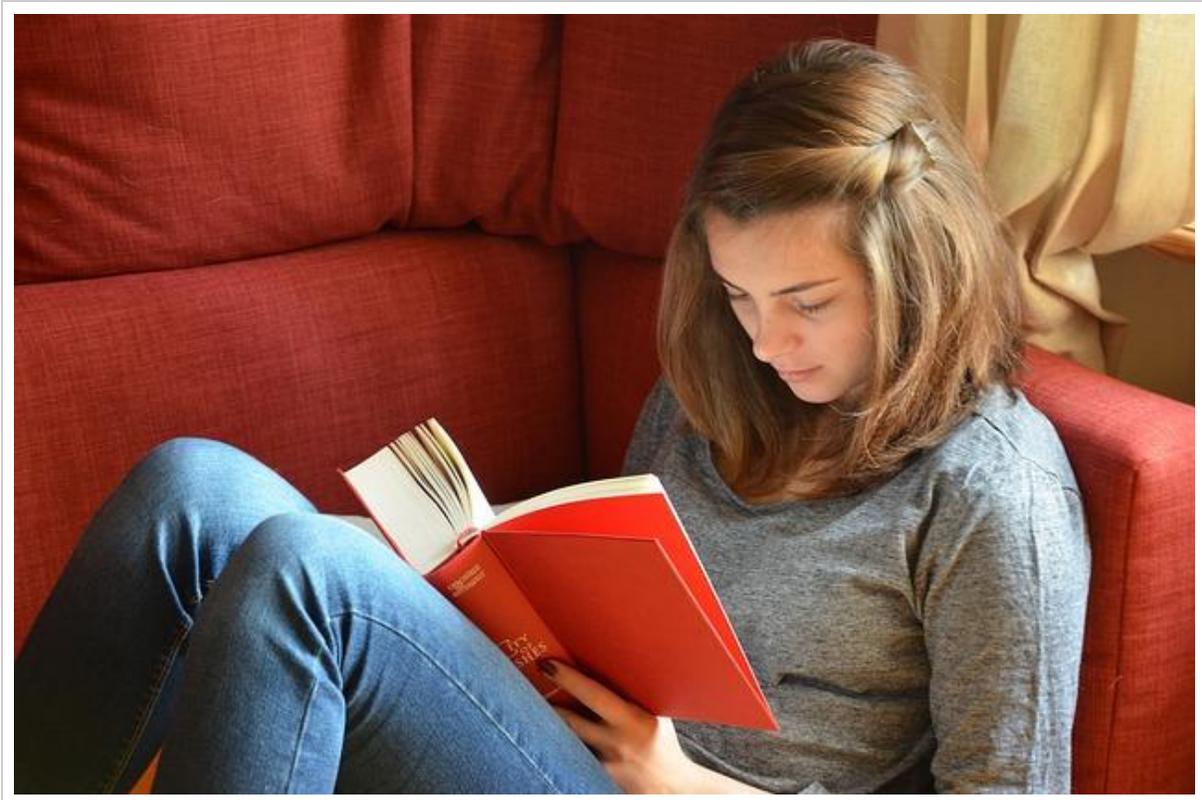

Effective Learning Methods – How to Learn anything You Want!

Posted on 2015/01/29 by Teresa Berners —



OK, let us face a hard reality. A quote from Wikipedia: “High unemployment can also cause social problems such as crime; if people have less disposable income than before, it is very likely that crime levels within the economy will increase.” (Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unemployment>)

And according to <http://realbusiness.co.uk/article/15296-why-the-education-system-leaves-graduates-unemployable> the unemployment rate in the world increases because nowadays, more fresh students graduating from colleges are found to be more unemployable since they simply do not possess a deep understanding of the subjects taught in the college. This simply implies, if the students are able to grasp their subjects more thoroughly, they can become at least moderately proficient in their subjects, and hence increasing their employability rate, and thus directly impacting the increasing crime rates.

This fact alone is sufficient to stress the importance of learning effective techniques to master the subjects a student is trying to learn – because it has a direct impact on the crime rate in the society.

This article attempts to lay out a few simple strategies, which are based purely on scientific facts, which if followed by a student, can immensely benefit him/her in learning any subject in the most efficient manner.

Importance of changing one's belief:



Almost half a century ago, Dr. Maxwell Maltz, a dentist by profession, proved to the world that by changing one's self-image, one can change his/her entire life. He also proved that, such process of change is surprisingly simple – it can be achieved just by changing one's habit. Again, changing a habit is quite simple too – just regular practice for brief periods of time is all that is necessary, Dr. Maltz proved.

The fact that almost all modern sources on self-improvement are based on Dr. Maltz's findings simply proves that his theories and practices are strong enough to stand the tests of time. So, one who wants to change his/her life can simply follow the principles laid out by Dr. Maltz.

Dr. Maltz's findings are important in our context of learning new things efficiently, because, like any habit, learning efficiently too can be nurtured by simple practice of a few techniques.

Relaxation:





Dr. Maxwell Maltz who found about the left-brain and right-brain approaches to solving day-to-day challenges, stresses the importance of being in a relaxed state, if any fruitful outcomes are to be expected in one's attempt to change his/her habit.

The modern findings about focused and diffuse modes of thinking resonate just with that.

By being in a relaxed state, we simply allow our brain to expand its horizon and to realize its true potential. In such a relaxed state, learning new things is simply inevitable, because our brain has been conditioned all through these hundreds of years just for the same. Ever realize how you can remember a nursery rhyme with all its tune and accents – which you learnt several decades ago – today with so much precision? It is just because you learnt it in a most relaxed way during your childhood – when you were free from all distractions and worries of adulthood.

If as a child, you can learn and remember things too easily and permanently, why your same brain cannot be used for learning new things today, so that they can be remembered a few decades later?

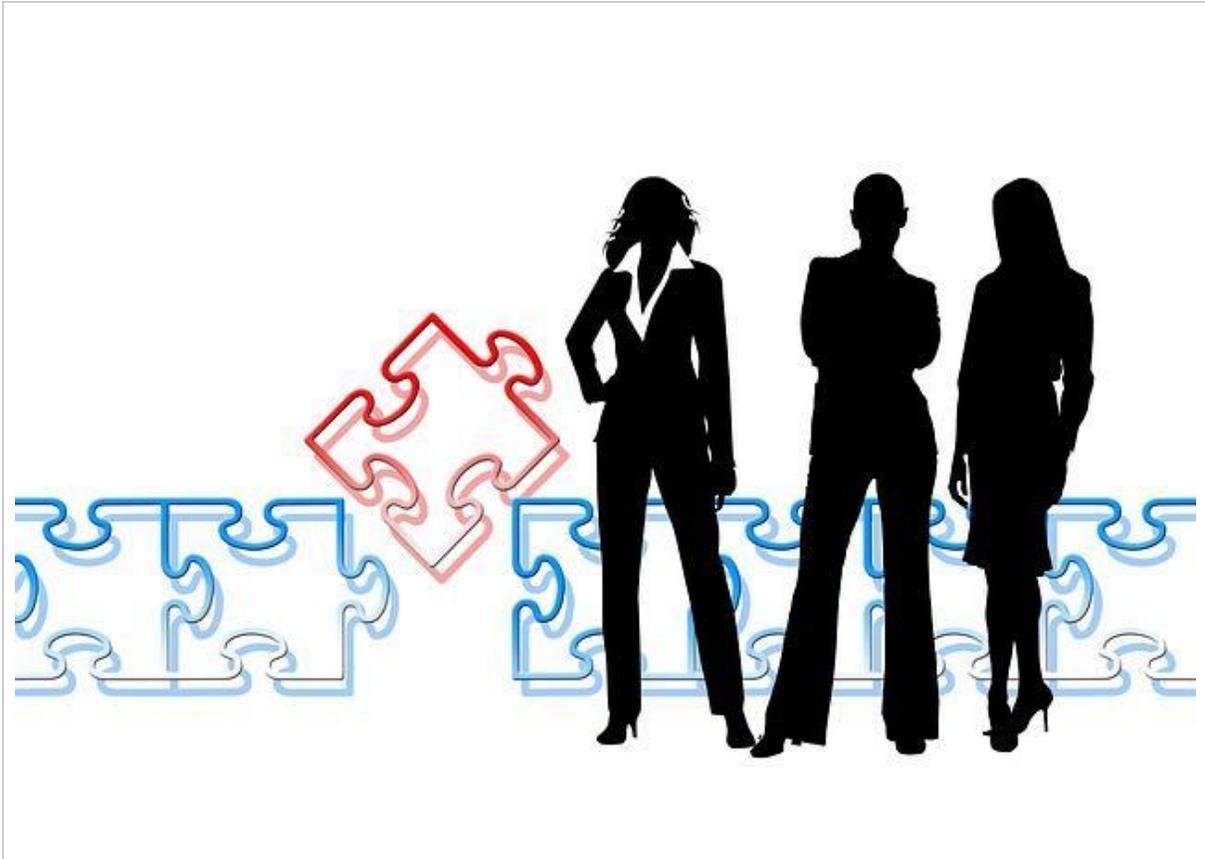
Is it possible? Yes, absolutely. Because it is your same brain.

But what is the difference in your brain between the present time and when you learnt new things decades back? Just being in a relaxed mindset.

Fair enough?

OK, let us move to the next step in learning.

Getting the Big Picture:

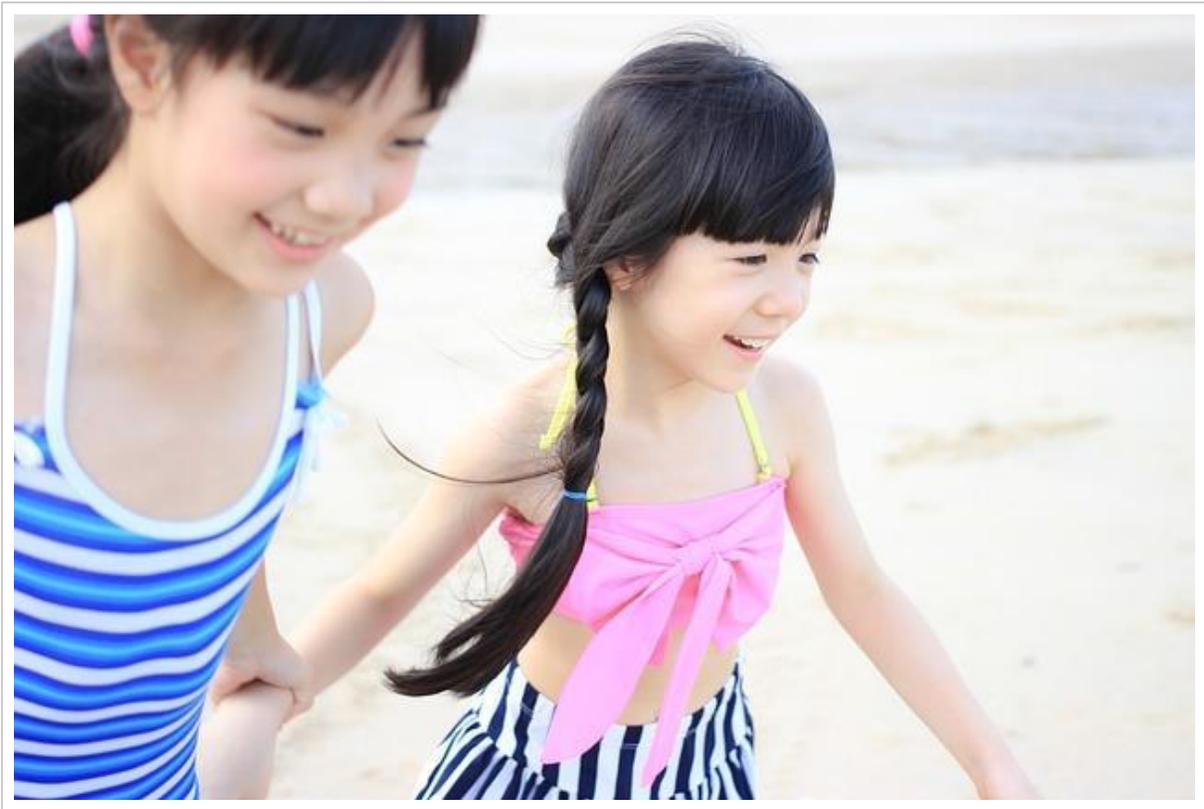


Often when I was a child, I just learnt what was taught to me in school on a day-to-day basis, and I would often revise it too, and then just before the examination, I would revise it one final time, and I got used to get good marks. Yes, got good marks for no apparent use later. And the habit continued in my college days too, worse still, the same habit continued even after graduating from college for nearly, believe it or not, 2 decades. This habit just fed in me some sort of illusion in competence: While I thought I knew many things – indeed I was able to know many things on a microscopic level – I lost the big picture completely on a macroscopic level. Yes, I knew many things in chunks, the problem was connecting them to get the big picture – I was simply unable to come out of the bad habit of assimilating too many unrelated things without getting a big picture of any one thing that could be considered worthwhile.

Now that Professor Barbara Oakley has taught about the ins and outs of learning how to learn in her course, I am trying to get the big picture of whatever I learn. And I find that getting the big picture is immensely helpful in retaining my sanity! No more do I learn anything for no reason!

The best way to do this, as Barbara Oakley tells, is browsing through the entire course of study at hand, before starting to study the individual chapters.

Mindset:



As the Course tells, it is often the mindset which is responsible for our approach to learning new things. Having the proper mindset before sitting for a study is extremely important to derive the maximum benefit from that study. Just focus on the goal – why you are beginning to study it – before the study, and the interest will come automatically on the subject. Having the proper interest is half the battle. However, this should not be confused with the ‘product and process approach’ when you are beginning to solve a problem in a home work during your school / college days. In that case, you would do well when you focus your attention on the process (actually beginning to do the home work) rather than on the product (the finished home work.)

Visualization in Learning:





A picture is worth thousand words. It is true for our brain. Given that our mind can see and remember pictures thousand times more than merely abstract data of texts, it makes sense if we begin to associate most, if not each, of the text we need to study with the appropriate pictures. Doing so can help in the retention of whatever is studied – better than trying to remember only blocks of text. In fact, this is the exact secret of many people doing amazing memory feats – like remembering the sequence of several decks of cards, remembering hundreds of things both randomly and sequentially, remembering dozens of names, remembering plenty of faces, etc. Once these association of things with pictures is mastered, you have mastered the memory techniques, and you have astonishing memory!

Forming stories, practicing [PEG systems](#), association of things with places, and techniques like these all can tremendously increase your memory. The best part is, it is absolutely fun to do it!

Practice Makes Perfect:



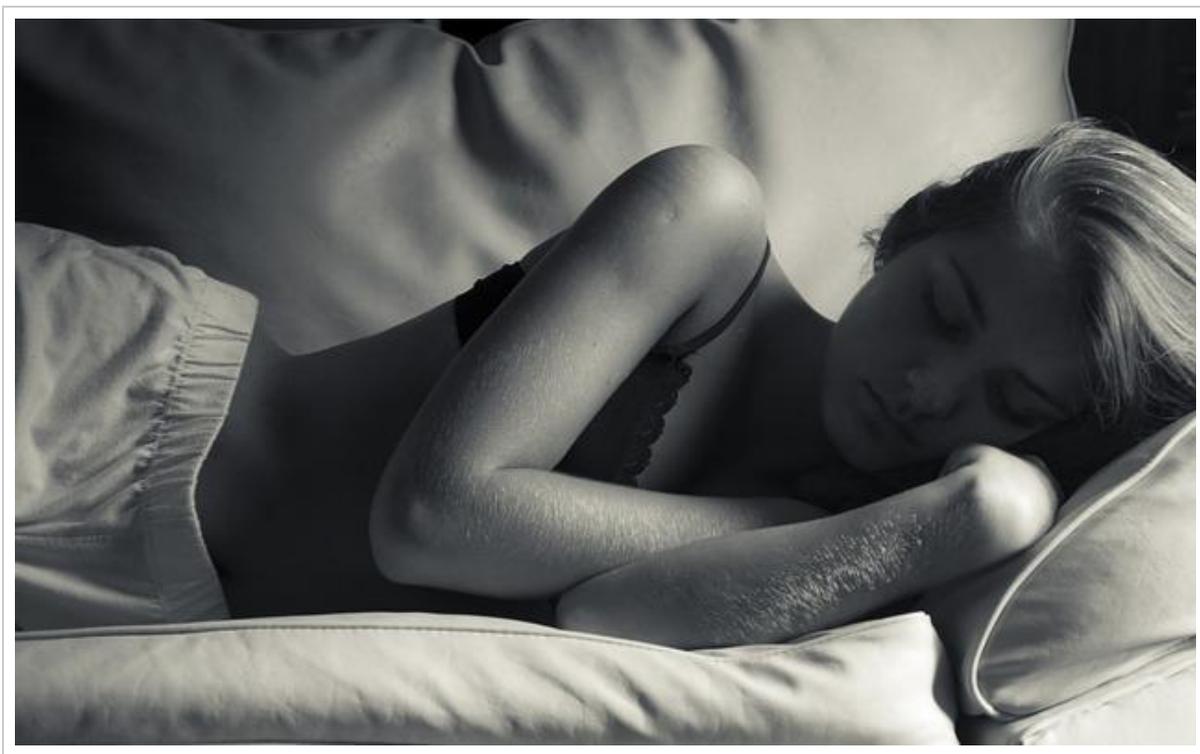


Ever wonder how your favorite body builder built his muscles? You know it is by practicing – giving enough exercise to the body muscles – on a DAILY basis.

Ever wonder how your favorite genius built his/her genius? If you don't know, it is again by practicing – giving enough exercise to the brain muscles – on a DAILY basis.

See the similarity between the two comparisons above? Yes, by practicing on your chosen field of study on a DAILY basis, you too can achieve that kind of genius. The same 1% inspiration 99% perspiration thing you have heard of....

Over-learning:



While stressing the importance of practicing on a DAILY basis, as above, it is equally important to give enough rest to your brain to assimilate the subject you have already studied – before beginning to learn

the next thing. One step at a time – no over-dumping your brain allowed if you want to keep your sanity! Having enough sleep per day, every day, will help you in this. Let your brain work in the background while you sleep, digesting whatever you have studied on the day. Doing physical exercise every day will help you tremendously in your ability to learn new things.

Testing:



The above two in place, how do you ensure that you have really learned the material you were trying to learn? The only fool-proof method is testing yourself – on a regular basis. First, try to solve simple problems related to what you have studied, then once you are comfortable with your ability to solve simple problems, go for more advanced ones, and when this process is done on a continual basis, you will find that you are already a Master in your subject.

Having your own study group together can help you more in this process. Of course, be sure not to get distracted by the group members' activities. (If you find that your group member is distracting you, do not hesitate to just leave it and join a new group or be on your own.)

Procrastination:





I often found myself procrastinating on many things. On thinking over it, I find that it is because of two main reasons: (i) The subject of study was not interesting enough to me; and (ii) The subject was a little difficult for me.

Nowadays I counter these two in the following ways:

(i) If I need to study because it would help me in my career, but I do not have enough interest, then I would force myself to get interested in it, because I would simply focus on the benefits I would be getting once I finish the same. After that, the interest would automatically come to me!

(ii) If I find that the subject is a little difficult, then, I would simply use the [pomodoro technique](#) – which tells us to focus on only one thing (without any sort of distractions) for 25 minutes, then take a 5 minute break and reward yourself a little during this 5 minute period. Just repeat this 25:5 minutes technique for another cycle or two, and you will find you have already overcome procrastination!

For accomplishing this, I make an audiobook of whatever I want to learn and listen to it when I go for morning walk. By doing this, I not only use my walk-hour fruitfully without letting my mind wander haphazardly, but my study is also completed on time.

Learning is Lifelong:



A little observation around you will tell that every living being is destined to study from its birth to death. While animals learn this by experience, we humans are blessed with the ability to expand our horizons throughout our life time both through experience as well as conscious decision to study. This means, by expanding our areas of interest, and using the above techniques in learning, we can reward ourselves with the ultimate feeling of living the life we want.

Article written by:

Charles Carlos (<http://www.GiftEA.com>)

References:

(i) This article is a project for the Learning How To Learn Course by Dr. Barbara Oakley, Dr. Terrence Sejnowski. You can access it for Free [HERE](#).

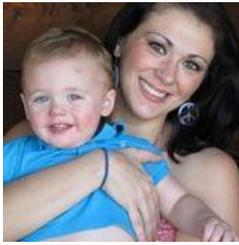
(ii) Psycho-Cybernetics by Maxwell Maltz – You can read and / download the eBook for Free [HERE](#) ; You can also download the Free Audiobook [HERE](#).

(iii) My companion during my morning walk is provided by Sony. You can get it at <http://amzn.to/15WFtnu>

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