



**Alex Brogan** ✓

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15 mental concepts that will  
probably make you smarter:

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## Man in the Car Paradox

No one is impressed with your possessions as much as you are.

You think you want an expensive car or fancy watch.

In reality, what you want is respect and admiration from other people.

Don't have the mistaken belief that expensive stuff will bring it.



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## Hock's Principle

Simple, clear purpose and principles give rise to complex and intelligent behavior.

Complex rules and regulations give rise to simple and stupid behavior.

Obsessive control isn't always the answer to chaos.

Simplify to amplify.



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## The Paradox of Abundance

The average quality of information is decreasing over time.

But the highest quality stuff gets better and better.

Abundance is bad for the 'median' consumer.

But simultaneously good for the 'conscious, discerning' consumer who filters out noise.



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# Winning Hearts and Minds

Historically a war concept.

It means prevailing by making emotional or intellectual appeals to sway others, rather than the use of superior physical force.

A timeless lesson to always remember you're dealing with humans.

Work smarter, not harder.



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## Sturgeon's Law

"Ninety percent of everything is crap."

In general, the vast majority of the work that is produced in any given field is of low quality.

Take your time to find the very best content before you learn or consume.

Discern more to earn more.



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## Burn The Boats

Burning the boats is taking an action that forces you to continue with a particular course.

Leaving only one path forward can enhance motivation, increasing the likelihood of success.

With your biggest goals, how can you burn the boats?



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## Decline of Violence

The modern world is witnessing a massive decline in all forms of violence.

This includes war, crime, and interpersonal relationships (see @sapinker).

But, still, we are accustomed to thinking the modern world is increasingly violent.





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This thinking comes from the persistently horrific stories in the news:

- Murders
- Geopolitical wars
- Domestic abuse

It results from availability bias.

Our tendency to judge the probability of an event occurring based on how easily it comes to mind.



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The news disproportionately reports on bad things happening—that's what gets clicks.

So, we overestimate how common these rare bad events are because they are fresh in our memory.

Lesson: Remember the whole story, not just the available story.



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Google Effect (aka digital amnesia)

We tend to forget information that's easily looked up in search engines.

Facts, statistics, names, and dates.

Partly because the mind struggles to attach this type of knowledge to existing knowledge.

Also because of information overload.



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## Backfire Effect

We believe that when our beliefs are challenged, we alter our opinions and incorporate new information into our thinking.

Not true.

In reality, our beliefs get stronger when our deepest convictions are challenged by contradictory evidence.



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## Zeigarnik Effect

We remember unfinished or interrupted tasks better than completed ones.

Without 'closing the loop' we remain distracted by these tasks.

For better achievement and forward progress, learn to reduce the number of in progress projects or tasks.



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## IKEA Effect

We place higher value on things we partially created ourselves.

"Don't you love this pot I spent \$20 on? I painted it myself!"

Usually most relevant in career settings when you've contributed to a project.

Learn to disentangle your ego for more happiness.



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## Ben Franklin Effect

A person who has already performed a favour for another person is more likely to do another favour for the other than if they had received a favour from that person.

Be weary if you're being asked for small favours that appear to be getting larger...



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## Decision Fatigue

Making decisions is exhausting.

Anyone who has ever researched a long trip—flight, hotels, activities, restaurants, weather—knows this well.

After all the comparing and considering you're exhausted.

Science calls this decision fatigue.

It's dangerous.





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As a consumer, you become more susceptible to advertising messages and impulse buys.

As a decision maker, you are more prone to seduction or persuasion.

Willpower is like a battery.

After a while it runs out and needs to be recharged.



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How do you do this?

- Taking a break
- Relaxing
- Eating
- Exercising

What does it tell us?

Save important decisions for the morning and minimise the number of menial decisions you make each day.

Remember how Steve jobs wore the same clothes every day...?



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## Denominator Blindness

We fail to put big numbers into proper context.

Put simply, information that provides only a numerator is of limited use.

Headlines or statistics that provide only a numerator are of limited use, they need to be considered in full context or relatively.



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## Buridan's Ass

An Ass got stuck between two stacks of hay of equal size and quality, and couldn't decide which to eat, causing it to starve to death from indecision.

A type of decision paralysis where two equally good options lead to no decision.

Don't be afraid to decide.



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That's a wrap!

What else would you add? Let us know in the comments.

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