**Notebook for**

# Building a Second Brain: A Proven Method to Organize Your Digital Life and Unlock Your Creative Potential

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## Chapter 2: What Is a Second Brain?

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 236**
Unlike modern readers, who follow the flow of a narrative from beginning to end, early modern Englishmen read in fits and starts and jumped from book to book. They broke texts into fragments and assembled them into new patterns by transcribing them in different sections of their notebooks. Then they reread the copies and rearranged the patterns while adding more excerpts. Reading and writing were therefore inseparable activities. They belonged to a continuous effort to make sense of things, for the world was full of signs: you could read your way through it; and by keeping an account of your readings, you made a book of your own, one stamped with your personality.III

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 280**
For many people, their understanding of notetaking was formed in school. You were probably first told to write something down because it would be on the test. This implied that the minute the test was over, you would never reference those notes again. Learning was treated as essentially disposable, with no intention of that knowledge being useful for the long term.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 290**
For modern, professional notetaking, a note is a "knowledge building block"—a discrete unit of information interpreted through your unique perspective and stored outside your head. By

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 294**
The length and format don't matter—if a piece of content has been interpreted through your lens, curated according to your taste, translated into your own words, or drawn from your life experience, and stored in a secure place, then it qualifies as a note.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 297**
A knowledge building block is discrete. It stands on its own and has intrinsic value, but knowledge building blocks can also be combined into something much greater—a report, an argument, a proposal, a story.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 375**
You can't fail, because failure is just more information, to be captured and used as fuel for your journey.

# Chapter 3: How a Second Brain Works

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 427**
There are four essential capabilities that we can rely on a Second Brain to perform for us: Making our ideas concrete. Revealing new associations between ideas. Incubating our ideas over time. Sharpening our unique perspectives.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 467**
This tendency is known as recency bias.4 We tend to favor the ideas, solutions, and influences that occurred to us most recently, regardless of whether they are the best ones.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 470**
call this approach the "slow burn"—allowing bits of thought matter to slowly simmer like a delicious pot of stew brewing on the stove. It is a calmer, more sustainable approach to creativity that relies on the gradual accumulation of ideas, instead of all-out binges of manic hustle.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 482**
Our careers and businesses depend more than ever on our ability to advance a particular point of view and persuade others to adopt it as well.6 Advocating for a particular point of view isn't just a matter of sparkling charisma or irresistible charm. It takes supporting material.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 520**
Most important of all, don't get caught in the trap of perfectionism: insisting that you have to have the "perfect" app with a precise set of features before you take a single note. It's not about having the perfect tools—it's about having a reliable set of tools you can depend on, knowing you can always change them later.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 523**
Remembering, Connecting, Creating: The Three Stages of Personal Knowledge Management

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 552**
To guide you in the process of creating your own Second Brain, I've developed a simple, intuitive four-part method called "CODE"—Capture; Organize; Distill; Express.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 564**
Capture: Keep What Resonates

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 568**

Here's the problem: we can't consume every bit of this information stream. We will quickly be exhausted and overwhelmed if we try. We need to adopt the perspective of a curator, stepping back from the raging river and starting to make intentional decisions about what information we want to fill our minds. Like a scientist capturing only the rarest butterflies to take back to the lab, our goal should be to "capture" only the ideas and insights we think are truly noteworthy.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 574**

You might email yourself a quick note, brainstorm some ideas in a document, or highlight quotes in a book you're reading, but that information probably remains disconnected and scattered. The insights you uncovered through serious mental effort remain hidden in forgotten folders or drifting in the cloud.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 576**

The solution is to keep only what resonates in a trusted place that you control, and to leave the rest aside.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 578**

Don't make it an analytical decision, and don't worry about why exactly it resonates—just look inside for a feeling of pleasure, curiosity, wonder, or excitement, and let that be your signal for when it's time to capture a passage, an image, a quote, or a fact.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 580**

By training ourselves to notice when something resonates with us, we can improve not only our ability to take better notes, but also our understanding of ourselves and what makes us tick. It is a way of turning up the volume on our intuition so we can hear the wisdom it offers us.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 585**

Organize: Save for Actionability

**Note - Location 585**

But what about information that is not actionable at the moment?

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 600**

Distill: Find the Essence

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 604**

The human mind is like a sizzling-hot frying pan of associations—throw a handful of seeds in there and they'll explode into new ideas like popcorn. Every note is the seed of an idea, reminding you of what you already know and already think about a topic.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 612**

Why is it so important to be able to easily find the main point of a note? Because in the midst of a busy workday, you won't have time to review ten

pages of notes on a book you read last year—you need to be able to quickly find just the main takeaways.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 616**
Every time you take a note, ask yourself, "How can I make this as useful as possible for my future self?" That question will lead you to annotate the words and phrases that explain why you saved a note, what you were thinking, and what exactly caught your attention.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 620**
Express: Show Your Work

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 631**
I'm here to tell you that that is no way to live your life. Information becomes knowledge—personal, embodied, verified—only when we put it to use. You gain confidence in what you know only when you know that it works. Until you do, it's just a theory.

**Note - Location 632**
Like me waiting to post on twitter till I have "good" enough content

## Chapter 4: Capture—Keep What Resonates

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 737**
The challenge for the rest of us is how to apply this same lens to the work we do every day. What kinds of information are worth preserving when we don't know exactly how we'll be putting it to use? Our world changes much faster than in previous eras, and most of us don't have a single creative medium we work in. How can we decide what to save when we have no idea what the future holds?

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 752**
Knowledge assets can come from either the external world or your inner thoughts.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 806**
In other words, Feynman's approach was to maintain a list of a dozen open questions. When a new scientific finding came out, he would test it against each of his questions to see if it shed any new light on the problem. This cross-disciplinary approach allowed him to make connections across seemingly unrelated subjects, while continuing to follow his sense of curiosity.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 822**
Ask yourself, "What are the questions I've always been interested in?" This could include grand, sweeping questions like "How can we make society fairer and more equitable?" as well as practical ones like "How can I make it a habit to exercise every day?"

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 851**

The goal isn't to definitively answer the question once and for all, but to use the question as a North Star for my learning.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 874**

Don't save entire chapters of a book—save only select passages. Don't save complete transcripts of interviews—save a few of the best quotes. Don't save entire websites—save a few screenshots of the sections that are most interesting. The best curators are picky about what they allow into their collections, and you should be too.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 886**

Capture Criteria #1: Does It Inspire Me?

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 892**

Capture Criteria #2: Is It Useful?

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 900**

Capture Criteria #3: Is It Personal?

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 903**

No one else has access to the wisdom you've personally gained from a lifetime of conversations, mistakes, victories, and lessons learned. No one else values the small moments of your days quite like you do.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 907**

Capture Criteria #4: Is It Surprising? I've often noticed that many of the notes people take are of ideas they already know, already agree with, or could have guessed. We have a natural bias as humans to seek evidence that confirms what we already believe, a well-studied phenomenon known as "confirmation bias."[6] That isn't what a Second Brain is for. The renowned information theorist Claude Shannon, whose discoveries paved the way for modern technology, had a simple definition for "information": that which surprises you.[7] If you're not surprised, then you already knew it at some level, so why take note of it? Surprise is an excellent barometer for information that doesn't fit neatly into our existing understanding, which means it has the potential to change how we think.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 924**

Ultimately, Capture What Resonates

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 932**

You don't need to figure out exactly why it resonates. Just look for the signs: your eyes might widen slightly, your heart may skip a beat, your throat may go slightly dry, and your sense of time might subtly slow down as the world around you fades away. These are clues that it's time to hit "save."

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 944**

The authors' conclusion: "Our intuitive mind learns, and responds, even without our conscious awareness." If you ignore that inner voice of intuition, over time it

will slowly quiet down and fade away. If you practice listening to what it is telling you, the inner voice will grow stronger. You'll start to hear it in all kinds of situations. It will guide you in what choices to make and which opportunities to pursue. It will warn you away from people and situations that aren't right for you. It will speak up and take a stand for your convictions even when you're afraid.

### Note - Location 948
What about anxiety? How is intuition different from anxiety?

## Chapter 5: Organize—Save for Actionability

### Highlight (yellow) - Location 1077
Tharp calls her approach "the box." Every time she begins a new project, she takes out a foldable file box and labels it with the name of the project, usually the name of the dance she is choreographing. This initial act gives her a sense of purpose as she begins: "The box makes me feel organized, that I have my act together even when I don't know where I'm going yet. It also represents a commitment. The simple act of writing a project name on the box means I've started work."

### Highlight (yellow) - Location 1088
Even a project as open-ended as this one started the same way as all the others, with her goals: "I believe in starting each project with a stated goal. Sometimes the goal is nothing more than a personal mantra such as 'keep it simple' or 'something perfect' or 'economy' to remind me of what I was thinking at the beginning if and when I lose my way. I write it down on a slip of paper and it's the first thing that goes into the box." For the collaboration with Joel, Tharp had two goals: The first was to understand and master the role of narrative in dance, a long-standing creative challenge that had captured her curiosity. The second goal was much more practical, but no less motivating: to pay her dancers well. She said, "So I wrote my goals for the project, 'tell a story' and 'make dance pay,' on two blue index cards and watched them float to the bottom of the Joel box… they sit there as I write this, covered by months of research, like an anchor keeping me connected to my original impulse."

### Highlight (yellow) - Location 1107
The box gave her the security to venture out and take risks: "a box is like soil to me. It's basic, earthy, elemental. It's home. It's what I can always go back to when I need to regroup and keep my bearings. Knowing that the box is always there gives me the freedom to venture out, be bold, dare to fall flat on my face." The box gave Tharp a way to put projects on hold and revisit them later: "The box makes me feel connected to a project… I feel this even when I've back-burnered a project: I may have put the box away on a shelf, but I know it's there. The project name on the box in bold black lettering is a constant reminder that I had an idea once and may come back to it very soon."

### Highlight (yellow) - Location 1113
"There's one final benefit to the box: It gives you a chance to look back. A lot of people don't appreciate this. When they're done with a project, they're relieved.

They're ready for a break and then they want to move forward to the next idea. The box gives you the opportunity to reflect on your performance.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 1140**

Organizing for Action: Where 99 Percent of Notetakers Get Stuck (And How to Solve It)

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 1157**

I eventually named this organizing system PARA,I which stands for the four main categories of information in our lives: Projects, Areas, Resources, and Archives. These four categories are universal, encompassing any kind of information, from any source, in any format, for any purpose.II

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 1182**

One of the biggest temptations with organizing is to get too perfectionistic, treating the process of organizing as an end in itself. There is something inherently satisfying about order, and it's easy to stop there instead of going on to develop and share our knowledge. We need to always be wary of accumulating so much information that we spend all our time managing it, instead of putting it to use in the outside world.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 1197**

Projects: Short-term efforts in your work or life that you're working on now. Areas: Long-term responsibilities you want to manage over time. Resources: Topics or interests that may be useful in the future. Archives: Inactive items from the other three categories.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 1202**

Projects: What I'm Working on Right Now Projects include the short-term outcomes you're actively working toward right now.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 1221**

Areas: What I'm Committed to Over Time As important as projects are, not everything is a project. For example, the area of our lives called "Finances" doesn't have a definite end date. It's something that we will have to think about and manage, in one way or another, for as long as we live. It doesn't have a final objective. Even if you win the lottery, you'll still have finances to manage (and it will probably require a lot more attention!).

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 1253**

Resources: Things I Want to Reference in the Future The third category of information that we want to keep is resources. This is basically a catchall for anything that doesn't belong to a project or an area and could include any topic you're interested in gathering information about.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 1265**

Archives: Things I've Completed or Put on Hold Finally, we have our archives. This includes any item from the previous three categories that is no longer active. For example:

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 1307**
Where Do I Put This?—How to Decide Where to Save Individual Notes

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 1405**
The first is that people need clear workspaces to be able to create. We cannot do our best thinking and our best work when all the "stuff" from the past is crowding and cluttering our space. That's why that archiving step is so crucial: you're not losing anything, and it can all be found via search, but you need to move it all out of sight and out of mind. Second, I learned that creating new things is what really matters. I'd see a fire light up in people's eyes when they reached the finish line and published that slideshow or exported that video or printed that résumé. The newfound confidence they had in themselves was unmistakable as they walked out of the store knowing they had everything they needed to move forward.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 1411**
It doesn't matter how organized, aesthetically pleasing, or impressive your notetaking system is. It is only the steady completion of tangible wins that can infuse you with a sense of determination, momentum, and accomplishment.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 1414**
Your Turn: Move Quickly, Touch Lightly

# Chapter 6: Distill—Find the Essence

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 1482**
Coppola's strategy for making the complex, multifaceted film rested on a technique he learned studying theater at Hofstra College, known as a "prompt book." He started by reading The Godfather novel and capturing the parts that resonated with him in a notebook—his own version of Twyla Tharp's box. But his prompt book went beyond storage: it was the starting point for a process of revisiting and refining his sources to turn them into something new.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 1494**
In his own words, "I endeavored to distill the essence of each scene into a sentence, expressing in a few words what the point of the scene was."

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 1511**
Quantum Notetaking: How to Create Notes for an Unknown Future

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 1530**
This holds true for so much of the ideas and inspiration around us. There is a key idea that catches our attention in the moment. We feel enraptured and obsessed with it. It's difficult to imagine ever forgetting the new idea. It's changed our lives forever! But after a few hours or days or weeks, it starts to fade from our memory. Soon our recollection of that exciting new idea is nothing but a pale shadow of something we once knew, that once intrigued us. Your job as a notetaker is to preserve the notes you're taking on the things you discover

in such a way that they can survive the journey into the future. That way your excitement and enthusiasm for your knowledge builds over time instead of fading away. Discoverability—The Missing Link in Making Notes Useful

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 1562**
Highlighting 2.0: The Progressive Summarization Technique

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 1567**
The technique is simple: you highlight the main points of a note, and then highlight the main points of those highlights, and so on, distilling the essence of a note in several "layers." Each of these layers uses a different kind of formatting so you can easily tell them apart. Here is a snapshot of the four layers of Progressive Summarization:II

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 1698**
Picasso's Secret: Prune the Good to Surface the Great

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 1715**
Picasso's act of distillation involves stripping away the unnecessary so that only the essential remains. Crucially, Picasso couldn't have started with the single line drawing. He needed to go through each layer of the bull's form step-by-step to absorb the proportions and shapes into his muscle memory. The result points to a mysterious aspect of the creative process: it can end up with a result that looks so simple, it seems like anyone could have made it. That simplicity masks the effort that was needed to get there.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 1724**
Progressive Summarization is not a method for remembering as much as possible—it is a method for forgetting as much as possible. As you distill your ideas, they naturally improve, because when you drop the merely good parts, the great parts can shine more brightly. To be clear, it takes skill and courage to let the details fall away.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 1730**
The Three Most Common Mistakes of Novice Notetakers

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 1731**
Mistake #1: Over-Highlighting

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 1741**
A helpful rule of thumb is that each layer of highlighting should include no more than 10–20 percent of the previous layer. If you save a series of excerpts from a book amounting to five hundred words, the bolded second layer should include no more than one hundred words, and highlighted third layer no more than twenty. This isn't an exact science, but if you find yourself highlighting everything, this rule should give you pause.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 1744**
Mistake #2: Highlighting Without a Purpose in Mind

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 1745**
"When should I be doing this highlighting?" The answer is that you should do it when you're getting ready to create something. Unlike Capture and Organize, which take mere seconds, it takes time and effort to distill your notes. If you try to do it with every note up front, you'll quickly be mired in hours of meticulous highlighting with no clear purpose in mind. You can't afford such a giant investment of time without knowing whether it will pay off.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 1761**
Mistake #3: Making Highlighting Difficult

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 1764**
Just as you listened for a feeling of internal resonance in deciding what content to save in the first place, the same rule applies for the insights within the note.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 1793**
The true test of whether a note you've created is discoverable is whether you can get the gist of it at a glance.

## Chapter 7: Express—Show Your Work

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 1849**
She recalls, "Until I began writing my own stories, I never found quite what I was looking for… In desperation, I made up my own."

**Note - Location 1850**
This metphor can be applied to life as well

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 1899**
As knowledge workers, attention is our most scarce and precious resource.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 1918**
The final stage of the creative process, Express, is about refusing to wait until you have everything perfectly ready before you share what you know. It is about expressing your ideas earlier, more frequently, and in smaller chunks to test what works and gather feedback from others. That feedback in turn gets drawn in to your Second Brain, where it becomes the starting point for the next iteration of your work.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 1922**
The idea of dividing our work into smaller units isn't new. You've probably heard this advice a hundred times: if you're stuck on a task, break it down into smaller steps.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 1930**
Here's what most people miss: it's not enough to simply divide tasks into smaller pieces—you then need a system for managing those pieces. Otherwise, you're just creating a lot of extra work for yourself trying to keep track of them.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 1944**

Our time and attention are scarce, and it's time we treated the things we invest in—reports, deliverables, plans, pieces of writing, graphics, slides—as knowledge assets that can be reused instead of reproducing them from scratch. Reusing Intermediate Packets of work frees up our attention for higher-order, more creative thinking. Thinking small is the best way to elevate your horizons and expand your ambitions.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 1948**

Distilled notes: Books or articles you've read and distilled so it's easy to get the gist of what they contain (using the Progressive Summarization technique you learned in the previous chapter, for example). Outtakes: The material or ideas that didn't make it into a past project but could be used in future ones. Work-in-process: The documents, graphics, agendas, or plans you produced during past projects. Final deliverables: Concrete pieces of work you've delivered as part of past projects, which could become components of something new. Documents created by others: Knowledge assets created by people on your team, contractors or consultants, or even clients or customers, that you can reference and incorporate into your work.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 2035**

Those four retrieval methods are: Search Browsing Tags Serendipity

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 2082**

However, tags can come in handy in specific situations when the two previous retrieval methods aren't up to the task, and you want to spontaneously gather, connect, and synthesize groups of notes on the fly.III

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 2158**

It is much easier to show someone a small thing, and ask for their thoughts on it, rather than the entire opus you're creating. It's less confronting to hear criticism on one small aspect of your work, at an early stage when you still have time to correct it, than getting a negative reaction after months of effort. You can use each little piece of intermediate feedback to refine what you're making—to make it more focused, more appealing, more succinct, or easier to understand.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 2164**

Once you understand how incredibly valuable feedback is, you start to crave as much of it as you can find. You start looking for every opportunity to share your outputs and gain some clarity on how other people are likely to receive it.

**Note - Location 2166**

The same happened to me when i catxhup with people nd share my thoughts

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 2168**

You will begin to see yourself as the curator of the collective thinking of your network, rather than the sole originator of ideas.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 2185**

Giving credit where credit is due doesn't lessen the value of your contribution—it increases it. Having a Second Brain where all your sources are clearly documented will make it much easier to track them down and include those citations in the finished version.

# Chapter 8: The Art of Creative Execution

### Highlight (yellow) - Location 2278
Divergence and Convergence: A Creative Balancing Act

### Highlight (yellow) - Location 2323
something—whether it's an explanatory email, a new product design, a research report, or a fundraising strategy—it can be so tempting to do more research. It's so easy to open up dozens of browser tabs, order more books, or go off in completely new directions. Those actions are tempting because they feel like productivity. They feel like forward progress, when in fact they are divergent acts that postpone the moment of completion.

### Highlight (yellow) - Location 2330
The Archipelago of Ideas: Give Yourself Stepping-Stones

### Highlight (yellow) - Location 2341
To create an Archipelago of Ideas, you divergently gather a group of ideas, sources, or points that will form the backbone of your essay, presentation, or deliverable. Once you have a critical mass of ideas to work with, you switch decisively into convergence mode and link them together in an order that makes sense.

### Highlight (yellow) - Location 2375
The Hemingway Bridge: Use Yesterday's Momentum Today

### Highlight (yellow) - Location 2378
Besides his prolific works, Hemingway was known for a particular writing strategy, which I call the "Hemingway Bridge." He would always end a writing session only when he knew what came next in the story. Instead of exhausting every last idea and bit of energy, he would stop when the next plot point became clear. This meant that the next time he sat down to work on his story, he knew exactly where to start.

### Highlight (yellow) - Location 2380
He built himself a bridge to the next day, using today's energy and momentum to fuel tomorrow's writing.IV

### Highlight (yellow) - Location 2388
Write down ideas for next steps: At the end of a work session, write down what you think the next steps could be for the next one. Write down the current status: This could include your current biggest challenge, most important open question, or future roadblocks you expect.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 2402**
Dial Down the Scope: Ship Something Small and Concrete

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 2426**
Waiting until you have everything ready before getting started is like sitting in your car and waiting to leave your driveway until all the traffic lights across town are green at the same time. You can't wait until everything is perfect. There will always be something missing, or something else you think you need. Dialing Down the Scope recognizes that not all the parts of a given project are equally important. By dropping or reducing or postponing the least important parts, we can unblock ourselves and move forward even when time is scarce.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 2457**
Divergence and Convergence in the Wild: Behind the Scenes of a Home Project

# Chapter 9: The Essential Habits of Digital Organizers

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 2574**
Project Checklists: Ensure you start and finish your projects in a consistent way, making use of past work. Weekly and Monthly Reviews: Periodically review your work and life and decide if you want to change anything. Noticing Habits: Notice small opportunities to edit, highlight, or move notes to make them more discoverable for your future self.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 2605**
Capture my current thinking on the project. Review folders (or tags) that might contain relevant notes. Search for related terms across all folders. Move (or tag) relevant notes to the project folder. Create an outline of collected notes and plan the project.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 2613**
Here are some questions I use to prompt this initial brainstorm: What do I already know about this project? What don't I know that I need to find out? What is my goal or intention? Who can I talk to who might provide insights? What can I read or listen to for relevant ideas?

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 2638**
My goal is to end up not just with a loose collection of ideas. It is to formulate a logical progression of steps that make it clear what I should do next.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 2649**
Here are some other options for actions you might want to include in your own version: Answer premortemI questions: What do you want to learn? What is the greatest source of uncertainty or most important question you want to answer? What is most likely to fail? Communicate with stakeholders: Explain to your manager, colleagues, clients, customers, shareholders, contractors, etc., what the project is about and why it matters. Define success criteria: What needs to

happen for this project to be considered successful? What are the minimum results you need to achieve, or the "stretch goals"you're striving for? Have an official kickoff: Schedule check-in calls, make a budget and timeline, and write out the goals and objectives to make sure everyone is informed, aligned, and clear on what is expected of them. I find that doing an official kickoff is useful even if it's a solo project!

### Highlight (yellow) - Location 2668

Mark project as complete in task manager or project management app. Cross out the associated project goal and move to "Completed" section. Review Intermediate Packets and move them to other folders. Move project to archives across all platforms. If project is becoming inactive: add a current status note to the project folder before archiving.

### Highlight (yellow) - Location 2678

2. Cross out the associated project goal and move to "Completed" section. Each project I work on usually has a corresponding goal. I keep all my goals in a single digital note, sorted from short-term goals for the next year to long-term goals for years to come. I like to take a moment and reflect on whether the goal I initially set for this project panned out. If I successfully achieved it, what factors led to that success? How can I repeat or double down on those strengths? If I fell short, what happened? What can I learn or change to avoid making the same mistakes next time?

### Highlight (yellow) - Location 2685

Any time I need some motivation, I can look through this list and be reminded of all the meaningful goals I've achieved in the past. It doesn't matter if the goal is big or small—keeping an inventory of your victories and successes is a wonderful use for your Second Brain.

### Highlight (yellow) - Location 2709

Here are some other items you can include on your Project Completion Checklist. I encourage you to personalize it for your own needs: Answer postmortem questions: What did you learn? What did you do well? What could you have done better? What can you improve for next time? Communicate with stakeholders: Notify your manager, colleagues, clients, customers, shareholders, contractors, etc., that the project is complete and what the outcomes were. Evaluate success criteria: Were the objectives of the project achieved? Why or why not? What was the return on investment? Officially close out the project and celebrate: Send any last emails, invoices, receipts, feedback forms, or documents, and celebrate your accomplishments with your team or collaborators so you receive the feeling of fulfillment for all the effort you put in.

### Highlight (yellow) - Location 2727

The practice of conducting a "Weekly Review" was pioneered by executive coach and author David Allen in his influential book Getting Things Done.III He described a Weekly Review as a regular check-in, performed once a week, in which you intentionally reset and review your work and life. Allen recommends using a Weekly Review to write down any new to-dos, review your active

projects, and decide on priorities for the upcoming week. I suggest adding one more step: review the notes you've created over the past week, give them succinct titles that tell you what's inside, and sort them into the appropriate PARA folders. Most notes apps have an "inbox" of some kind where new notes collect until they're ready to be reviewed. This "batch processing" takes only seconds per note, and you can complete it within a few minutes.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 2740**

Clear my email inbox. Check my calendar. Clear my computer desktop. Clear my notes inbox. Choose my tasks for the week.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 2760**

I don't highlight or summarize them. I don't try to understand or absorb their contents. I don't worry about all the topics they could potentially relate to. I want to save all that thinking for the future—for a time and place when I know what I'm trying to accomplish and am seeking a knowledge building block to help me get there faster. This weekly sorting process serves as a light reminder of the knowledge I've accumulated over the past week, and ensures I have a healthy flow of new ideas and insights flowing into my Second Brain.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 2774**

Review and update my goals. Review and update my project list. Review my areas of responsibility. Review someday/maybe tasks. Reprioritize tasks.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 2852**

There's no need to capture every idea; the best ones will always come back around eventually. There's no need to clear your inbox frequently; unlike your to-do list, there's no negative consequence if you miss a given note. There's no need to review or summarize notes on a strict timeline; we're not trying to memorize their contents or keep them top of mind.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 2856**

When organizing notes or files within PARA, it's a very forgiving decision of where to put something, since search is so effective as a backup option.

## Chapter 10: The Path of Self-Expression

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 2886**
Mindset Over Toolset—The Quest for the Perfect App

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 2893**
There is no divide between our inner selves and our digital lives: the beliefs and attitudes that shape our thinking in one context inevitably show up in other contexts as well.

**Highlight (yellow) - Location 2927**
How does such a dramatic change happen? Amelia didn't necessarily learn a new fact that she didn't know before. She took on a new perspective. She

chose to look at the world through a different lens—the lens of appreciation and abundance. We can't always control what happens to us, but we can choose the lens we look through. This is the basic choice we have in creating our own experience—which aspects to nourish or starve, using only the magnifying power of our attention.

### Highlight (yellow) - Location 2959

I see so many people trying to operate in this new world under the assumptions of the past—that information is scarce, and therefore we need to acquire and consume and hoard as much of it as possible. We've been conditioned to view information through a consumerist lens: that more is better, without limit. Through the lens of scarcity, we constantly crave more, more, more information, a response to the fear of not having enough.1

### Highlight (yellow) - Location 2967

It is driven by fear—the fear of missing out on some crucial fact, idea, or story that everyone is talking about. The paradox of hoarding is that no matter how much we collect and accumulate, it's never enough. The lens of scarcity also tells us that the information we already have must not be very valuable, compelling us to keep searching externally for what's missing inside.

### Highlight (yellow) - Location 2971

Abundance Mindset tells us that there is an endless amount of incredibly powerful knowledge everywhere we look—in the content we consume, in our social network, in our bodies and intuitions, and in our own minds. It also tells us that we don't need to consume or understand all of it, or even much of it. All we need is a few seeds of wisdom, and the seeds we most need tend to continually find us again and again. You don't need to go out and hunt down insights. All you have to do is listen to what life is repeatedly trying to tell you.

### Highlight (yellow) - Location 2975

Life tends to surface exactly what we need to know, whether we like it or not. Like a compassionate but unyielding teacher, reality doesn't bend or cave to our will. It patiently teaches us in what ways our thinking is not accurate, and those lessons tend to show up across our lives again and again.

### Highlight (yellow) - Location 2991

The purpose of knowledge is to be shared. What's the point of knowing something if it doesn't positively impact anyone, not even yourself?

### Highlight (yellow) - Location 3012

Polanyi observed that there are many tasks we can easily perform as humans that we can't fully explain. For example, driving a car or recognizing a face. We can try to describe how we do these things, but our explanations always fall far short. That's because we are relying on tacit knowledge, which is impossible to describe in exact detail. We possess that knowledge, but it resides in our subconscious and muscle memory where language cannot reach.

### Highlight (yellow) - Location 3028

The process of knowing yourself can seem mystical, but I see it as eminently practical. It starts with noticing what resonates with you. Noticing what seems to call out to you in the external world and gives you a sense of déjà vu. There is a universe of thoughts and ideas and emotions within you. Over time, you can uncover new layers of yourself and new facets of your identity. You search outside yourself to search within yourself, knowing that everything you find has always been a part of you.

### Highlight (yellow) - Location 3050
I discovered something through that experience: that self-expression is a fundamental human need. Self-expression is as vital to our survival as food or shelter. We must be able to share the stories of our lives—from the small moments of what happened today at school to our grandest theories of what life is about.

### Highlight (yellow) - Location 3092
Decide what you want to capture. Think about your Second Brain as an intimate commonplace book or journal. What do you most want to capture, learn, explore, or share? Identify two to three kinds of content that you already value to get started with. Choose your notes app. If you don't use a digital notes app, get started with one now. See Chapter 3 and use the free guide at Buildingasecondbrain.com/resources for up-to-date comparisons and recommendations. Choose a capture tool. I recommend starting with a read later app to begin saving any article or other piece of online content you're interested in for later consumption. Believe me, this one step will change the way you think about consuming content forever. Get set up with PARA. Set up the four folders of PARA (Projects; Areas; Resources; Archives) and, with a focus on actionability, create a dedicated folder (or tag) for each of your currently active projects. Focus on capturing notes related to those projects from this point forward. Get inspired by identifying your twelve favorite problems. Make a list of some of your favorite problems, save the list as a note, and revisit it any time you need ideas for what to capture. Use these open-ended questions as a filter to decide which content is worth keeping. Automatically capture your ebook highlights. Set up a free integration to automatically send highlights from your reading apps (such as a read later or ebook app) to your digital notes (see my recommendations at Buildingasecondbrain.com/resources). Practice Progressive Summarization. Summarize a group of notes related to a project you're currently working on using multiple layers of highlighting to see how it affects the way you interact with those notes. Experiment with just one Intermediate Packet. Choose a project that might be vague, sprawling, or simply hard, and pick just one piece of it to work on—an Intermediate Packet. Maybe it is a business proposal, a chart, a run of show for an event, or key topics for a meeting with your boss. Break the project down into smaller pieces, make a first pass at one of the pieces, and share it with at least one person to get feedback. Make progress on one deliverable. Choose a project deliverable you're responsible for and, using the Express techniques of Archipelago of Ideas, Hemingway Bridge, and Dial Down the Scope, see if you can make decisive progress on it using only the notes in your Second Brain. Schedule a Weekly Review. Put a weekly recurring

meeting with yourself on your calendar to begin establishing the habit of conducting a Weekly Review. To start, just clear your notes inbox and decide on your priorities for the week. From there, you can add other steps as your confidence grows. Assess your notetaking proficiency. Evaluate your current notetaking practices and areas for potential improvement using our free assessment tool at Buildingasecondbrain.com/quiz. Join the PKM community. On Twitter, LinkedIn, Substack, Medium, or your platform(s) of choice, follow and subscribe to thought leaders and join communities who are creating content related to personal knowledge management (#PKM), #SecondBrain, #BASB, or #toolsforthought. Share your top takeaways from this book or anything else you've realized or discovered. There's nothing more effective for adopting new behaviors than surrounding yourself with people who already have them.