

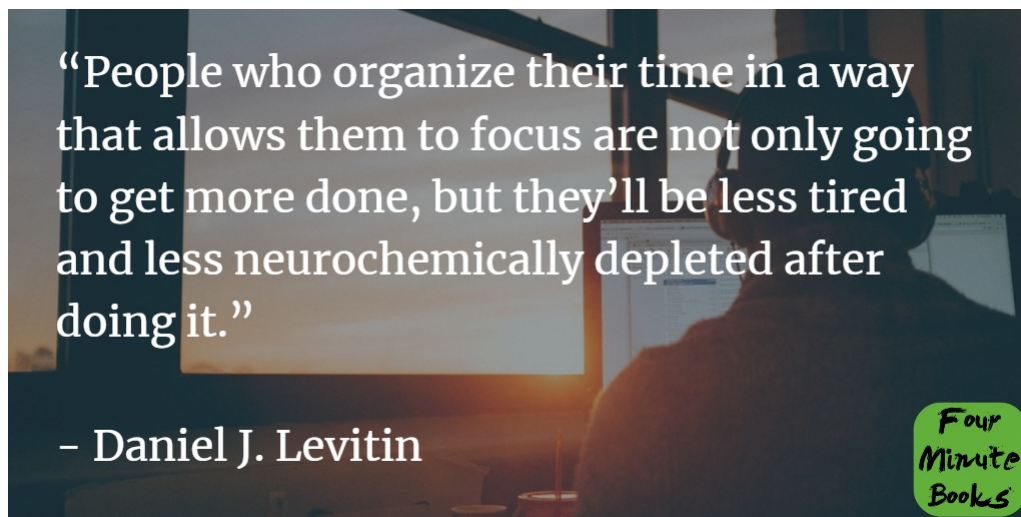
The Organized Mind Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *The Organized Mind* will teach you how to use your brain the way it's meant for so you can manage work and life efficiently and stop feeling overwhelmed in the information society.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



Thirty years ago, travel agents made our reservations, clerks helped us find what we're looking for in stores, and typists helped us with writing and correspondence. Today, we are doing ourselves the jobs once delegated to ten different specialists while also trying to keep up with our private lives.

Now the average supermarket stocks 40,000 items, while we only need 150 to satisfy 80% of our needs. So every time we do groceries we have to ignore at least 39,850 items and struggle to find the ones we want.

In the meantime, thousands of words, images, and videos are uploaded and wait for us on the Internet. How can we keep up with so much information and complexity?

In *The Organized Mind: Thinking Straight in the Age of Information Overload*, cognitive psychologist and neuroscientist Daniel J. Levitin suggests you give up. Give up getting as much information as you can and take a Zen approach instead!

Slowing down and focusing on what really matters, one thing at a time, are the keys to handle today's speed.

Here are 3 lessons about the mind from this book:

1. The evolution of the human brain over the tens of thousands of years we were hunter-gatherers means it can't deal with today's complexity.
2. If you want to work efficiently, use external devices for organizing and remembering and focus on a single task.
3. Keep your mind fresh for important things by organizing your space to avoid unnecessary thinking.

Let's see how you can build what the author calls "an organized mind that leads you effortlessly to good decision-making"!

Lesson 1: Our brains can do one thing at a time and find it hard to handle the present overload of information.

Our genes haven't changed much from when we were hunter-gatherers. Back then we needed deep concentration just to survive. **The human brain evolved to focus on a few inputs at a time.** We can only handle the most important information in that precise moment. This means we focus on the things that, for our ancestors, would make the difference between catching and being caught.

We also developed the ability to notice modifications around us, like things that change or suddenly move, are likely to grab our attention. This is very useful to help us not get hit by flying objects or to escape car accidents but makes it hard to live in a world that changes so fast. In fact, attention costs energy and is a limited resource.

Moreover, today we are bombarded with information, which forces us to make continuous choices. What should I eat? What to wear? Where should I spend my weekend? For each question there's a world of possibilities, all coming with countless data to analyze.

The problem is the brain consumes energy to take decisions, even if they're small ones with no real impact on our lives. Furthermore, making choices is time-consuming and distract us from what's really important. It prevents us from being present and do our best in the here and now.

Lesson 2: Organize your environment the way your mind likes it and you'll avoid fatigue.

To make it easier for your mind, organize your house and office to best suit your brain's approach.

If you want to simplify your life, designate a place for every object and put it back in its place after using it – Marie-Kondo style. Our brain is very good at storing locations. It has a dedicated area for that, which we can even train. Its name is the hippocampus.

Our mind likes categories, too. Levitin recommends grouping objects according to their appearance or function. For example, you can choose a place for all your pencils based on their gross appearance or you can have a space for grey pencils and another for colored ones, or fine appearance. You may also divide objects in accordance with what they are used for. For example, you might put forks, glasses, and dishes together.

There will be items that don't fit in any category or are too few to deserve their own space. Put them in a junk drawer. Think of it as another category and check what's in it from time to time.

Remember the brain has a special alert that turns on every time something changes around you. Keep your space the same as long as you can and your mind will be fresher.

Lesson 3: Organizing your work means decluttering your mind and focusing on one thing at a time.

So how can we cope with today's overload of information, especially when working?

According to the author, “the most fundamental principle of the organized mind is to shift the burden of organizing from our brains to the external world.” So write down your ideas on paper or digital devices and schedule your tasks. Never keep them in your mind!

The brain can store information but isn't good at retrieving it. When we try to remember, information often comes out distorted and we don't even realize it. But most of all, we don't want to tire out our brain loading it with data that we may put elsewhere, do we?

Levitin also suggests you dedicate time to tasks and decisions only as much as they're worth. Analyze them each and choose your next step: drop it, do it, delegate it or defer it. And always use the 2-minute rule: if something can be accomplished in less than a couple of minutes, do it right away.

To work efficiently, it's essential to do one thing at a time, avoiding distractions and interruptions. Multitasking doesn't even exist. When you think you're multitasking, you're actually switching very quickly from one task to another, with fatigue and loss of time. Even if you don't realize, you are being less productive and in the end, you'll also feel more tired.

The Organized Mind Review

The Organized Mind is not just a collection of tips to boost your productivity. With insights from science and practical examples, Daniel Levitin helps you understand how the human brain has evolved over time. He explains how the mind works so that you can remember things and manage your work and life without fatigue.

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Who would I recommend The Organized Mind summary to?

The 20-year-old student who wants to be more efficient at studying in order to gain more free time, the 35-year-old woman who struggles to balance work and family, and anyone feeling the day is too short to do everything that needs to be done.