

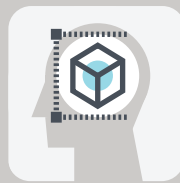


The Student Mindset



A 30-item toolkit for
anyone learning anything

Steve Oakes and Martin Griffin



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Visit us at thestudentmindset.com, follow us on Twitter @vespamindset for our latest updates or say hello via thestudentmindset@gmail.com.

Introduction

W

e've spent a combined forty years studying how people learn.

We've followed students who battle through difficult times, stay positive and get really good results – and wished we could be the same. We've worked with students who get exasperated, unfocused and demotivated – and recognised our past selves in them too.

We've spoken to thousands of students about how they study and what they do every day or week that makes a difference. We've discussed the problems we all face when we try to learn something new.

We've discovered huge amounts.

For example, we've learned that past success does not correlate with future success; some students with a track record of underperforming go on to achieve amazing results, while others with a great track record don't achieve what they were hoping for.

We've seen scores of students persist with approaches that aren't working well and spoken to hundreds of students who have decided to study in new ways. Many of the latter have seen their results change significantly as they've adjusted their tactics. We've seen that while cognitive factors can be important, non-cognitive factors also play a huge role in academic success.

Most importantly, we've found that there are a set of tools and strategies that keep coming up when we ask successful students what it is they do. They seem to be in control – they're balanced, grounded and happy despite the challenges of study.

We've been lucky enough to borrow these techniques and apply them to our own studies. We're both currently students ourselves, and we've become better learners by stealing the tricks and tactics associated with calm, purposeful study and, ultimately, getting good results.

In short, we've discovered that academic success isn't just about intelligence. This might seem counterintuitive at first, but time after time we've seen students do well because of the way they work – the routines, strategies and habits they've created for themselves.

These tricks and tactics are what this book is all about.

VESPA

So what are the tools and techniques used by successful learners? We've become so obsessed that we've begun collecting them, reading about them and practising them. We've started designing our own and testing them with students.

For us, it's become clear that these strategies sit in one of five groups, each associated with a particular characteristic. The five characteristics or qualities we've discovered in high performing students are vision, effort, systems, practice and attitude, or VESPA.

Let's take them one at a time ...

Vision

Mindset starts with ambition because our potential is limited by our ambition. High aspirations drive us to take more risk, have more courage, show more resilience and be more positive.

Owen (2015), p. 17

Figuring out *why* you're studying helps to release extra levels of commitment, determination and positivity. When times are tough, high vision students can remember why they're going through difficulties. They persist for longer and manage to remain optimistic. And so students with a strong vision get better results. So:

- * Do you have a clear plan for the future?
- * Have you written down your goals?

Vision is about having a well-defined goal: it's about making a connection between the work you are doing and your reason for doing it. In simple terms it's about knowing the outcomes you want to achieve and developing an appetite to achieve them. Angela Duckworth, the distinguished professor of psychology at the University of Pennsylvania, calls this 'grit'. In her book of the same name, Duckworth (2016) found that people who know clearly what

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they want to achieve, and then stick to it, are more likely to be successful. They're more gritty.

How might you measure a person's grit? Duckworth and her team developed an interesting questionnaire that you might want to try yourself - here's the link: <https://angeladuckworth.com/grit-scale/>.

If you complete the questionnaire, don't worry if your score seems low. You might not have had the opportunity to fully develop your grit yet. It might be worth spending some time thinking about when you've been most gritty. What were you doing? At what stage of your life? Finally, and most importantly, how are you going to be gritty when you're studying?

If we dig deep enough, most of us have a vision - a big goal we'd like to achieve. It's important not to let people talk you out of your goal or tell you that you can't do it. Distance yourself from those who do. One of the best ways to get clarity on your goals is to write them down and reflect on them.

There are seven vision activities in this book. If you want to jump in and do all of them, they're on pages 18, 35, 38, 42, 46, 48 and 116.

Effort

*I believe that my success is due in part to some level of skill.
But more than that, I believe that I win because I out-work people.*

Gary Vaynerchuk (quoted in Brock, 2016)

We've asked thousands of students how hard they work, and then checked this against the results they achieve. The students with the best results work harder than the others. But when we spoke to low effort students, they thought they were working hard too. *Perceptions of effort are personal and relative.* So:

- * When was the last time you worked really hard on something? What were you doing?
- * Have you ever worked so hard on something that time just flew by?

The effort element of the model refers to how much work you do. Pretty much anything worth achieving requires effort. You might be aware of the 10,000 hour rule suggested by K. Anders Ericsson (2016). His research found that most experts have dedicated over 10,000 hours to their craft to become an 'expert', a fact popularised by Malcolm Gladwell in his book *Outliers: The Story of Success* (2008).

A quick internet search will reveal many students who claim to have studied with minimum effort – the PhD completed in 100 days or the master's dissertation written in a weekend. We wouldn't recommend that you use these as your benchmark. People are always looking for short cuts, but most students who achieve good results will have worked hard. It's as simple as that.

Don't panic though! We're not discussing a vast and endless 10,000 hours of nose-to-the-grindstone effort here. Effort varies from field to field. And while there isn't much research out there giving us a clear answer on exactly how much effort is needed to pass particular qualifications at certain levels or ages, what is clear to us is that high levels of effort are a habit. And anyone can start a new habit.

There are five effort activities in this book. If you want to race through all of them, they're on pages 77, 122, 133, 136 and 141.

Systems

Creativity x Organization = Impact

Belsky (2010), p. 27

Being organised allows you to collect and collate learning material and then see the connections between topics and ideas, which allows you to understand material more quickly. Organising your day well means that you get more done in less time. These two tricks – one to do with resources and the other to do with time – are at the heart of why high systems students get better results. So:

- * What does your study area look like? Is it tidy or messy? What about your files and folders?
- * Do you stick to deadlines? Are you measured and methodical, or always in crisis mode?

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System is about two things: (1) organising your learning and (2) organising your time. Students often overlook the importance of being organised. There's been some interesting research which suggests that struggling with particular academic challenges is more to do with a lack of organisation than a lack of intellectual ability. Most students will have to deal with the battles of time management, procrastination and systematising information.

We've found that students get a significant return on their investment if they develop their systems, and over the years we've picked up some great tools to help you.

There are five systems activities in this book. If you want to skip ahead and do them all, they're on pages 56, 59, 63, 66 and 70.

Practice

For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them.

Aristotle, The Nicomachean Ethics, p. 23

Learning isn't memorising information. It's memorising information and then using it to achieve certain things – to construct an argument, solve a problem, interpret unfamiliar data, build something new. High practice students get good results because they spend time practising using their information flexibly and creatively to achieve an objective. Low practice students stop once they've memorised their information (or they stop *before* they've finished memorising it!). So:

- * When was the last time you tested yourself?
- * How would you advise someone to revise for an exam?

We see practice as distinct from effort – it represents what learners do with their studies. It's the *how* of studying. When it comes to learning quickly, it's the way you practise that counts. It's hard to talk about practice without mentioning the work of K. Anders Ericsson, mentioned earlier. He has spent his entire career looking at top level performers in a number of fields. His conclusion

is that top performers don't just practise hard, they *practise in a particular way*.

There are four practice activities in the book. If you want to complete them all at once, they're on pages 80, 83, 92 and 97.

Attitude

Students who are success seekers are not bluffed by setback, poor performance, failure or academic adversity. They take the lesson to be learnt and move on. They do not dwell on the mistake; they learn from it. They do not conclude they are dumb or no good; they see mistakes and setbacks as reflecting on their effort, attitude, or the way they went about the task, which all can be improved next time. They do not assume that past failure will predict future failure.

Martin (2010), p. 22

Everyone goes through difficulties when learning. For some of the students we've talked to, these difficulties are evidence that they're not good enough. Many of them withdraw their effort, retreat from challenges, and eventually give up. The high attitude students we've interviewed and observed know that difficulties are to be expected. They keep going when times are tough, and get better results because of this. So:

- * How do you respond when something goes wrong?
- * How do you learn from your mistakes?

We all know how important having the right attitude is; it's quite often what separates performance in any field. For students to be successful we think you need four aspects of attitude. First, you need confidence in your abilities – confidence is key to academic success. Second, you need to be able to control your emotions in high stakes situations. Third, you need to respond positively when feedback indicates there is still a lot of work to be done to improve. Finally, you need a growth mindset. This means that you have to believe that you *can* improve.

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We've spoken to hundreds of students who appear to have this positive attitude in their DNA. But in fact they've just developed, sometimes subconsciously, a series of tricks and techniques to get themselves through challenging periods. We're going to share some of these with you.

Attitude is key, so there are nine attitude activities in this book. If you want to push on and do all of them at once, they're on pages 23, 27, 50, 86, 100, 106, 126, 131 and 143.

What's in a Mindset?

A mindset is a set of beliefs, principles and values which influence the way you see the world. Adopting a particular mindset is like putting on a pair of glasses – a set of lenses which modify your vision, sharpening some things and blurring others.

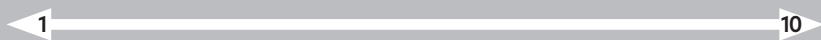
We think the five characteristics we've just shared beat intelligence hands down. And they form a mindset that's going to put you in the best position for success. This is the student mindset.

The VESPA Circle

Where do you think you sit at the moment? It's worth spending time thinking about which VESPA elements you might be strong in and which elements you might need to strengthen.

This is a simple activity to get you thinking about VESPA and to help you figure out where you might need to develop. First, consider the statements below on the continuum. Think of the line as being a 1-10 scale.

Vision:



I don't like setting goals and targets.

I always set goals for myself.

I tend not to stick to goals I've set myself.

I always finish everything I start.

Effort:



I don't like working hard.

I'm extremely hard working.

I get easily distracted.

I'm very focused when I work.

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Systems:

1

10

My files, papers and notes are very disorganised.

I am very organised in all my work.

I have no system for recording my tasks.

I use a diary/planner/app to record all my tasks.

Practice:

1

10

I do very little revision.

I use a wide range of techniques when revising.

I tend to focus on gathering and memorising information.

I set myself tricky problems and learn by trying to do them.

Attitude:

1

10

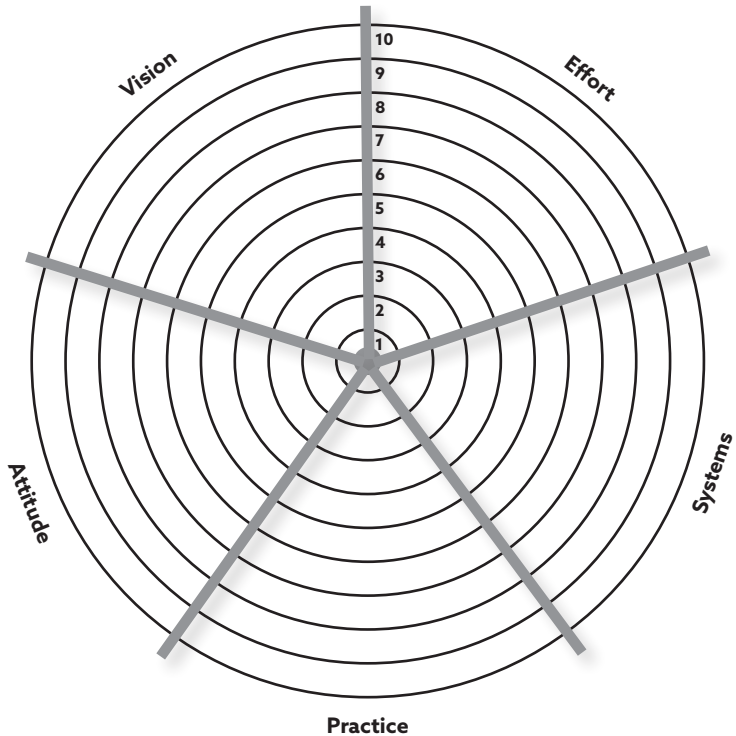
I get easily upset when things aren't going well.

I stay calm in high stakes situations like exams.

I don't have a lot of confidence in my ability.

I have high levels of self-belief.

Now you've assessed the statements, try to assign a rough numerical value for each element of VESPA between 1 and 10. Then simply shade in the section on the profile opposite, working from the inside out.

Figure I.1. The VESPA circle

Now you've got a visual sense of where you are, you might want to pay particular attention to certain activities as you work through this book. When you come across one that deals with an area you might feel weaker in, give it your full focus.

Experiment as you go along. Some activities might look potentially uncomfortable, but give them your time anyway. Some might need a couple of attempts before you get to grips with them. Others might not suit you at all. That's fine. Select the ones that work for you, adjust them if necessary and you can create your own toolkit of strategies and tactics.

How This Book Works

There's an array of studies examining precisely how learning occurs, and we've found them really helpful in assessing where we're succeeding and where we might be going wrong in our own learning. A significant number of studies conclude that learning happens in steps. Many scholars have suggested that we pass through phases when we are learning something academic. Fitts and Posner (1967) studied motor skills in athletes and observed them mastering techniques in stages.*

Cooper, Sullivan and Shulman (1978), working at Michigan State University, looked at academic learning and also saw learners passing through distinct stages. Haring, Lovitt, Eaton and Hansen (1978) discovered the same.

We've researched and combined the results of these studies, plus a number of other models, to develop the six-section sequence that follows. It describes the phases you're likely to go through as you explore your new subject, course or topic. At each phase you'll experience challenges and discover new ways of working. You'll have particular questions, issues or worries.

We've organised the book using these six phases so you can recognise which phase you're in, and choose some tools to help you get through it.

1

Preparation - getting ready to learn (Chapter 1)

Preparation is often overlooked but it should occur before each extended period of learning.

Questions: What's my mindset like at the moment? Am I in a good frame of mind? What should I expect? What are my obstacles to success going to be? How might I need to learn?

* Cited in Wulf (2007), p. 3.

2**Starting study – beginning the learning process (Chapter 2)**

This happens at least three times, since after every period of downtime you're required to get yourself revved up and refocused all over again.

Questions: What am I trying to achieve? Why? What does success look like for me? Has anyone else done it before? What might I learn from their experiences?

3**Collecting and shaping – gathering your information (Chapter 3)**

Collecting and shaping starts from day one and doesn't end until the final months of your course, at which point you'll stop assimilating new information and work with what you've got.

Questions: What's my most important information? How can I arrange and organise it all? How are things connected? What are the key ideas and principles? How can I recast this material so it feels like mine?

4**Adapting, testing and performing – using your information to achieve outcomes (Chapter 4)**

This begins later – you need a body of knowledge before you can practise effectively – but it goes on right until the final hour.

Questions: How do I create a robust working knowledge of everything I've learned? How do I demonstrate my mastery of this material and use it under pressure? How do I prepare and practise?

5**Flow and feedback – getting better through focused practice (Chapter 5)**

This is the zone where you seek to practise intensely in order to improve your skills. This stage usually comes later in a course, but some learners reach it more quickly.

Questions: Is there a level above where I am? How do I access it? Can I get some perspective and see what's going well and what isn't? Why do others seem to be in the zone and I'm not? Are there better, quicker ways to do this?

6

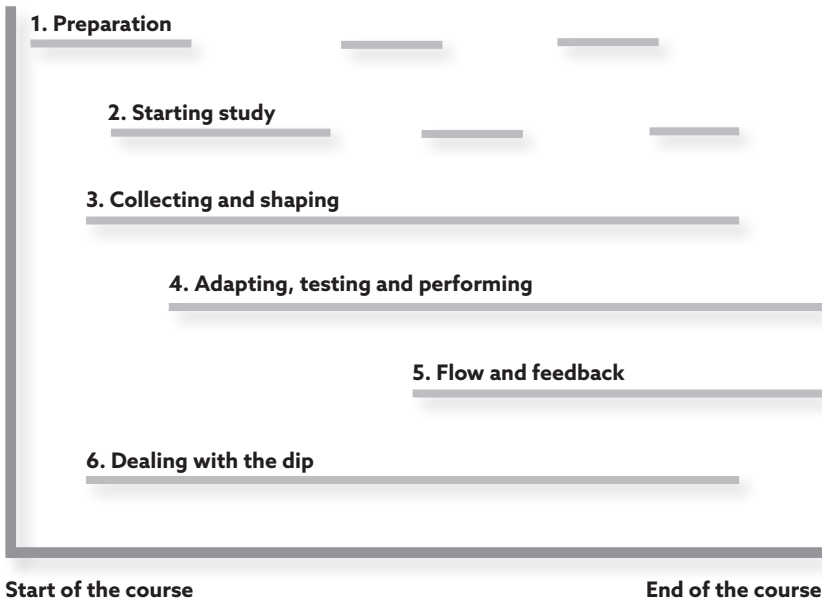
Dealing with the dip - handling setbacks and solving study-related problems (Chapter 6)

The dip is the place where problems occur and motivation weakens. It happens at different times for different people, but we're always aware of its presence.

Questions: Everything feels like it's going wrong - how do I get out of this? Is it just me? Are there systems to help me get through these difficult times?

These phases don't come one after the other. They co-exist - like this:

Figure 1.2. The six phases of learning



So, for lots of the time you'll be doing all six at once.

CHAPTER 1

Preparation

Questions:

What's my mindset like at the moment?

Am I in a good frame of mind?

What should I expect?

What are my obstacles to success going to be?

How might I need to learn?

Key elements of the VESPA model in this phase:

vision and attitude.

Dr Tina Seelig, author of the excellent book *inGenius: A Crash Course on Creativity*, teaches a course on creativity at Harvard. Her course is very popular – every year she has to turn some applicants down.

One year, Seelig received a note from a student who hadn't made it onto the course. 'He said that he *never* gets into the courses he wants,' Seelig writes. 'I thought carefully about how to respond and sent him the following message: "If there is a course you really want to take and you don't get a spot in the class, then just keep showing up. Spots usually open up during the first week ... If you're there, you're almost guaranteed the spot."'

'Thank you for this advice,' the student wrote back. 'I assume that won't work for your class.' Seelig continues, 'I stared at his email for several minutes and then responded, "Yes, you're right. It won't work." I had handed him the ruby slippers and he didn't take them.'

Seelig contrasts this with a second student whose application was also unsuccessful, but who wrote to ask if she could attend just one class. When a student later dropped out, she got the place.

'The difference between them,' Seelig concludes, 'is their attitude. The first fellow ... didn't even see the possibility when I placed it in front of him. The second student created a way to get what she wanted' (Seelig, 2012, pp. 169-170).

The right attitude created an opening for the student who was able to see it. The direction of her life changed because she took advantage of the opportunities available to her.

Getting your preparation right helps you to see opportunities. Consider the first example on page 17:

Attitude	Emotional response to challenge	Decisions and behaviour	Results
I don't feel in control of my destiny. Other people seem to get chances and opportunities I don't.	I've developed 'selective attention' about chances to try new and interesting things. I didn't even see the posters advertising that particular competition. Now it's pretty much the deadline for entries.	I get the information but I know it's already too late. I don't bother entering. A fellow student on my course does enter, and wins. The first prize is £1,000.	I miss out, and I reinforce my belief that good things only happen to other people.

Or this one:

Attitude	Emotional response to challenge	Decisions and behaviour	Results
I'm highly likely to see criticism of my work as criticism of myself.	I've had a low mark and a list of things to improve, but I feel angry and indignant.	I'm going to tell myself I don't care. My tutors are wrong and this course is unfair. I'm not going to put much effort into improving the work because it feels uncomfortable and embarrassing.	I get a lower grade than others, and can't access a particular course module/ get into a particular class/get a particular job as a result.

As these examples demonstrate, preparation is a crucial part of the journey. By knowing yourself – who you are and what you're trying to achieve – you can anticipate and avoid a number of the obstacles ahead.

Before you take your first step, here are three key activities to have a go at. It can be tempting to skip this part and travel straight to the next phase, but even half an hour or so spent here can make a difference.

1. Vision Activity: The Learner's Manifesto

A manifesto is a statement of intent, like a resolution. If you make yourself a personal manifesto and commit it to paper, it's like the start of building yourself a new mindset. It becomes like your operating system. The apps at the surface of your life may change, but underneath your manifesto and mindset contain the principles that make your operating system run glitch-free every day.

Before building your manifesto, consider the following:

- * The 'beginner's mind' is a phrase meaning a quality of approach to study that we can all have – seeking to be open, eager and uncritical. 'In the beginner's mind,' says Shunryu Suzuki, 'there are many possibilities, but in the expert's there are few' (Suzuki, 2005, p. 1).
- * Naturalist Rachel Carson expresses it this way: 'A child's world is fresh and new and beautiful, full of wonder and excitement. It is our misfortune ... [that] that true instinct ... is dimmed and even lost before we reach adulthood' (Carson, 1965, p. 42).
- * Or if you want your advice research-based, try Professor Victor Ottati's paper – in the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, no less. The more expert someone feels, he says, the more closed-minded they are likely to be. In the prof's words, 'situations that [create] self-perceptions of high expertise elicit a more closed-minded cognitive style' (Ottati et al., 2015, p. 1).

The good news is that we can all return to the position of beginner, even if we're starting something as advanced as a degree in a particular subject.

Here are the five inherent dispositions of the beginner's mind:

- 1 **Discard fear of failure;** instead expect it.
- 2 **Be comfortable with 'I don't know'.** Your mind is ready for new thoughts, not rehashing old ones. Get comfortable with 'that doesn't make sense'. Turn it into 'that doesn't make sense yet'. See if you can hold opposing, illogical ideas in your head for long periods. It's safe to assume that you're going to study something that might not make sense for a week, a month or even longer. Disregard 'common sense' preconceptions or 'what I thought was true'. Most people's early education has dealt in *strategically simplified versions of the truth*.
- 3 **Seek out divergent thinking.** There are many possibilities and many answers, not just one. Others may have persuasive opinions; you don't need to wholeheartedly agree with them.
- 4 **Be curious and enquiring.** Replace 'I'm dreading this!' with 'I wonder what this will be like?' Focus on questions rather than answers.
- 5 Psychologist Abraham Maslow said we should **try to think 'without fashions, fads, dogmas, habits or other pictures-in-the-head of what is proper, normal, "right"'**. Instead, we should be 'ready to receive whatever happens to be the case without surprise, shock, indignation or denial' (Maslow, 2000, p. 194).

Your learner's manifesto should describe the best version of you – how that best version learns, what attitudes you bring to learning and how they work. The ideal operating system.

There are plenty of examples out there. Here are a few to give you a sense of what you're looking for:

- * Farnam Street – an organisation devoted to helping users 'develop an understanding of how the world really works, make better decisions, and live a better life' – has five principles: 'direction over speed', 'live deliberately', 'thoughtful opinions held loosely', 'principles outlive tactics' and 'own your own actions'.*

* See <https://fs.blog/principles/>.

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- * The manifesto of the Indie Travel group (who believe that 'we better understand ourselves and others when we leave home to experience the world first-hand') is created by forum discussion followed by up or down voting statements. Under discussion at the time of writing are: 'pack light and keep things simple', 'replace broad expectations with nuanced realities', 'options over possessions' and 'discovery over escape'.*
- * Leo Tolstoy, the author of *War and Peace*, wrote his own manifesto when he was 18. Here are some of our favourite bits: 'Get up early (5 o'clock)'; 'Eat little and avoid sweets'; 'Try to do everything by yourself'; 'Have a goal for your whole life, a goal for one section of your life, a goal for a shorter period and a goal for the year; a goal for every month, a goal for every week, a goal for every day'; 'Be good, but try to let no one know it'; and 'Always live less expensively than you might'.†

If that isn't inspiration enough, here are some other areas you might want to consider when formulating your manifesto:

- * Effort and efficiency: 'I give 100%, whatever I do. I never give up. I don't waste time. I get things done.'
- * Resilience: 'I'm dedicated. I'm strong under pressure. People can rely on me.'
- * Wealth of resources: 'I'm going to ask for help and advice every day. I'm going to get the most out of all the resources around me.'
- * Agency: 'It's down to me to fix problems and chase down solutions. I don't pass on responsibility when things get tough.'
- * The beginner's mind: 'I'm positive, open-minded and curious. I welcome mistakes and feedback.'

* See <http://indietravel.org/>.

† See <https://gretchenrubin.com/2011/01/10-rules-of-life-from-tolstoy-what-are-your-rules/>. Tolstoy's 'Rules of Life' appear in Henri Troyat's biography, *Tolstoy* (2001 [1967]).

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Once you've chosen your new operating system, you need to find a method of verbalising it, of remembering it and retelling it to yourself. The term 'mantra' is often used to describe an utterance or phrase with psychological power. This is what you're creating here – a shortened version of your manifesto.

Summarise it in one sentence or phrase:

.....

.....

.....

.....

Find a time of day when you can repeat your mantra – in the shower, on the bus, walking home or crossing the campus between lectures.

2. Attitude Activity: The Five Glitches

Even with the best of intentions, we might find ourselves suddenly assailed by doubt or fear when beginning our studies. One of the ways to best tackle these anxieties is to try to classify them, so we can easily recognise them when they emerge.

In this activity, we refer to these doubts and fears as 'glitches'. We've chosen this metaphor of a software bug because we've found it helpful in rethinking what's happening when we feel overwhelmed.

Have a look at the following glitches which are common among students:

1

The glitch of belonging

This glitch works by promoting how important it is to be normal. It tells you that your value comes from your ability to conform and belong. If you're normal, you'll be welcomed and accepted. Then the glitch not-so-helpfully highlights all the ways in which you're *not* normal: everyone's got higher grades than you. They're using words you don't understand. You just don't belong. This glitch is masterful at conjuring up what psychologists call 'imposter syndrome' – the feeling that you've faked your way into a job or course.

2

The twin glitches of comfort and ease

These glitches start by promoting the joys of cosiness, and then draw your attention to potential discomfort. They're the ones making you look at the rain outside, or reminding you how cold it will be if your train is late, or how comfortable your bed is. Their aim is to create inertia.

3

The glitch of helplessness

This glitch works by convincing you that the locus of control for your life lies outside you. It tells you that you're not the architect of your own destiny, and it's down to others to ensure you're on

track. When you're in a jam, this glitch lines up a list of people to blame: the library didn't have that crucial textbook just when you needed it, or the lecturer moved that lecture and never told you about it, or someone stole your reading list.

4

The glitch of perfection

This glitch begins by drawing your attention to the importance of polished perfection. Assignments need to be graded as close to 100% as possible. This glitch often refers to your past. It tells you that you've never made any significant mistakes up to this point, so you should continue to be perfect. You wouldn't want to put that record at risk, would you?

5

The glitch of status

This glitch works by promoting the notion that status is everything. Status is conferred by others and so the opinion of peers is crucially important. The glitch waits until you're in a situation where you have to choose between maintaining your status or being successful. It then tries its best to make sure you choose status over success, so you keep the good opinion of your peers but fail your course.

Which glitches have you faced before? What happened? Who won?

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Which glitches are likely to return? Put the five in order, from most likely to least likely to be an obstacle:

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Do the five glitches listed here cover everything, or are there other glitches? Record them in the table on page 26.

Now that you've considered your potential obstacles, you might need to rewrite your operating system - your learner's manifesto - to strengthen it against further attack.

Return to Activity 1 and reconsider what you've said so far.

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The result might be that I ...					
It tricks me into thinking ...					
Glitch					

3. Attitude Activity: The ABC of Fear

All of us feel fear at some point in our lives. Fear about a goal often stops us taking any action.

The American psychologist Albert Ellis (1957) had a really interesting way of dealing with fear. He argued that fear is a response to an *activating event* (A) – something happens which makes us fearful. It might be a test or an exam. It might be a challenging seminar with high level thinking and discussion. It might be a lecture about applications for postgraduate study. Whatever it is, it triggers anxiety.

Then, Ellis argued, the anxiety triggers a *belief* (B). This may be a false belief that has been learned over the years, but it can be deep-seated and persistent. A and B collide to give C, a *consequence*. We subconsciously choose a certain behaviour and act it out. This is Ellis' ABC model of irrational beliefs.

An example might look like this:

A **Activating event:** There's a lecture about the challenges of the undergraduate year and how hard you'll need to work to be successful.

B **Belief:** Over the years you've acquired a false belief that you can't motivate yourself to work hard.

C **Consequence:** You immediately feel that study at this level will be impossible for you. You decide you don't care, you don't want to be successful, you're not enjoying your course anyway. You work less hard than others.

How might we break this cycle? Ellis offers two other letters, D and E, to give us some guidance here. D stands for *dispute*. What can we do to dispute the belief we have about ourselves? Do we have any evidence to show us that our false belief is wrong? He then

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recommends that we get an *energising alternative* (E) to the false belief – a new, more positive belief about ourselves.

Take some time to think about yourself, and use the space below to make some notes.

A

Have there been any activating events that have made you feel anxious in the past? List them. Do they have anything in common? Do they make you feel anxious because they trigger a long-held false belief about yourself?

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B

What false beliefs might you have developed about yourself over the years? Why have these beliefs begun to feel real?

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C

Make a list of actions you've taken at some point in your past as a consequence of a false belief. Have these actions made the false belief seem even more real?

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D

Imagine you had to completely destroy your false belief. What arguments would you make? What evidence could you use?

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E

What energising alternatives to your false belief could you generate?

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You might want to return to your manifesto (Activity 1) at this point and rework it in light of the thinking you've done.



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