a bad thought does it mean something is wrong with you. What is wrong is holding onto anger and ill wishes toward others. It would be great if we could never think anything unpleasant about anyone, but that is not a realistic thing to expect of yourself all the time. When we are disappointed by and angry with people, we are going to have some rogue thoughts fly through our heads. They come and go, and then it is as if they never happened. You do not have to disclose or confess to everything you say and think. I can assure you that for everyone in this world, down to a person, if you were to have access to every thought they have ever had, there would be things you would find that would shock and disgust you.

Also remember this. Thought does not equal action. That is what separates civilized people from the uncivilized ones. You may think to throw your drink at someone because they said something rude to you, but the important part is that you do not actually go through with it. It may feel like you have done something whenever you have a thought or fantasy because the image of it plays in your mind, but in reality nothing has happened. This is because our thoughts are only as real as we make them. I make this point because people with anxiety often suffer from immense guilt. You consider yourself to be a bad person because you hold yourself to a morality that cannot be attained. There is no such thing as that hero on the cartoons that always makes the right decision, battles evil, and wins. You need to rid yourself of the notion that you are never going to do anything that causes harm to anyone. Of course, you would not seek to perpetrate violence or other serious harm to anyone, but there will be times that you lose your temper and say some choice words to someone. You will not be as emotionally available for someone as they need you to be at times. You will continue to suffer immensely for as long as you place the pressure on yourself to not ever make a mistake.
Allow yourself to have a thought come and go without thinking it needs to be placed under scrutiny or thinking there must be some big hidden truth, whether within yourself or something or someone else, that you need to figure out because of it. When you have a thought that is intrusive and unhelpful, such as one that puts you down or makes you think you might be a bad person, it is time to tell that thought that it is silly and holds no weight.

Turn dissociation on its head. Tune out the unhealthy thoughts with things you would rather think about. Dissociate from the negative self-talk and intrusive thoughts by keeping your eyes trained onto the task at hand, even if it is small. If your task is to go to sleep because you have a long day ahead of you, that is where your thoughts should be. If you have a performance, focus on having fun, not what others might say or all of the mistakes you might make. Only humor thoughts that are useful or give you comfort and happiness, and throw the rest of them away.
LIVING AN ORGANIZED LIFE

YOU HAVE PROBABLY HEARD the idea that a cluttered house is a good indicator of a cluttered mind. This is true because we tend to replicate what is going on inside of our minds in our surroundings. In times where you are too busy to have much register in your mind, it is likely that your living spaces will have that chaotic look- dishes not put away, clothes in places other than the laundry bin, the surfaces dusty, and overall an unpolished look. This will be unpleasant to look at, which will go on to increase your stress. On the other hand, when your living space looks nice, you will feel a sigh of relief whenever you open your front door.

The Tranquil Type vs The Anxious Type

Also, think about the way people with a tranquil mindset live their life as opposed to people who are constantly anxious. The anxious type invests in relationships that are volatile, whereas people with organized lives gravitate away from people who are causing them too much stress. This does not mean there will never come a point that they reconnect with that person, but it will have to be when some changes have been made and a conversation with them can be productive. When a tranquil person is hit with a setback, their mind goes to how to get to a solution rather than wallowing in how severe the problem is. When they take on a project, they take it on in smaller, more manageable bits. When your life is organized in other aspects of your life, your mind will fall into the same pattern. You have to begin this in your daily ritual.
Imagine a person that wakes up every morning in a bedroom with sheets that were not made the night before, and they look around at a room that has trash strewn about it. Things are piled haphazardly on top of one another and the surfaces have various food containers and glasses sitting on them, leaving nowhere to place anything. Their laundry basket is piled up to the top and starting to brim, causing some dirty clothes to fall onto the floor. They are trying to find their keys and something acceptable to wear, which takes a while because of the disorganization of their possessions. They realize there is a paper that they cannot find and it is only five minutes until they have to leave for work, so they realize they are just going to have to explain to their supervisor that they do not have it and hope for the best while they rush out the door without having any breakfast. They are feeling groggy because they were up until a disturbing hour of the morning finishing a project that had been assigned to them a long time ago and they are hoping it will be deemed acceptable.

There is no way this person would be able to draw any organization into any aspect of their life, especially not within their mind, if they kept going on a pattern like this. When we put out chaotic energy, not only will we not attract things that are positive, but we will repel them.

We all have stressful lives that are filled with demanding daily schedules and responsibilities that clash with one
another. There is no getting away from that. If you are waiting for a
time that this comes to an end to have a less stressful life, that is not
going to happen. You need to become responsible for your own
stress relief. You may not be able to anything about how heavy the
expectations placed onto you are, but you do have the power to
decide what your experience with these tasks are.

Planning Ahead vs Dreading the Future

There is a difference between planning ahead and
dreading the future. It is good to be prepared for what bumps in the
road would come along. For example, if you are going outside and
the sky looks cloudy, it is wise to bring an umbrella. This is proactive.
However, it would do nothing but cause you distress if you were to
board up all of your windows even though the weatherman had given
you no indication that a storm was coming. You would be putting a
great deal of work into something that turned out to be pointless
once the storm was over and it turned out that there was never a
need to do such a thing.

You can choose to make your life less cluttered. At the
beginning of each day, figure out what tasks you are going
to need to take on. Living moment to moment puts you in
a position where you are always uncertain and feel like you are just
about to fall behind. This means you need to prepare for what could
happen (realistically, not reaching for a hypothetical situation) in
advance instead of not doing so and then becoming frantic when a
situation comes up. As I said before, you do not want to cause
yourself undue stress, but you also do not want to avoid reality
because you do not want to experience unpleasant feelings. When we let life happen to us without us, we will never feel like we are keeping up.

Organize the problems in your life. If you do not do this, everything will feel like a crisis. This means you will spend your life in a constant state of anxiety. The top of the list is emergencies. Very few things in life will live up to this category. Someone’s life typically needs to be in danger for that to be so. Below this are the very significant responsibilities that cannot be shirked- taxes, work, and so on. Then there are things that you need to do but can be put off a day or two if you need to- extra credit projects, changing your bedsheets, etc. Finally, there are the things that do not matter at all, and will not make one bit of difference in your life. The most common thing in this category that people of the anxious sort worry about is what other people think of them.

Learn to Say No

If you have a cluttered mind, there is a good chance that doing too much for others plays a role in it. You must learn to say no to people. You are not putting them out. In fact, you are passing their request off to someone who does have the time and means to do it.

People who cannot say no will often find themselves having to explain why they could not get done what you promised that you would. This is an embarrassing and uncomfortable situation to be in. You will have to deal with others being frustrated with you
because things they are coming to find out that they still need to worry about what they thought would be taken care of. This is why turning down a request you know you cannot fulfill is the actual kind thing to do.

It is easy to get the wrong idea of what it means to be a good person. There is such an emphasis on being “nice”- if you are nice, it means you never disappoint anybody. If you tell them no, you are giving them bad news, and therefore you are being mean. You need to do whatever they want, even if you do not want to or have time for it.

True kindness is giving to others and yourself what you can realistically do. It is telling them the truth even if it is hard to hear. Say your friend asks you what you think of their outfit and you notice that the patterns they are wearing clash. If you nod and say you like it, you are setting them up to go out in public looking bad. Therefore it is telling them what you think they want to hear. The true kind thing to do would be to suggest a different shirt that is a better fit for the pants they have on.

You also back yourself into a corner when you try to always please others with your answers. If you pretend to like a TV show that you really do not for their sake, they are going to start constantly playing it. You will be bored and feel yourself becoming upset with them for always wanting to watch it. You will eventually have to do the uncomfortable task of telling them
how you actually feel and deal with the discomfort they feel about that knowledge. They will be upset to hear that you never really enjoyed this activity that they thought was your thing, and that all of the time the two of you were having fun in their mind, you had a very different perspective. You will have to live out consequences of being insincere. Your life will be chaotic on both an internal and external level. You will have emotional turmoil from not being honest with yourself and have conflict with others because there will be a lack of honesty as well.

Information Overload

Let’s talk for a minute about a couple of things you need to watch out for in your work life. You’ve probably heard the term “information overload.” You go to a business meeting or lecture, and the speaker fills an entire hour with facts, information and other things they want you to remember. By the end of it, you can barely name one thing that was mentioned during the entire discussion even though you were listening. This is because you did not get enough time to process anything, and it is why we cannot procrastinate and then expect to jam-pack a large amount of information into a short period of time. Think about a time you had slacked off on studying for a class, and then tried to study and learn all of the material the night before. You were lucky to remember anything. Often, procrastinating becomes a habit that spreads into everything one does, which is how they get the idea that they can pull everything together at once by multitasking. There is no such thing as true multitasking. Something will have to be neglected. Have you ever tried to talk on the phone while writing something else down
that was unrelated to what you were talking about? You cannot concentrate on two things at once.

**Declutter Your Space**

I cannot stress enough how important a clean house is to decluttering your brain. You cannot expect to have a cluttered living space and an organized mind. Disorganization around us naturally causes anxiety because it creates the feeling of being out of control. You also know that if you had to find anything, you would need to sift through a jumbled mess of junk trying to find what you do need.

Get rid of things you do not need anymore. Letting old, used and unnecessary things pile up will lead to hoarding. You need things that either currently serve a purpose or that make you happy to see in your house. This means decorations. It doesn’t need to be anything elaborate. Artificial flowers that cost a couple of dollars at your local store counts as a decoration. It may not be much, but just a little item here or there can go a long way in beautifying your house.

Make little changes to your house depending on the season or time of year. If you don’t like to completely deck your house out, you do not have to, but get some Halloween-themed cups near the end of October. Put up a tree and stockings for the holidays. Send someone a card on Valentine’s day. When days that are supposed to be festive pass by and you do nothing, this will cause you to become depressed. Also, participating in these
events will make you feel more connected to the outside world and you will be putting your energy into something positive.

We all have energy and inspiration. It is just a matter of where we channel it into. Some people do not tap into it. Others pour it into something that will not be good for them. You need to look at what you are putting first in your life with a critical eye.

Adopt a Routine

One thing you need to adopt is creating a routine for yourself, meaning things you do on a daily basis. They should include self-care and enrichment. People with such routines live more organized lives and have a clearer mental space because these habitual practices create a solid ground for you to stand on. This way, even if something unpleasant happens to you, there is still something good waiting for you at the end of the day.

These routines also serve as a positive force to drive you. To declutter your brain, you need to be able to recognize when you have something in your life that is only causing you stress. It could be a friendship with someone who starts arguments with other people on a consistent basis and drags you into them. It could be a relationship that is always hanging on by one finger.
t is important to figure out what you do not need anymore. Old receipts, candy wrappers, assignments from years ago, and things that are cracked or broken are all junk. They do not serve any purpose for you at the current time. They just take up space.

You need to be careful when you are judging what is a sentimental item because this can lead to its own form of hoarding. If you feel the need to keep everything that ever once carried some meaning, you will never be able to throw anything given to you by anyone. You will pile up every card you’ve ever gotten for any occasion—holidays, birthdays, etc.—no matter how many years ago they were given to you. Your friend gave you a trinket that was beautiful at the time, but now it has age on it and it does not look the way it did when it was first given to you.

Think about the intention from the person who gave it to you. They wanted you to have something that looked nice and gave you joy. If they found it in the condition it is in now, they never would have thought of giving it to you. They thought this trinket would make you happy for a little while, and then when it no longer did you would pass it on. It was not their intention to make you feel beholden to keeping something even though you no longer like the way it looks. If you indiscriminately keep anything that might be sentimental, that means nothing is special.

There are very few material things you will keep throughout your entire life. For the most part, they will come and go, and that is the way it should be. Things break down over time and
then they are no longer useful. When it comes to inanimate objects, you are allowed to be cold.

There will be times that you are sure you will not have enough hours in the day to complete everything you need to. Say you have a lot of things you need to get done this week because there is a big holiday event happening in the company soon. When you initially look at it, it can seem daunting and this will cause you to put it off, but that doesn’t do you any good. That just causes you to have more to do in a shorter amount of time.

Create a Task Hierarchy

Focus on one task at a time. What is the most important thing to do? That is the one you should tackle first. When you have made this decision, let thoughts of whatever else you have to do go for the time being. When we put all of our energy into something, not only will it turn out better, but it will get done in a shorter amount of time. For one, your thoughts and actions are aligned and linear. This means you have a direct stream of energy flowing into one task. You will not have to pause, turn your attention to something else, and put yourself into the mindset fitting for that one.

After you have completed all of these tasks is a crucial time. Your body and mind will be telling you not to do anything heavy-duty for a little while, and it is right. Everyone needs downtime. You cannot constantly go on full speed ahead with no rest. It will not take long for you to become burnt out if you do this.
We hear that phrase so often but rarely think about the true meaning of it. Burnout is much more serious than just being tired. You have been tired for a long time but ignored it to keep moving forward. It is a physical, mental, and emotional state because you have been giving too much on all fronts.

It is dangerous to let yourself get to this point. For one, you will become ineffective. You might be denying yourself breaks because you want to be the “special, secret weapon employee” who always goes the extra mile. However, if you are drained, the work you put out will not be good. It will be sloppy because when you are tired and your brain is frazzled, you are prone to making more errors. On an emotional level, you will not be able to tolerate much. This will cause you to become irritable, which will make you prone to snapping at others. You cannot hide when you are in a bad mood. It will show in your mannerisms and tone. You know what it is like to be around someone who clearly does not want you in their presence and sees you as a bother. This will not have a good effect on your relationships. You will find it difficult to retain new information. A flash drive can only hold so much data. Our brains operate in much the same way. Take just one day to yourself. You need to rebuild your defenses and energy levels.

When you feel yourself getting to this point, you need to take immediate action- or rather, inaction. You are in desperate need of a restorative day. This means not responding to any more social media than is absolutely necessary and doing what you need to do. When we feel like all we ever do are things other
people want us to do, we will become both frustrated and unmotivated.

A free day like this is also a good time to eliminate smaller tasks from your docket so you do not have to think about them anymore. This will actually be beneficial for your memory because then other information can take its place. When you want to place something onto a flash drive that is full, you must make room for it. This means deleting old files that are not needed anymore and data that is just taking up space. When our brains are cluttered, there are at least a couple of things we could shuffle out of it. When you get a free day, take a look at your to-do list. Is there anything you could take off of it? Maybe you have wanted to clean out your fridge because it is in need of it. If there is some paperwork that needs to be done, do it. These things will not take long to do or require a great amount of energy, but they still will take up space in your drive for as long as they go unattended. Sometimes we put things off because they are tedious to do, such as housework and errands. However, as time goes on, more and more of them will pile onto your plate. No amount of dreading it is going to take your workload away from you. It will only cause you to pile up more anxiety. When you are thinking, “I need to do this, I need to do that, I have a million things to do!” See if there is anything you can tackle at that moment.

Inventory of Your Brain

Take inventory of your life. Before, we discussed cleaning out your physical living space. Now you need to do the same with
your mind. You are likely carrying things that should not be there anymore. This is why you have to find a way to stop worrying about things that are out of your hands. It is a completely unproductive investment of time. It creates clutter in your mind that does have to be there. However, we all do it. When you go through the things you are worried, you will likely find that most of these things are either beyond or control, impossible to predict, or both.

It is easier than you might think to develop a consistent fear of something unlikely. Throughout the day, you hear horror stories on the news. This can cause you to think the world is a violent and dangerous place. We are often exposed to people coming to public places and doing violent acts, which can warp the way you view strangers. You see a picture of the perpetrators of these vicious crimes and their faces are not grotesque. They do not have the “look” of someone who could do that. That strips us of the security in the idea that you would be able to spot that kind of person immediately and know to stay away from them. To an extent, this is a good lesson because you want to only give people the trust they have earned. However, you do not want it to escalate to the point where you are paranoid. This will be extremely limiting for your life and can even escalate to a disorder.

Be Mindful of Your Mental Health

Keep a vigilant watch on your mental health. This is something that can easily slip through the cracks because it does not show up in obvious ways like coughing or a headache. You can repress emotional struggles and keep going- but not forever. There
will be little signs that all is not well which will actually often manifest as physical symptoms. One of the most common ones is fatigue. You feel tired no matter how late you sleep in or how early you get in bed. However, when you try to sleep at night when you are supposed to, your mind will not slow down. This is a heavy indicator of anxiety and depression, and these symptoms can escalate over time into a meltdown.

When we hear the term “meltdown”, your mind probably conjures up images of disgraced celebrities in highly inebriated states, screaming profanities and doing bizarre things such as going on prolonged social media rants. Often, it is more subtle than that. Essentially, a meltdown is the release of stress and other negative emotions that have been bottled up for a long time.

At the end of the day, check your mental vital signs. They may be subtle, but if you take a closer look you will be able to easily spot them. For instance, things that you normally don’t even notice begin to aggravate you. People coming up to you and asking you questions might suddenly cause you to feel resentment towards them. This is because you do not feel like you have anything left to give.

Be Mindful of Your Music Choices

Pay attention to the type of music you are listening to. This might seem trivial, but this can reveal a lot about your psyche. Of course, sometimes you simply like the way a song sounds, but what
you listen to consists almost exclusively of sad or angry songs, this might be indicative of something deeper going on in your life. This is especially so if you get more emotional than usual over the music. There is truth to the idea that you are what you consume. If you are consistently listening to words that convey the message that everything is hopeless and nothing will ever get better, you will begin to see evidence of this in reality. In a way, you will develop a confirmation bias. In scientific research, this refers to when someone is conducting an experiment to prove a theory they have and only acknowledge the evidence that points toward their theory. If something comes up that contradicts it, they do not look at it. When you surround yourself with stimuli that place you into a negative mood, you will only notice the bad things that happen in your life. In addition, you will magnify the severity of them in your mind.

This isn’t to say you should invalidate your feelings when they are hurt. However, on the other hand, it is also detrimental to a person’s mental health to feel the full effect of every disappointing or difficult event. You cannot survive under those conditions for that long.

It all starts with your internal dialogue. We need to keep an eye on not only the way we speak to ourselves directly, but the way we word it whenever we narrate what is happening to and around us. Pay attention to your choice of words- for example, when you spill your drink onto your shirt, is this a “horrible” event, or is it an inconvenience? When you have a date that doesn’t go anywhere, was it “the worst date ever”, or was it just unfruitful?
If your spill was a minor embarrassment, you will be able to move past it and not think about it after it is over. If you think of it as this awful mistake you made that everyone will remember forever, you will think about it every day and it will have no small impact on you mentally- your confidence meeting others, the way you value yourself, and much more. When this is how you interpret every unpleasant thing that comes along, you will be a mess internally. Everything will become insurmountable.

Move Along

People with a cluttered mind often have difficulty moving past something after it is over. They think of all of the ways it could have been prevented, better decisions they could have made, and they will go on to create an entire gallery in their minds of should’ve, would’ve, and could’ve. Let’s say an interpersonal relationship went sour. You had been very close friends with this person for a long time but now you have grown apart.

Sometimes things happen that are out of our control. It is difficult to give up the idea that we have the power to influence and prevent everything that can go wrong. However, it is the only thing that will give you peace of mind whenever bad things happen. When you give yourself powers that you do not have, you will blame yourself for things that are not your fault.
any times, people with anxiety will punish themselves even though they have not done anything wrong. They feel like they have, and therefore they assume they must have done something that needs punishing. This is an example of emotional reasoning. Essentially, when you do this, you make judgments about the real world based on feelings that are going on inside of you. One of the first experiences a person will often have with this is in early childhood when they are alone in their room at night after they have watched a scary movie. They will hear something and picture it being the monster from the movie. They will feel scared and instead of attributing it to what they saw on the screen, they will think the monster must be under their bed or in the closet.

**Emotional Reasoning**

Emotional reasoning drives us to paranoia and negative self-talk. Even stimuli that are supposed to be positive will turn on the anxiety. For example, someone tells you they like the way your hair looks today. Instead of appreciating the compliment and allowing it to make you feel good, you start thinking “What if they are being sarcastic and not only do they think I look bad, but they’re laughing at how stupid I am for not noticing that? Are they saying my hair doesn’t look good most days? Have I been walking around for years with a terrible haircut?”

You will bring a lot of bad days onto yourself with emotional reasoning. It will cause you to jump to the worst possible conclusions. Your friend doesn’t respond to your text so you will think they must dislike what you said and that you will never
hear from them again. A few hours later you find out they were called by a friend to pick them up because their car broke down. This means you spent that entire time being consumed by anxiety and there was never any need for it.

It isn’t hard to get into the habit of assuming the worst in times of uncertainty. Any relief you get will be temporary because before long your mind will be occupied with another worry. It can actually become addicting to play worst-case scenario. You might think it is a crazy idea that you could actively seek out ways to torture yourself, and it does not mean what you might think it does. When people do this, it is not because they enjoy pain. It is because they literally do not feel comfortable when they are not stressed out. It is an unfamiliar feeling, so the unconscious part of their mind tells them there is something wrong. We go for what we know even if it is unhealthy.

You deserve better than this. You need to do better for yourself than to keep yourself in a constant state of distress. Deep down, you want a life beyond this. The fact that you are reading this book is proof of that. Bad habits can become old habits. The first step to that is getting a handle on what happens to unhealthy thoughts once they enter your mind.

Social Connectedness and Support

In order to be able to handle the stresses of daily life, you need to be connected socially to someone. Life is too much for any
one person to handle all on their own all of the time. This is why it is not only good but necessary to cultivate friendships in your life. There will be times that you have had an extremely rough day and need to vent about it to someone. There will be inconveniences in life, and you will be setting yourself up for a very difficult life if there is never anybody you can call to help you out.

If we do not talk about an issue, it will continue to fester inside of us and influence what we say and do. In order to manage and organize your thoughts, you will need to talk them out. Sometimes after you talk about a problem with someone you trust, it will feel less overwhelming. This is because your friend is now sharing the burden with you. Even if they cannot do anything about it except for listening to you, you will feel better after you have spoken about what is bothering you. Up to this point, your thoughts will all be bunched together and seem impossible to overcome. Even if they do not advise you on what to do, you can sometimes be lead to a solution.

Life comes to us in disorganized bursts, but we still have the opportunity to then take these events and compartmentalize them into organized places in our minds. When you are at work, stay there and focus on your projects. When you are at home with your family, be in that moment with them and engage in whatever activity is going on there. That is the ultimate key to decluttering your life, and therefore your mind.
CONCLUSION

What happens in the outside world is beyond your control, so you have to focus on what is going on inside of you. Your mind is the most important part of yourself to keep healthy. Whenever our mental wellness is suffering, it gets in the way of our ability to function in our daily lives. It will impact your ability to make good decisions, how you respond to hardship, and your overall quality of life.

You can get a handle on your thoughts. If you work for it, you will get to the point where you can say what thoughts have a place in your mind instead of being led by them. Keep at mind what is at the core—stress and burnout. Do the practices we talked about daily. Transform your life into a more tranquil experience. Focus your energy on what needs to be done right now, not your end goal, what happened before, or what could happen in the future. If a thought comes in that falls into the unnecessary category, let it go. You make thoughts go away not by repressing them, but by allowing them to come and go without paying any mind to them.

If you feel yourself becoming overwhelmed again, that’s not horrible. It just means you need to renew your commitment to decluttering your brain. All you need to do is make today better. Sometimes it is as simple as reminding yourself to breathe and that there will be a solution to whatever is troubling you today.