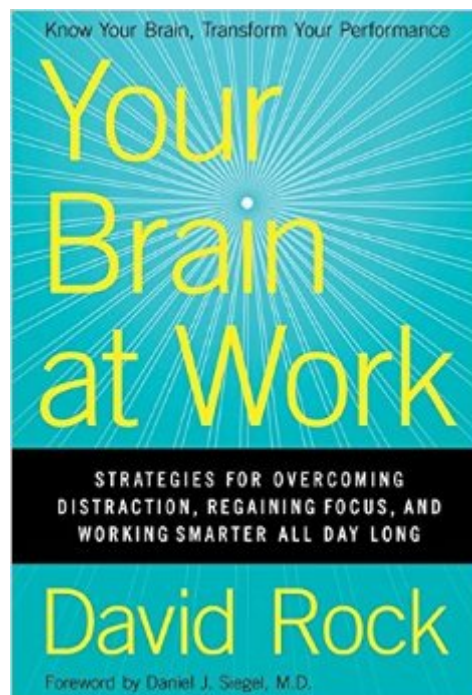


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# Your Brain At Work: Strategies For Overcoming Distraction, Regaining Focus, And Working Smarter All Day Long



## Synopsis

Meet Emily and Paul: The parents of two young children, Emily is the newly promoted VP of marketing at a large corporation while Paul works from home or from clients' offices as an independent IT consultant. Their lives, like all of ours, are filled with a bewildering blizzard of emails, phone calls, yet more emails, meetings, projects, proposals, and plans. Just staying ahead of the storm has become a seemingly insurmountable task. In this book, we travel inside Emily and Paul's brains as they attempt to sort the vast quantities of information they're presented with, figure out how to prioritize it, organize it and act on it. Fortunately for Emily and Paul, they're in good hands: David Rock knows how the brain works-and more specifically, how it works in a work setting. Rock shows how it's possible for Emily and Paul, and thus the reader, not only to survive in today's overwhelming work environment but succeed in it-and still feel energized and accomplished at the end of the day. **YOUR BRAIN AT WORK** explores issues such as: - why our brains feel so taxed, and how to maximize our mental resources - why it's so hard to focus, and how to better manage distractions - how to maximize your chance of finding insights that can solve seemingly insurmountable problems - how to keep your cool in any situation, so that you can make the best decisions possible - how to collaborate more effectively with others - why providing feedback is so difficult, and how to make it easier - how to be more effective at changing other people's behavior

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Your Brain at Work does an excellent job synthesizing a large body of scientific research on

cognitive neuroscience and interpreting the results in a way that helps readers understand how the brain works and how to make it function more efficiently. The book is laid out in a format of a theatrical play, where it introduces two ordinary people and follows their respective days. Both of the characters are facing a variety of challenges, very similar to the ones that millions of professionals deal with on a daily basis. After presenting a particular scenario and having one of the characters go through it, the author then performs a thorough analysis of what each of the characters did wrong and how they could have approached a particular challenge or activity in a much more efficient way. The best part is, obviously, that the analysis and the corrections in the behavior are all based on the most recent research in cognitive neuroscience. The narrative is broken into different "acts" according to the progression of the work day of the characters and the type of mental processes that are being discussed. I think this is a particularly good structure because it a) personifies the cognitive challenges by bringing up prototypical characters that most of us can relate to b) organizes the context in a way that is logically progressive and easy to follow and c) makes the book easy for later reference. As far as the content, to use the book's own language, a big dopamine rush is how I would describe it. It is really full of a good and useful insight, at the same time boasting a high level of writing that uses plenty of metaphors and is very easy to read (took me 5 days of reading before bed to finish).

In this review I will: a. summarize the book's content, b. provide an overview of the reviews of this book, and c. evaluate the book's merits. **CONTENT** The overarching message is that we benefit ourselves when we engage in metacognition (Rock's term). We improve ourselves by becoming more aware of how our power of awareness functions. Rock often expresses this idea metaphorically by telling us that it is to our advantage to develop a strong "director." "When we enhance our self-awareness, we appreciate that human beings are motivated by five types of phenomena: Social status, Certainty, Autonomy (independence), Relatedness (social connections), and Fairness. Enhancement of these five dimensions is experienced as rewarding. Diminution along any of these dimensions is just as aversive as physical pain. When we are suffering because one or more of these dimensions has been threatened, we can use three procedures to restore our mental well-being. The first is labeling. By describing an emotion we can reduce it. If someone insulted me, I can tell myself that I am angry. That will make me feel better. The second procedure is reappraisal. By changing our perspective or our interpretation of a situation, we can lessen the negative emotion. If someone insulted me, I can take his perspective and realize that he is so upset that he is not responsible for his actions. Or, perhaps I could reinterpret the situation and realize that what I took

to be an insult might not have been one after all. The last procedure is lowering expectations.

**THE "GUTS" OF THIS BOOK** This is one of the most practical 'neuro' books on the market at the moment. It is aimed at the 'lay-person' rather than the 'neuro-enthusiast'. The focus of the book is based on Rock's belief that ...'by understanding your brain, you increase your capacity to change your brain.' As a 'neuro-enthusiast and translator' I agree with him completely, and so do neuro-specialists such as Dan Siegel. However, it might be more accurate in the case of this book to say 'by understanding your mind, you increase your capacity to change your brain'. This book is about more than the physiology and processing power of the brain. Many of these practical tips have been tried and tested for years but we now have evidence to show why they work. Rock clearly outlines these for us.

**WRITING STYLE** David Rock uses three parallel techniques to involve us. These run throughout the book:

- \* A story - The story of Emily and Paul allow us to identify with their thinking at work.
- \* A metaphor - The use of a stage and actors enable us to easily understand the roles of various parts of our thinking
- \* A reference to research and the physical brain - Research data that underpins the book. Mercifully he avoids using large numbers of neuro-jargon. He focuses on the role of the pre-frontal Cortex (the director) and the way in which we use our 'director' in dealing with chemical responses. He introduces us to three positive chemicals; dopamine (feel good), nor-adrenaline (excitement) and oxytocin (collaboration). The combination of all three of these works because it draws people with different thinking preferences into the content.

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