

THE BRAIN BOX

DAVID HODGSON
& TIM BENTON

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO
SUCCESS AT SCHOOL OR COLLEGE



Independent Thinking Press

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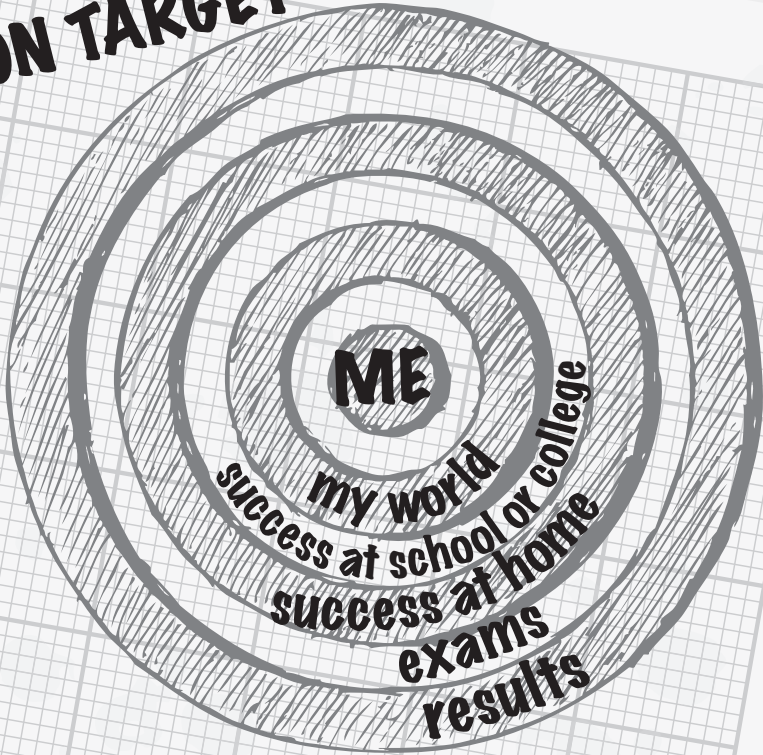
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*This is for all of the students and staff who
have contributed ideas and inspiration for
this book and for the many who will use it.*

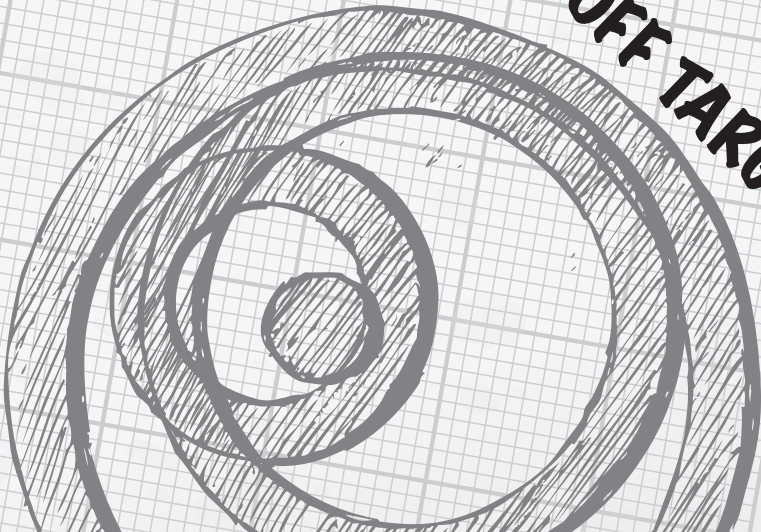
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ON TARGET



OFF TARGET



INTRODUCTION

The rules for this book - there are no rules!

This book is yours.

That means you can do what you like with it.

There are places to make notes and to doodle.*

There are things to pull out. There are quizzes and other tools that will help you get to know yourself better.

By the time you're finished with it, this book should be a mess. It will have been your companion through your exams and, like a good friend, it will have helped you get through the tough stuff.

Love this book. And make it your own.

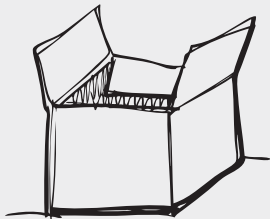


* We tend to focus better when we're doodling, so become a doodler! You don't have to be an amazing artist - just do what comes naturally. Sooner or later, you'll start remembering what you were doing/studying just by looking at the doodles. Try it!

WHAT DO YOUR DOODLES SAY ABOUT YOU?

★ **Arrows** – ambition and aggression. Book your place on the next series of *The Apprentice*.

★ **Boxes** – a methodical thinker.



★ **Eyes** – you feel you're being watched and judged by others. You want to be noticed. Audition for *Britain's Got Talent*.

★ **Stars or flowers** – you're romantic.

★ **Question marks** – you're uncertain about your future.

★ **Umbrellas** – you're bored.

★ **Webs** – you feel trapped.

You are creative, so go for it!



ONE OF A KIND

There are seven billion people on this planet, yet we're all unique! We have different talents and abilities. We all have something positive to offer the world.

Just take a look at the end of your thumb. There's the proof, right there! Your fingerprint is unique to you. No one else has it. No one ever will.

That makes you *different* to everyone else. But *different* in a good way.



We're all different.

There are some people who like cheese. Others hate it.

Some people love thrash metal, others indie, some just want to listen to chart stuff.

Some people love to play computer games all the time, some just like to watch TV or hang out with their friends.

It would be a boring world if we were all the same, if we all thought the same and wanted to do things in the same way.

And it's like that with revision. It's like that with learning.

How we learn can be as individual as a fingerprint.

Hopefully this book will help you to work out *your* way of doing things.

Once you've worked out the best methods, you're sorted. You can keep on learning. You'll do better, get smarter and keep growing.

Then you can make your mark on this world.

Your profile:

Name:

Age:

School:



Revision makes me (circle the ones which apply):

excited bored happy miserable vomit wee myself hungry
worried
give up energised focused not care other

Relationship status (circle the ones which apply):

single happily single unhappily single on the lookout in a relationship

tried dating once but can't be bothered any more

in a relationship with my mate's girlfriend/boyfriend (don't tell them!)

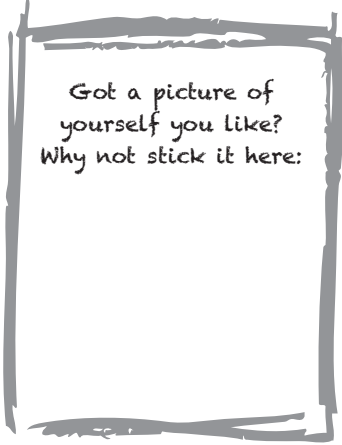
I love my dog/cat/gerbil/tarantula/ferret/bearded dragon/other!

My idea of happiness is:

.....
.....
.....
.....

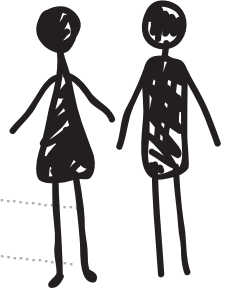
When I grow up, I want to be:

.....
.....
.....



Status right now:

.....
.....
.....
.....



RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW ...

Which one of these statements applies to you, right now at the start of things?
Tick the box and then read the section below that's meant for you.

- I'm massively stressed about my exams. **Read 'Stressed'**
- I'm working well right now. **Read 'Working well'**
- I want to do well so I'm reading this to find out if there's anything else I can do to improve myself. **Read 'What else?'**
- I always do well in tests so I'm not too bothered. **Read 'Not bothered'**
- I want to revise, but I don't know how. **Read 'I want to but ...'**
- Nothing works for me, I can't remember anything. **Read 'Nothing works'**
- Life's too short to revise. **Read 'Life's too short'**
- I don't care how I do. **Read 'Don't care'**
- I say I don't care how I do. But I do really. **Read 'Do care, really'**

Stressed

So you're massively stressed about your exams.

You probably have a really clear idea about where you're heading in life and know that it starts now. Maybe you feel a weight of pressure to do well, either for your parents or your teachers. Maybe you have an older sibling who excels academically and you feel you need to compete – doing as well as them or even better.

You aren't the first person to feel this stress, and you won't be the last. There are scores of other young people, up and down the country, who feel the same way. But that doesn't make your feelings any less real. What you need to do is manage your stress – you are more likely to mess up if you don't get a handle on your anxiety.

First off, you need to talk about the pressure and how it is making you feel. Talk to friends, a teacher you get on with or a parent. Maybe there is a school adviser or counsellor. Just talking about your anxieties will help.

There are bits and bobs in this book that you should read – browse the stuff



about the brain (and read all the 'Inside the Brain Box' sections), particularly the bits on what stress does to you. Forewarned is forearmed! Read about motivations – do you want to do well for the right reasons (see page 62)? You might have always got good grades at school and haven't really experienced failure. However, we all fail sometimes. That's just life! We need to know how to deal with it and, more importantly, know that it isn't the end of the world. Even if you fail all your exams (and we doubt you will), you will find a way to move forward. Read what we have to say about dealing with failure (page 58) – it will help you to realise that there is *always* a way forward.

If you need specific revision tips, look at our suggestions in Chapter 4.

If panic is making you avoid revision, read our thoughts on that too (see page 106).

Also read what we have to say about time management and making sure your life is in balance (see page 137). If all you have is great exam results, you may not have all you need ...

Working well

You're thinking, I'm already working well right now.

Hey! Good for you. But don't get complacent! Pace yourself. Read what we have to say about making a planner (see page 111) and keep going.

There is a danger that you're working *hard* not *smart*, so check out what we've got to say about *effective* revision (see Chapter 4). Also, if you're doing the same things all the time you might get bored, so make sure you're shaking it up from time to time. Read what we've written about keeping it fresh in Chapter 3.

What else?

You want to do well, so you're reading this to find out if there's anything else you can do to improve yourself.

Great attitude! What you've realised is that success comes in many forms. Good grades are part of this, and you'll find some brilliant tips to sharpen up your revision sessions in Chapter 4.

But it's also important to be a rounded individual. Have you considered work experience? Is your only hobby getting to the next level on *Call of Duty*? How do you spend your spare time and holidays? What are you putting out there on Facebook or Twitter? It's no good having great grades if the Internet is awash with reasons for future employers not to give you a great job! Have a look at our thoughts on this (see page 62).

Why not try out some of the suggestions for time management (see page 137)? These could help you raise your game.

Make sure, of course, that you also follow our advice for exam success in Chapter 5, because that will be a great start.

Not bothered

You always do well in tests so you're not too bothered.

Oh, so you're a clever one! Good for you! But that won't always be enough. At some point, we all realise that we need to work harder at some things than we think we do. Some of us have always done well in school, but then find GCSEs need more work than we thought. Others discover this at A level – many people come unstuck in sixth form because they got their GCSE grades with little effort. Some people reach college or university before they realise, for the first time, that they have to work hard. Others get their first job and then discover they aren't as brilliant as they always thought they were.

Why take the risk? Work hard now. No one ever looks back at school and thinks, 'I wish I'd worked less!' No one ever gets the top grades at GCSE with little work. No one achieves the top grades in their A levels without serious hard graft.

Read what we have to say about your competition (see page 64). Being good isn't enough any more. You might find this section a real wake-up call.

I want to but ...

You want to revise but don't know how.

Well, good news! You have this book! Schools are usually great at telling you that you *have* to revise and even *what* to revise, but often not how to revise. Read all our tips on revision in Chapter 4. Some will work for you, others won't. Use the ones that do and avoid the ones that don't, but don't be afraid to try things out.

Nothing works

Nothing works for you – you can't remember anything.

Ah! That's not true. You just aren't revising in the right way. Read what we have to say about finding the right way to work (see page 101).

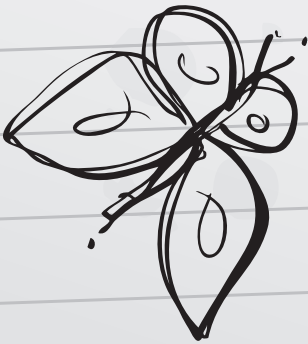
We can all learn, but we need to find the best methods for us. Once we have the tools, we'll be unstoppable. We also need to be in the right mood (see pages 24–39).

Life's too short

You think life is too short for revision.

But if you end up doing a job you hate, things will *really* drag. If you think schoolwork is boring, wait until you see the options open to you after you've flunked out.

Read what we have to say about goal setting (see page 61) and motivation (see page 65). In the bigger scheme of things, knuckling down and revising takes up only a short period of time, but the effort will be worth it.



Don't care

You say you don't care how you do.

We're aware this may be the only bit of this book you'll read, so we've probably only got about 10 seconds to make a difference.

Start the countdown ...

10. Life can be crap. But just because it might have been in the past, doesn't mean it always will be (see page 20).
9. We know you don't believe it now, but you've got more to offer than you think (see page 11).
8. Just because it *feels* hopeless, doesn't mean it is.
7. Your teachers don't hate you, so stop fighting them. People will help you. You aren't worthless, regardless of what you feel.
6. Life isn't fair, but you can make it better.
5. Someone will one day think you are amazing. That may seem hard to believe right now. Try to care about your future, because one day it will matter to you.
4. Yesterday has gone, but you still have tomorrow (see page 21). Every day is a new start.
3. The voice in your head – the one that tells you everything is a waste of time and nothing can change – it's lying!
2. The voice in your head which says all that negative stuff about you is also lying.
1. If you try, things will get better: you are smarter and more capable than you realise. Really.

We hope you decide to read some more.

Do care, really



You say you don't care how you do – but you do really.

Wow. It must be hard keeping up a front all the time, pretending you're one thing but really you're another. It's probably sapping all your energy!

Chill. Relax. Be yourself.

And stop reacting badly all the time and making such a fuss! The only person you're ultimately going to hurt is yourself. Get a grip! You may be worried about what your friends think, but they may not even be in your life in five years' time. It's time to step up for you.

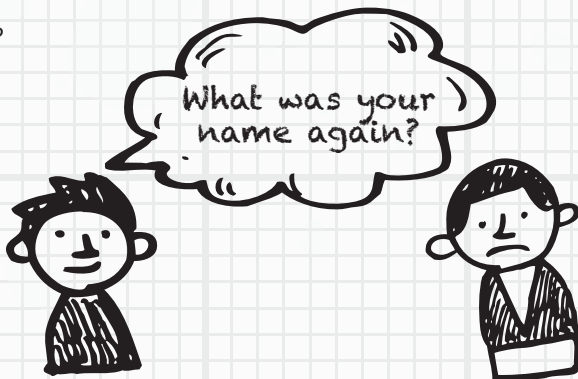
You know all those things you want from life? No one is going to just give them to you. You need to work for them. That starts now. Sorry if that sounds harsh, but sometimes we need a reality check.

If you're busy pretending to be something you're not, it will take its toll. If you're lashing out at people and being stroppy all the time, you're going to feel very alone. This may lead to stress. Stress and worry make a real mess of us. It is good to have a healthy body, but it is just as important to have a healthy mind. Read what we have to say about looking after your mental health (page 32). If you really do care, do something about it!

GETTING THINGS WRONG ... GETTING THINGS RIGHT

Most people struggle to remember names when introduced to a small group of people for the first time.

Why *is* that?



First, WRONG MOOD. This is because when we're introduced we're paying attention to *ourselves* not the person we're about to meet!

We may not even make eye contact because we're worrying about how bad our new haircut looks or whether we're dressed right. Maybe we're feeling nervous for a dozen other reasons. We don't even *hear* them say their name because we're not really *listening*.

Second, WRONG TECHNIQUE. We can all remember names if we follow a few simple rules.

When we first meet someone, we should *make eye contact*, *smile* as we shake their hand and say, 'Hello, my name is David.'

We then raise our eyebrows (the cue for them to speak) and after they say, 'Hi, I'm Paul,' we *repeat their name out loud*: 'Hello Paul, pleased to meet you.'

As we say their name out loud, we think of something weird which will help us associate their name with something about them. A rhyming word is good – so if *Paul* is *tall* or *small* we can use the rhyme, *tall Paul tall Paul*. If he looks like a famous Paul, we could imagine him dressed like Paul McCartney. Try it – it works!

Third, WRONG PRACTICE. Practice is vital. Practice develops skill and peak performance.

If you use this technique, you'll get better at remembering names. The

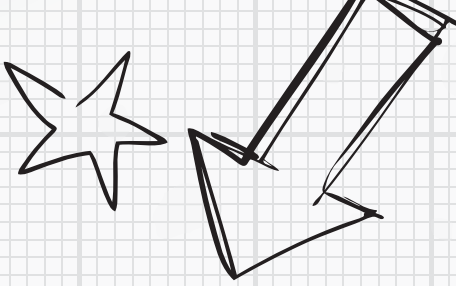
more you do it, the easier it will become. After a while, it will be second nature. It's great to pick up good habits, which will help you to be a more excellent version of yourself.

There are plenty more techniques in the book to try, so keep reading!

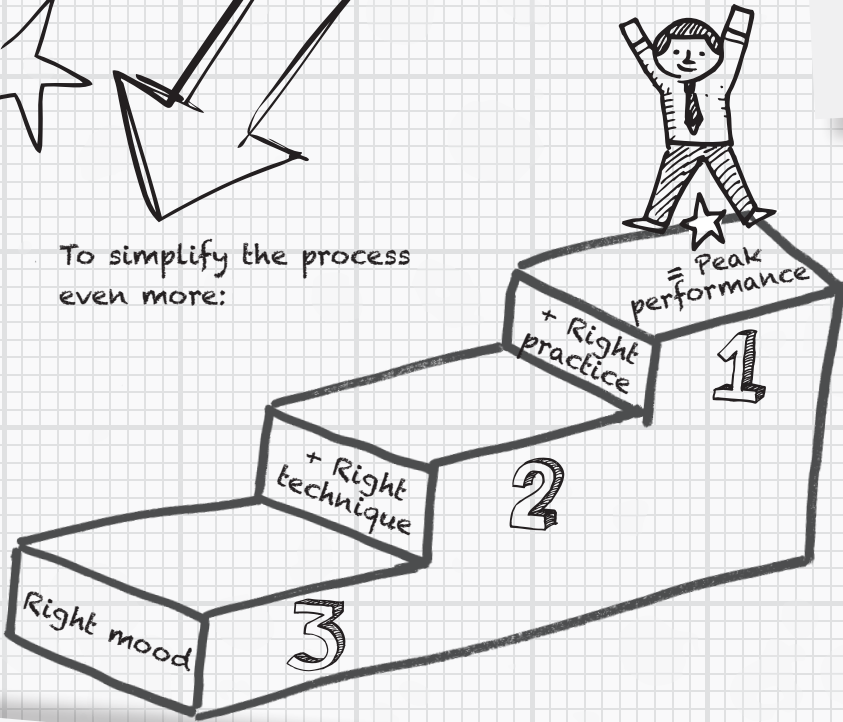
The process of learning and revising effectively is the same as remembering names effectively. We can learn and revise in this way too.

- ★ People often don't learn well because they aren't paying attention. Their minds are somewhere else during lessons and they simply don't hear it.
- ★ Nerves also limit us by turning our negative energy inwards, making us focus on ourselves rather than the learning (which is daft when you think about it).
- ★ Being able to enter the right mood for learning, revising and exams is crucial *and* fairly easy, when you know how.
- ★ We don't learn *how to learn*, but this is easy to correct. The rules of learning well in class, at home and in exams are covered in this book. Knowing the rules will save you time and effort and turbo-boost your performance!
- ★ We need to practise the techniques described in this book to improve our skill and performance.





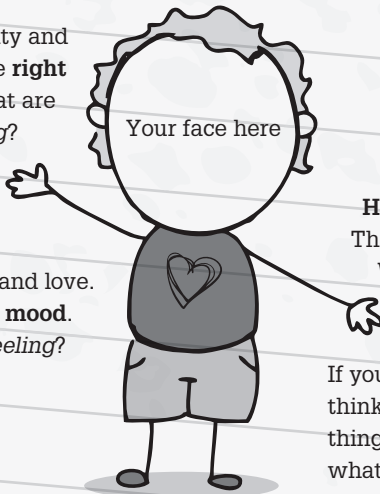
To simplify the process even more:



John Ruskin created a motto for the Society of Designers in 1896: 'Head, Hand and Heart'.

Head for creativity and ideas. This is the **right technique**. What are you *thinking*?

Heart for honesty and love. This is the **right mood**. What are you *feeling*?



Hand for craft and skill. This is the **right practice**. What are you *doing*?

If you're feeling good about yourself, thinking the right way and doing things correctly, you will succeed in what you are attempting to do.

CHAPTER 1

AT THE START DEALING WITH ME!



BELIEFS

Beliefs are fascinating. They make us who we are.

Some beliefs are very useful and some are limiting.

Some strong beliefs can be permanent, whilst others are fleeting. We might once have believed in the tooth fairy or Father Christmas. We may believe we'll never be able to ride a bike. We may believe we love certain people, animals or objects.

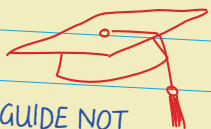
But what are your beliefs around learning, school, education and your intelligence?

They will have a **MASSIVE** impact on your future.

What are you avoiding because you don't think you can do it?



If you believe, you can
achieve, innit!
Dizzee Rascal



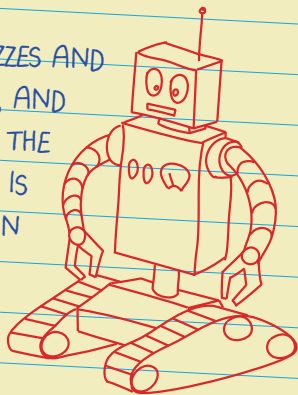
THE BRAIN BOX IS YOUR INDISPENSABLE GUIDE NOT ONLY TO POWERING THROUGH THE STRESS, HARD WORK AND BRAIN-ACHE OF SCHOOL OR COLLEGE, BUT ALSO TO ESTABLISHING GOOD LEARNING HABITS AND SELF-MOTIVATION WHICH WILL BE INVALUABLE THROUGHOUT THE NEXT STAGE OF YOUR LIFE, WHETHER AT UNIVERSITY OR IN A CAREER.

OPEN **THE BRAIN BOX** AND FIND OUT:

- * HOW AN ESSAY IS LIKE A SANDWICH
- * WHY THE MAJORITY OF PEOPLE WILL SAY CARROT WHEN ASKED TO NAME A VEGETABLE, AND RED WHEN ASKED TO NAME A COLOUR
- * HOW TO GET OVER A MAJOR CASE OF CBAS (CAN'T BE ARSED SYNDROME)!



PACKED WITH DOODLES, GAMES, QUOTES, QUIZZES AND ACTIVITIES WHICH YOU CAN FILL IN AND KEEP, AND INTERESTING FACTS AND QUESTIONS TO KEEP THE GREY MATTER GOING, **THE BRAIN BOX** IS YOUR ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO LEARNING, REVISION AND MOTIVATION.



'INTELLIGENCE IS A FACTOR, BUT MOSTLY IT COMES DOWN TO HOW WELL YOU WORK. THOSE WHO WORK HARD OR SMART TEND TO DO BETTER.'



Tim Benton is a trainer and educator. He works with young people across the UK, and beyond to India and Kenya, helping them achieve great results, not by fretting about exams, but by finding the ways they learn best, working smart and being all they can be. @TimBenton



David Hodgson works with young people on motivation, goal setting, life skills and employability; he goes about it in a way that combines practical common sense with an inspirational message (and, crucially, a sense of humour!). @DavidHitl

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