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Discovering Your Memory Power



As we discussed in the Introduction, the first six chapters of *Train Your Brain for Success* are dedicated to the very foundations of your ability to learn, your ability to absorb and then recall the information that you need for your growth. In this section, you're going to learn how to learn in the way that actually uses your brain in the way that it prefers to be used. Let's start with one of the most popular subjects that my company teaches: the subject of how to improve your memory.

Think for a moment about how many different ways you use your memory on a daily basis. If you're having trouble coming up with an answer, try this question on for size:

“If you lost your memory completely, what would you be able to do?”

The correct answer is “nothing.” When we're born, we come into the world with a working autonomic nervous system, so our breathing, heartbeat, and other bodily functions work properly. And we have automatic reflexes, like when the doctor



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hits your kneecap with that little rubber hammer to see if your muscles contract. That's it. Everything else in your life is learned. Even things as basic as what your own name is and how to eat are learned behaviors. So literally everything in your entire life requires the use of your memory.

Extend that out to your life today. At Freedom Personal Development, we will often ask our workshop audiences the question, "Where in your life do you feel an improved memory would help you be more effective, more productive, or reduce stress?" Just a few of the common answers we hear:

From professionals:

- "I wish I were better at remembering people's names!"
- "I wish I could deliver presentations without looking at notes!"
- "I wish I could learn product knowledge quicker!"
- "I wish I could remember dates and times for appointments!"

From students:

- "I wish I could remember foreign language vocabulary!"
- "I wish I could remember math formulas and equations!"
- "I wish I could remember things like the preamble to the Constitution, all the presidents, states, and capitals."
- "I wish I felt less freaked out when taking tests."

Honestly, I could just go on for an entire chapter about all the ways that we get to use our memories as tools for getting through life, so here's the best news:

No matter where you would like to see improvement in your memory or any area of learning, *you absolutely have the ability to make those improvements*. A significant body of research now confirms that for all practical purposes, your memory is actually perfect; you literally never "forget" anything. Some of you right now might be saying to yourself, "Okay, Roger, you just lost me.

I feel like I forget *stuff all the time!* Why do you think I bought this book in the first place?” And I understand that perception; I get where it *feels* that way. Fact is, though, that essentially everything—every book you’ve read, every conversation you’ve had, every person you’ve met—everything—is recorded by your brain. Your challenge is actually not your *memory*, but your *recall*.

Example: Think back to the last time you bumped into someone you knew (and you knew that you knew), but you couldn’t come up with their name. Common situation, happens to everyone. See that instance in your mind. You probably had a reasonably good conversation with that person, right? Five or 10 minutes of “how’s it going, how’s work, how’s the family,” and so on. But the whole time you were talking to them, what was your brain doing? Racking itself with one question: “What the heck is this guy’s name?” And it didn’t come to you while he was there. *But it did come to you later.* See, you didn’t forget that guy’s name, you just couldn’t *recall* it when you needed it.

Again, I could give you tons more examples, suffice it to say that your memory is in fact excellent, it’s actually your recall that may be suspect. The reason this is good news is that improving your recall is very much under your control. If you can’t recall a piece of information, it is always because the way that you stored it in the first place was accidental, mindless, haphazard, and unconscious. Here’s what I mean.

How You Originally Learned to Learn

If you’re like 99 percent of the population, back in school you learned to learn through a process called *rote memorization*. Rote memorization is simply learning through repetition. You got some information (from a teacher or a textbook) and then went over it and over it and over it, until hopefully it stuck in your brain. Sound familiar?

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How's that working for you now? Not too well, I would bet. Just to prove the point, take this short two-question quiz:

Question 1: Did you ever take a biology class?

Yes_____ No_____

Question 2: Without looking it up, please name all the phyla of the animal kingdom.

In our live workshops, everyone says “of course” to question #1, and then nobody can even begin to answer #2. Which is fine; you don't actually need to know any of the phyla of the animal kingdom. The point is that if you took biology, I promise you were taught that information. The question is “did you actually learn it?”, and the answer is almost assuredly no. You didn't *learn* that information, you *memorized* it for the test. Test came, you barfed the information up onto the test, and were done. Which was fine for back in school, but do you see the problem?

By following the process described above over and over again throughout your formalized education, you formed a habit of how you learn everything. My guess is that habit no longer serves you very well. Rote memorization actually can get you a decent grade on a test that you know is coming, but your life doesn't consist of tests that you know are coming, does it? So you'll need a method of learning that serves you a little better, which is exactly what you'll get from the first six chapters of *Train Your Brain for Success*, if you'll keep an open mind

The Teachability Index

There is a specific way of thinking and acting for any result. Our job is to be open and flexible enough to adopt those ways of thinking and acting.

Bill Harris, founder of Centerpointe Research Institute

How much you get out of this book or any learning experience has a significant amount to do with you as a learner. This

material will change your life, if and only if you absorb and apply it. So be aware of what's called your Teachability Index. It's a measurement of how ready you are to learn. Whether you realize it or not, the Teachability Index is in play anytime you are attempting to develop a new skill or a higher level of understanding of anything. There are two components of the Teachability Index, each of which can be easily evaluated on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being the highest).

The first component of your Teachability Index is your *desire to learn*. It just makes sense that if you're going to maximize any learning experience you must want to learn what's being taught. Some of the best news about you as a learner is that your desire to learn is very high, like 9 or 10 on the scale. Congratulations! The reason I can say this with confidence is that even though you and I may have never met, I know for a fact that you've already made an investment in yourself. You've probably invested some money to buy this book (thanks!). Even if you didn't invest your own money for it, at a bare minimum you've invested some time to get this far. You simply wouldn't have made that investment if you didn't have a pretty darn strong desire to learn. So go ahead and grade your current desire to learn from 1 to 10.

Desire to learn score _____

The second component of the Teachability Index is a bit more tricky. It's called your *willingness to change*, and it cannot be taken for granted, ever. Anyone who attends one of our programs or picks up a book called *Train Your Brain for Success* inherently has a strong desire to learn. Nobody inherently has a strong willingness to change. It's because of the comfort zone we discussed in the introduction: We are hardwired to stay wherever we are and do whatever we have been doing, even if that behavior pattern isn't getting us the results our conscious mind wants. I'm not saying that you can't have a high willingness to change, because you can. I'm just saying that if you want to boost your willingness to change, you will need to do it consciously and

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purposely. It won't happen by accident. So what would you say is your current willingness to change score?

Willingness to change score _____

Now that you have some numbers, the correct way to gauge your Teachability Index is to multiply the two scores. The highest possible score is 100 (10 times 10). So why not do that now, just to see what you come out with.

Desire to learn score \times willingness to change score = Total Teachability score

Notice that even if your desire to learn is a 10, if your willingness to change is a zero, your Total Teachability score is zero. For you to really learn, both scores need to be high. Don't just pay lip service to learning, do it! You picked up this book because you want your life to be better: true or false? Of course it's true, so if you really want that, you must do something different. The Chinese actually have defined insanity as "doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result."

Lots of our clients have told us this is a useful exercise, anytime the objective is to learn something new. There's no need to be judgmental or upset, it's just helpful to notice. If someone has a higher Teachability Score than you, it does not make them better than you, but it does mean they will make progress faster than you.

All this is to say that for these chapters on memory training, I have one tip that will help you get maximum value from them.

Tip #1—*Don't judge the process; do evaluate the result.*

The method you'll learn here definitely produces results, but it is different than what you are accustomed to. Because it's different, your brain will likely give you a thought like "Well, this is just weird." Everyone who learns memory training goes through at least one phase where they just think the whole thing is just a goofy bag of tricks. It's not. So when you experience that

thought, I recommend you check your Teachability Index, get over it, and keep moving forward. So don't waste time or energy trying to pick apart or analyze the process; there's plenty of time for that later if it's of interest to you. You'll learn much more quickly if you *don't judge the process*.

At the same time, *do evaluate your results*. That's how you're evaluated in your profession, isn't it? Do the same thing here: Trust the process, engage in what I ask you to engage in, and just see how it works. My guess is you'll impress yourself with how quickly you can boost your abilities.

Tip #2—*Have fun with your brain!* One of the things we know for sure is that at its best, learning is fun. There are a couple of aspects to this.

First off, think about the sense of enjoyment you feel when you learn anything new. Ever waterskied? Snowboarded? Played backgammon? Figured out how to sell something? Conquered a fear? When you started "getting it," it felt good, right? Whether or not you liked school, your brain likes to learn new things!

Secondly, we know that your brain's stress response—fight or flight—is clearly the worst possible state for learning something new. It's very effective if you've already been trained in something and you've reached a level of unconscious competence, but for learning new skills or information, the fight or flight stress response essentially shuts that ability down immediately. The whole reason you remembered that guy's name later is that after he left your presence you *took a deep breath and relaxed*. While he was there and you were racking your brain, your brain was experiencing the same thing that soldiers experience in battle! Granted, it was milder (the grocery store is a less intense scene than the battlefield), but fundamentally the biochemistry and brainwave activity are the same.

In our workshops we teach that *stress is the #1 killer of your mental ability*. So back off on the pressure a little. If you get stuck or stumped, just take a deep breath, tell yourself "This will come

to me,” and move on. Come back to it later. That’s often all you need to re-fire some neurons that will get you where you want to go.

Just be open-minded about your mind. If you’re anything like the hundreds of thousands of people who’ve experienced our live workshops, you are capable of way more than you think you are. So let’s have some fun.

Your Baseline Memory Evaluation

Before we leave this chapter, let’s just see where you’re starting from. In a few moments, you’re going to see a list of 20 items. Your job is to look the list over as slowly and carefully as you can, for no more than five minutes. Do the best job you can to commit the list to memory in that time span. You are not allowed to write the items down on scratch paper, only use your mind. When you are done, flip to the test on the next page and without looking back, write down the 20 items in order to the best of your ability. Ready? Go.

a unicorn	chopsticks
an electrical outlet	a rose
a tricycle	a black cat
a truck	gold
a hand	a dollar sign
a can of beer	a candle
a hockey stick	a wizard
a spider	a golf green
a baseball	a sauna
a dime	a dartboard

Again, take no more than five minutes to study the list. Once you’re done, go to the next page and write down those 20 items, in order, without looking back at this page. Go.

_____	_____
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How'd you do? If you're like most of our students, not so well. When we do this exercise in a live workshop, the average score is about 6 out of 20. If you did better than that, congratulations. If not, don't worry about it. Your score for the baseline evaluation is actually irrelevant, except as a baseline. There are a couple of great lessons to take away about some of your brain's natural tendencies that can be *harnessed*.

Tendency #1 — The Rule of 7, Plus or Minus 2

Without a system, your brain can only handle a maximum of five to seven pieces of information at a time (and often it's more like three to five). If you were just trying to learn that list of 20 items through rote memory, one pattern you likely realized is that you did pretty well with the first five to seven on the list and then began to struggle. If this happened, don't worry; it doesn't mean there's something wrong with you, it just means you were operating without a system. When you do that, you're bound by your memory's inability to handle more than a handful of different pieces.

By the way, if you did get more than seven of the items, I would bet money that you were doing something other than just rote memorization. It does happen in our live workshops where some people will score ten or more on the baseline evaluation, and they are never doing it with rote memorization. They either made an acronym, created some kind of story out of the items, or noticed the pattern in the list that I'll teach you in a minute. Rest assured, without some kind of technique or system, your brain can only deal effectively with about seven items, plus or minus two.

Tendency #2—Primacy and Recency

One of the most common patterns we see on this baseline quiz is called *primacy and recency*. This means that with a bunch of information to remember, your brain will naturally be effective with the information at the beginning and the end, while struggling in the middle. Again, it doesn't mean you're broken—primacy and recency is just natural tendency.

Understanding these tendencies leads us to our most basic recall improvement principle: chunking. It simply means that you will automatically improve your brain's ability to recall if you will break things into bite-sized pieces. If you would have seen the baseline quiz like this:

- a unicorn
- an electrical outlet
- a tricycle
- a truck
- a hand

- a can of beer
- a hockey stick
- a spider
- a baseball
- a dime

chopsticks
a rose
a black cat
gold
a dollar sign

a candle
a wizard
a golf green
a sauna
a dartboard

Your performance would have improved. Why? More beginnings and more ends! Just this one concept can be a huge help for your brain. When you learn anything, take it in bite-sized chunks as much as possible. That's bite-sized chunks of information and bite-sized chunks of time. Even with this book, I recommend you read no more than one chapter at a time. When you finish a chapter, take a moment to review what was covered, in writing or at least in your mind. Take a quick stretch break, grab a drink of water, get your mind off of the book for a few minutes. Then and only then come back to reading. You'll get way more out of it.

Okay, now that we've got your baseline score and a baseline understanding of how your brain operates naturally, let's supercharge it. In the next two chapters, you're going to learn how to speak the language of your brain, mentally organize information of all kinds, and improve your recall for any number of applications. Let's go!

Reinforcement and Bonuses: This chapter has been Memory Optimized™ for your benefit. For your brief lesson and some great bonuses, visit www.planetfreedom.com/trainyourbrain with the access code on page 232. Enjoy!

