How To Exploit Your Brain's Unlimited Power

How to Train Your Brain

"You know you've got to exercise your brain just like your muscles." –

Will Rogers

The average human brain, while it works all the time, functions at a very low level, unless stimulated and trained. Training your brain to operate at peak efficiency increases your productivity, aids your ability to learn new information, and even stirs the creative juices. While it is a myth that people use only ten percent of their brain capacity, it is true that most people's brains are not functioning at peak efficiency. However, you can change that and train your brain to be more retentive, more creative, and more productive.

Too often, people, when faced with a problem, slip into confusion and frustration. Once they learn how to train their brains, the ability to switch to logic and clarity becomes second nature. Your brain is capable of intense concentration; you simply need to hone the ability to focus on a problem. The great thinkers of our society have learned this secret. Once learned, you will not fall into the emotional trap of confusion and frustration anymore, and you'll know how to focus instantly on the problem and the solution you need.

Thanks to research, scientists have discovered that it is possible for you to learn to rewire your brain, simply by changing your thoughts and emotions. They found that certain types of meditation made it possible to increase the activity of the prefrontal cortex. They found a way to increase mental activity without necessarily increasing adrenaline and stress. Their research found that focusing on positive thoughts and emotions gave the greatest increase in brain activity.

This doesn't mean you need to chant a mantra or go to your happy place while meditating. The researchers discovered that just thinking happy, loving thoughts makes your brain go into overtime, making mental connections and being productive and creative. Whether you've been trained in meditation techniques or not, you can learn to increase your brain's activity, without stress.

For starters, give yourself just ten minutes in the morning and ten minutes in the evening to focus on happy, loving thoughts. Changing the way you think and behave is up to you. Henry Ford said, "If you think you can do a thing or think you can't do a thing, you're right." Find a comfortable place to sit, relax and take a deep breath through your nose. Close your eyes and concentrate first on your breathing. Then focus on thinking

about being joyful. Push aside the worries and concentrate on nothing by joy, happiness and love.

You can change the way your brain works, but it takes discipline, determination and practice. If you want to be smarter, you must choose to do so, by controlling your thoughts and emotions - by choosing to be happy, grateful, and appreciative. By choosing to be emotionally happy, you are changing the way your brain works, making new connections, in fact rewiring your brain to be more productive, more creative and smarter.

I know you're asking, why just making yourself feel happy could possibly have anything to do with getting smarter. It's simple. When your body feels good, blood circulates through the brain freely. This helps you to focus and lets your brain be as creative as it needs to be for the task at hand. Happiness releases hormones and body chemicals that will produce the greatest mental activity. Depression and unhappiness clog up the works, making your mental activity slow to a crawl and creating a sluggishness in the blood flow and thought processes. This is no way to work or live!

There's enough mental confusion being thrown at you from all directions, the last thing you need is to be bombarded by negative thoughts and emotions. All the worries and upsets, disappointments and anxieties just obliterates the learning process. When you're upset and confused, it's difficult to remember things, or even think straight. Even your observational skills are impaired by negativity and emotional upheaval. You can't enhance your brain while under the onslaught of worries and anxiety.

That's why the ten-minute twice a day are so important to your brain. During those times, you must not let any negativity into your consciousness. Allow your brain to relax with positive, kind, loving, happy thoughts. Think about all that you're grateful for in your life, everything that makes you happy. Push aside any worries and upsets, at least for that twenty minutes a day. It's especially important to start your day feeling happy and relaxed, to get through your workday; and it's equally important to end the day with those happy emotions to help you sleep soundly, unperturbed by the day's events, whether good or bad.

Feeling happy reduces the confusion in your mind, relaxing your brain and your body and allowing creativity and mental clarity to keep you on the path. This helps the mental connections in your brain to stay clear and logical.

Because of the fight or flight hormones flooding our system, we tend to make choices based on fear. Instead of facing the fears and working through them, we make choices to help us avoid pain and confusion. Unfortunately, that works against us, rather than for us. Our brains tell us to avoid anything that could harm us. That includes not just physical harm, but humiliation, embarrassment, loss of respect and credibility by peers, even loss of love. Therefore, in fear, we make wrong choices, delay changes that would help us, and try to avoid any risk at all.

Basing decisions on fear never works in your favor. It merely keeps you from fully living life, and in fact can stifle the learning and growing process that keeps us alive and keeps our brains healthy.

After you master the ability to teach your brain to work for you, rather than against you, it's time to start getting that brain in shape. You exercise your body, why not your brain too? You know that exercising your body makes you feel good and improves your life and increases longevity. Therefore, it's time to give your brain a good workout.

Believe it or not, one of the ways you can stretch your brain's muscles is by playing video games. That's right, I said video games. Playing the games actually does give your brain a pretty good workout. It allows you to develop your peripheral vision, something extremely useful in the real world too. It also teaches you to recognize repeating patterns and to remember details, also useful in the real world. You're also learning with each game you master.

For those who think playing video games is just for nerds and geeks, there is actually a large community of people who enjoy the challenge of these games and are intent on mastering the skills. Many are games of strategy and very useful for teaching your brain. In many of the games, working your way through the various levels is much like working your way through the levels of real life, learning as you go.

Those who oppose the idea of video games being educational argue that the games are violent, that they are addictive and time consuming, and that young people especially are wasting their time. As with anything in life, perhaps moderation needs to be applied. On the plus side, playing the games enables us to learn and overcome challenges; and that is a good thing. Never stop learning, growing and being creative. It's good for your brain.

Another way to stretch your brain is to expose it to new ideas. Explore new areas of understanding. Just because you've never agreed with an idea, doesn't mean you can't give it some thought. Stretch it a little to include some new facts. Avoid getting into a rut and becoming set in your ways.

Have a particular interest in your life, something that gives you great pleasure. Find a group of like-minded individuals, a club, if you will. It can be in your local neighborhood or online. The point is to have some interesting discussions, some give and take, exchanging information and ideas. That will stretch your brain and make you feel good and your mind stimulated. Try joining a book club to discuss some good fiction. A good story will catch your interest, pull you in and let you get to know the characters. Can't find a book club? Start one!

Another way to relax and allow your brain to stretch is by listening to music. Researchers say that music can actually help you think better and boost your brainpower. At UC Irvine's Center for Neurobiology of Learning and Memory, a study was done on music and how it impacts the brain. Thirty-six students were given the

standard spatial tests found in I.Q. tests. Before the test, they listened to Mozart's sonata for Two Pianos in D Major, for ten minutes. They listened to relaxation tapes just before the second test and simply sat in silence before the third test. All the students did remarkably better after listening to Mozart. In fact, they averaged nine I.Q. points higher after listening to the music. The music put the students into a more receptive state for the tests, so they did in fact have better access to the resources in their brains. Those involved with music on a regular basis, are actually much better at solving problems and when tested, scored eighty percent higher than those not in a musical program. If problem solving is part of your everyday life, and of course that is true for all of us, then let the music play on.

Your Conscious & Your Subconscious

When it comes to brainpower, your conscious mind is only one-sixth of your brain's thinking ability. However, your subconscious represents five-sixths of that ability. That means that put together, your whole mind has enough power to solve any problem that comes your way. Your conscious mind can only hold seven pieces of information in the short-term memory, but your subconscious mind stores every bit of knowledge you have ever learned. It contains everything you've ever heard, thought, read, or even imagined. In fact, you are much smarter than you think you are, thanks to the remarkable memory of your subconscious mind. It's from the subconscious mind that writers and artists get their inspiration.

"The intellect has little to do on the road to discovery. There comes a leap in consciousness, call it intuition or what you will, and the solution comes to you, and you don't know how or why," said Albert Einstein. This is obviously the work of your subconscious.

The best part about your subconscious is that you can program it to work on whatever problem you're facing and it will work nonstop, day and night, even while you're sleeping. Whatever you're dealing with, if accompanied by strong emotions, and whether it's positive or negative, makes a deep impression on your subconscious.

Brainstorming is the most common solution when a problem arises. Another approach to the problem solving is lateral thinking. The first impulse when a problem arises is to go straight to the heart of the matter for a solution. That doesn't always work, however. Sometimes, there doesn't seem to be a straightforward approach to the solution. That's where lateral thinking comes in. Let's say for example, that you have a very important client that you need to meet with ASAP. You invite him to your office, but he says he can't make it. What do you do? Sit down and begin listing as many ideas as you can to make it possible for the two of you to somehow meet and discuss business. There is a notation used in lateral thinking called Po. This stands for 'Provocative operation.' This is used to propose an idea which in and of itself may not always be a good solution, but helps to move your thinking to a new place, where you can explore some new ideas, roll them around and see how they might provide the solution to the problem.

Therefore, that client does not want to come to you. What's next?

- Po: Do you go to him?
- Po: How about a video conference?
- Po: Could you send someone else in your place?
- Po: How about trying to make a deal with him? Ask him what it would take to get him to come.
- Po: You could just wait until he changes his mind.

I think you get the idea about lateral thinking. It's okay to come up with what might seem to be outrageous ideas, ideas you know will not work. It could very well lead to ideas that will, and that's what you're aiming for. And it does work; many large corporations have used this method of brainstorming to great advantage and great profits.

Right-Brain/Left-Brain

Have you ever wondered whether you were right-brained or left-brained? That's actually very difficult to pin down and perhaps very limiting in terms of your brainpower. Pigeonholing yourself is not a good idea anyway. By telling yourself that because you are methodical about certain things, you must be an analytical thinker, you are limiting your own possibilities. You might be very good at something creative, but will never realize it if you're too limiting. Just because you like being creative, doesn't mean you can't handle numbers like an accountant, if you choose to. Try not to limit your brain's abilities.

When it comes to processing information, both halves of your brain can do it, just in different ways. The dominant side is normally used to process information, but the learning can be enhanced if both sides are used in balance. This means you'll need to pump up your less dominant side, exercise it a bit. Knowing how each half of your brain works will help you to understand how to create a balance between the two sides.

The Left Side:

- Processes information in a linear style. That means that it takes pieces of information, lines them up and then puts them in a logical sequence, then comes up with a conclusion. List making is what left-brained people love to do. They love daily planning schedules, and they take great satisfaction in checking each item off the list as they accomplish it.
- Has no problem when it comes to symbols such as words, letters, and math notations. The left-brain person is at home with linguistic and mathematical problems.
- Verbal thinking. Has no trouble with self-expression. The left brained person can explain a problem in detail, giving a step-by-step solution.

- Deals with reality more easily and adapts to different situations with more ease. Whatever their environment throws at them, they can adjust to it more easily.

The Right Side:

- Processes more randomly, skipping from item to item, jumping from topic to topic; more of a leapfrog approach.
- Needs things to be more concrete. They need to see and touch an object, rather than just discuss it.
- Non-verbal thinking. Has more difficulty expressing themselves in words and needs everything in writing.
- Not easily adaptable to their environment. Rather than adjust, they'd sooner change the environment.

No one has quite figured out exactly why, but the right hemisphere or right brain controls the left side of our bodies, processing what we see with our left eye; and conversely, the left hemisphere or left-brain controls the right side of our bodies and processes what we see with our right eye. Many think that this is what determines whether you are left-handed or right-handed, but scientists tell us it is not related at all. Yet, no one can explain why more artists have been left-handed. If you are right-handed, rest assured it doesn't mean you can't be artistic, if you choose to be.

Once again, don't narrow your vision concerning yourself, telling yourself you are limited due to the dominant side of your brain. Learn to balance and use both sides to best advantage. It will take some practice, but you can learn to process information on both sides of your brain. The artistic types can learn to be more linear and the logical types can learn to be more random.

You will also experience four different brain wave states. These are Beta, Alpha, Theta, and Delta. When your brain is in the Beta state, you are wide-awake and very alert. This is when your brain performs at its best, but not creatively.

The Alpha state is a slower brain wave state and your creativity starts to flow. Solutions begin to present themselves during this state.

In the Theta state, you are completely relaxed and are focused more on what's happening within you. You'll find this is very similar to a meditative state and you may even discover that the solution to a problem becomes very clear; you can actually see the 'big picture.'

When your brain is in the Delta state, you are sound asleep and it's time for your brain to recharge, to get you ready for another day and more problems and the need for creativity.

Though you are asleep, your brain is still working, indeed, it never stops, but it does slow down enough that the chatter stops. While you're awake, your brain is making

connections across the neural network, in a constant flow of data. While you're asleep, however, your brain loses those connections, it does in fact, shut down for recharging. That's while you're in a deep sleep, when the brain is dreaming, the connections are still careening around in your mind, much like it does when you're awake. Scientists think that the deep sleep cycle allows the cortical circuits to shut out the noise of the constant connections, to allow your brain to rest and recuperate for the next day.