

MENTAL NOTES

A mind expanding e-newsletter from Mark Zust, *The Perceptionist*



Change your mind, change your life!

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“Change has come to America.” Barack Obama, 44th US President

Change. The word is on the lips of every CEO, media outlet and even President Barack Obama. We’re constantly reminded that “change is here”, a direct result of the “change we need” campaign, but what does “change” really mean? It means chaos and uncertainty. It also means new opportunities and a fresh start. How you view change, whether as a threat or a blessing, makes all the difference in your ability to handle stress and prepare for the sometimes jarring adjustments required to usher in the new. One thing is for certain: the most important thing you can change is **your mind**. How you think about change stimulates the brain, positively or negatively, to make connections, seek solutions, and even grow new neurons to handle the task! The happy benefit of embracing the changes life throws at us, whether at work or home, is that you are conditioning your mind to access stored information



as well as seek and incorporate new data, often in new ways. It’s like building your biceps or expanding your lung capacity: if you do the same exercises over and over, you begin to see diminishing results. Only by changing the routine will you stress your muscles in new ways, which stimulates growth. The same goes for your brain. By consciously choosing new ways to solve problems, looking at the world from varying perspectives, as well as collecting information and experiences using all five senses, you are growing your mental muscles and literally changing your mind! And don’t forget that a growing brain needs the right fuel. I’ve been recommending the book *The Brain Trust Program* to all my friends and colleagues. It’s a bit technical at times, but is also a wonderful mix of nutrition, exercise (mental and physical) and mind motivation. Now is the perfect time to change your mind.

Easy ways to grow your mind and embrace change:

- 1. Record how you think about change.** Take a few minutes to write down your gut responses to change in general. Write three positive responses to change and three negative responses. How many do you feel are rational and justified as opposed to fear-based? What simple steps can you take to remove or downplay the fear?
- 1A. Choose a change you’re facing right now.** Take five minutes to write down a change at work or home that has been occupying your thoughts. List three positive responses and three negative responses to this specific issue or situation. Are you following a pattern of how you respond to change in general or are your responses to this issue/situation different. Why?
- 2. Balance yourself physically and mentally.** Try standing on one foot for 10-15 seconds, which will strengthen your back and stomach muscles comprising your “core”. This area is traditionally the weakest as we get older, particularly if we spend hours sitting at work. Now, try standing on one foot while closing your eyes! Not so easy, is it? To improve, focus on a fixed point (a window, a pattern in the wall paper, etc.) and try to see that image in your mind’s eye as you close your eyes. Over time, your ability to visualize an object in space will improve your balance by conditioning your mind not to rely primarily on spatial coordinates transmitted through your eyes. If balancing on one foot seems like an artificial exercise to you, then make it part of your morning ritual when you put on your socks or panty hose. Balance on one foot as you put your sock on, then your shoe. Then switch to the other foot. Be sure you’re near a chair or table to catch yourself if you start to tip over! Again, in time you will build up your core muscles and be able to accomplish this ritual easily. A client of mine who is in her late 50’s swears by this exercise and has noticed a dramatic improvement in her overall balance in the last three months. Try it!
- 3. Play Cranium or get the calendar.** Cranium is a great family or party game for adults and older teens that challenges you to solve questions and do stunts requiring all your senses. If you’re not into games, purchase the desk calendar featuring a different brain challenge daily. To purchase the online version, go to www.pageaday.com.
- 4. Get the book.** Go to the library or online for your copy of *The Brain Trust Program* by Dr. Larry McCleary, a pediatric neurosurgeon who has studied the effects of nutrition, exercise and mental engagement on sustaining a healthy brain for nearly four decades. It’s fascinating reading and filled with great advice. Enjoy!

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