

Note-taking Techniques to Change Yourself

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Introduction: Your Life Will Change with an Investment of One Notebook and 30 Minutes!

Thank you for picking up this book from among so many others. I am the author, Yasuda.

This might be sudden, but do you have any of the following worries?

- You are extremely busy and have no time to think deeply.
- Your mind feels cluttered and messy.
- You do not know what you want to do yourself.
- You are not good at planning, and you cannot come up with ideas.
- You want to improve your work efficiency.
- You want to improve your relationships.
- There is a qualification you want to get.
- Someday, you want to try a side job or start your own business.

Actually, these were my own worries before I started writing in notebooks seriously. If even one of these applies to you, this book will definitely be useful to you.

There are two types of people in the world: people who like notebooks, and people who hate notebooks. Since you picked up this book, I assume you are a "notebook lover." I also love notebooks. Notebooks changed my way of being, and they changed my life.

Currently, I run a community that supports people who want to start businesses or organize events. I work at times I like, with people I like, doing work that I want to do. I am in a state very close to my ideal life.

However, before I met notebooks, I lived as a company employee for 15 long years. It did not suit me. I was married and had two children, but I was worried. I thought, "Will I continue this way of life for decades? It feels like being a slave."

I worked in a nice office and received a high salary, so some might think this was a luxurious worry. Still, I was seriously troubled. I knew I couldn't continue like this. But, since I had a family to support, I thought quitting the company was impossible.

What saved me was a "Solo Retreat" using a single notebook. After that, I quit the company, started my own business, chose a working style with almost no stress, increased my income, and lived happily with my family. Thinking about my past self, this feels like a dream.

I will explain in this book how I used the notebook and what a "Solo Retreat" is. If you are worried about something now, a notebook will solve it for you.

You do not need willpower or hard effort. Please just prepare this book, one notebook, and 30 minutes. You don't need anything else. Just with that, your life will change dramatically.

Does it sound like a lie? If you doubt it, that is fine. Please just try reading this book first.

I am very happy if my experience and the note-taking techniques I developed can become the trigger to change your life.

Chapter 1: The Effects of Writing in a Notebook

1. Write Everything Out of Your Head and Create "Space"

We think we are always thinking about many things. However, humans cannot think about complex things only inside their heads.

For example, imagine you made a mistake at work and your boss scolded you.

"Why did I make that mistake..."

"I hate being scolded by my boss. He didn't have to say it like that."

"I must make sure not to repeat the same mistake..."

"But really, why did I make that mistake..."

Like this, only two or three words are spinning around in your head. Perhaps some people can spin five words, but there is not much difference. I think you can agree that we cannot think about complex things just in our heads.

In brain science, this activity of vaguely thinking about random things is called the DMN (Default Mode Network). Research confirms that this plays a role in organizing the brain. However, it is said that if this activity becomes too frequent, it consumes a massive amount of energy, and you get tired.

I define this state where words are spinning in your head not as "thinking," but just as "worrying." Unfortunately, ordinary people like me cannot reach a conclusion inside our heads when the problem becomes even slightly complex.

In a Solo Retreat, you write these spinning words into a notebook. This creates "space" inside your head. Think of a computer. If the memory is full, you write data to an external drive to make space. The mechanism of the brain and a computer are similar.

2. Your Mind Clears Up and Worries Disappear

As you saw in the previous example, writing things down clears up the fog in your mind significantly.

It is said that 80 to 90 percent of worries for company employees are about human relationships. When I was an employee, my worries were mostly about relationships rather than the work itself. Notebooks are very powerful for these relationship worries.

The feeling of "I hate that my boss scolded me" changes to a more objective view, like "My boss must be stressed with his family or work, too. It must be tough for him." Also, instead of just worrying, you can see what to do next, such as creating a manual to prevent mistakes. This makes you feel refreshed.

3. Planning Ability Improves and Ideas Flow

If you are an entrepreneur, producing new plans is the center of your work. Even if you are an employee, you might feel lost when your boss says, "Come up with some ideas."

I used to be bad at planning. I thought creating new things was for talented creators, not for ordinary people like me. However, this problem can also be solved using a notebook.

Planning is just a combination of something and something else. Completely new ideas do not actually exist. Instead of waiting for a brilliant idea to flash in your mind, it is much more effective to write down facts you know in a notebook and combine them.

4. Organizing Schedules and To-Do Lists Becomes Easy

Some people say, "I am too busy to have a Solo Retreat." For those people, let's solve the problem of being "busy" using a notebook.

Being busy is just a state of mind. It is not an objective fact, but an assumption. People who work efficiently have organized heads. They know exactly what they need to do and by when.

To visualize your tasks, write down everything you "should do" and "want to do" in your notebook. Even tasks for the far future. Then, estimate the time required for each and add a deadline.

5. Self-Analysis Progresses Dramatically

Of course, notebooks are effective for studying for exams. But in this book, I want to focus on self-analysis for job hunting or career changes.

People often do not know themselves very well. If asked, "What kind of person are you?" can you answer immediately?

When I interviewed students, many gave the same answers. "I worked hard at my part-time job." "I like people." This does not pass the interview.

You need to view yourself objectively. Write about yourself in a notebook, review it objectively, and get feedback from others. This cycle is a powerful weapon for your career.

Chapter 2: How to Do a "Solo Retreat"

1. What is a Solo Retreat?

Now, let's talk about the Solo Retreat.

What is it? It means going to a "training camp" (Gasshuku) alone.

Usually, a training camp is done with multiple people. Companies often hold "management camps" or "executive camps." They gather to discuss management plans. Sometimes they stay at hot spring resorts. It allows for deep discussions away from the busy office.

Simply put, a Solo Retreat is doing this management camp alone.

You don't drink alcohol, but you prepare an environment where you can focus, like a business hotel or a cafe, to get away from busy days. You secure time to think thoroughly with a notebook and pen. Since you are alone, chemical reactions with others won't happen, but you will feel a chemical reaction happening within yourself.

You avoid miscellaneous tasks and meet no one. You just write and think. That is the essence.

2. Is Preparation Necessary? How to Proceed

The method is not difficult. If you have 30 minutes, you can start immediately at a cafe. That is why it is important to always carry a notebook and pen.

If you want to do a full-scale Solo Retreat for 3 hours or more, you need preparation:

1. Secure time.
2. Secure a place.
3. Prepare a notebook and pen.
4. Make a plan.

Securing Time and Place

Ideally, a business hotel is great because there are few distractions. However, it costs money. Beginners can start at a cafe. Avoid places where you might meet acquaintances.

During the retreat, you must not do any chores. Meet no one. Do not answer the phone. Decide not to reply to emails or messages until the retreat is over.

Digital Detox

Do not bring a computer. It is best not to bring a smartphone either. Leave it at home. Just having a smartphone nearby reduces concentration.

People often ask, "Can I bring a book?" Ideally, no. Books are for input. A Solo Retreat is for output. If you bring a book, you will end up reading it.

Please stick to just a notebook and a pen.

3. First, Go to a Cafe for 30 Minutes

There are no strict rules. Just go to a cafe with a notebook.

Stay for about 30 minutes. Ensure no interruptions during this time. Leaving your smartphone at home is best. If you feel anxious about leaving your phone for just 30 minutes, that anxiety itself is a sign of digital dependence.

During the retreat, you might remember tasks you need to do. If so, write them on a sticky note (Post-it) to get them out of your head, then return to thinking.

4. Just Write Everything in Your Head!

The trick is to write a lot. Don't cross your arms and just think. Write.

Even if you can't write anything, facing the fact that you "can't write" is a realization. If you can't write, write about "why I can't write."

Here are 5 themes to think about:

1. Future Vision: Ultimate goals, economic goals for 3 or 10 years later, ideal lifestyle.
2. Worries: Relationships, career, personality, habits you want to change.
3. Ideas/Planning: New products, naming, business ideas, blogs.
4. Organizing Thoughts: Summarizing books, preparing for presentations.
5. Free Theme: Whatever is on your mind.

5. Planned Solo Retreats: 3 Hours, 2 Days, 4 Days

- 3 Hours: Focus on 1 theme. Break it down into 4-6 topics (30 mins each).
- 2 Days: You can cover about 4 themes. Day 1 is for "Vision" (Dreams/Delusions). Day 2 is for "Reality" (Schedule/To-Do).
- 4 Days: The most effective. Imagine a long-distance relay race.
- Days 1-2 (Outward trip): Expand your imagination. Vision and ideals.
- Days 3-4 (Return trip): Return to reality. 3-year plan -> 1-year plan -> This month's To-Do.

During these 4 days, you are the "CEO" of your life. Make a plan for the "employee" (you) to execute starting tomorrow.

6. It's Okay to Feel Unsure

If you tried doing this for even 30 minutes, congratulations! Your life has started to change.

You might think, "I'm not sure if this is working." That is normal.

Even realizing "It is tiring to focus for 30 minutes" is a great discovery. Eventually, you will be able to organize your thoughts and generate ideas.

Please try it without overthinking. The true value becomes visible by repeating it.