

THE BIG IDEAS

2 Top Questions

For tomorrow.

The Zeigarnik Effect

You rockin' it?

Are You Nailing It?

= 90% success for 90 days.

Fight-thrus

= Key to habit formation.

Mental Toughness

Here's your new workout.

Strong + Resilient

People are RSF.

Repetition, Repetition,

Repetition, repetition, repetition...

*"In our experience, those who enjoy the most success are the ones who do the best job prioritizing the day's activities and accomplishing the most important tasks—not the greatest *number* of tasks."*

~ Jason Selk and Tom Bartow



Organize Tomorrow Today

8 Ways to Retrain Your Mind to Optimize Performance at Work and in Life

BY JASON SELK AND TOM BARTOW WITH MATTHEW RUDY · DA CAPO LIFELONG BOOKS © 2015 · 240 PAGES

"In *Organize Tomorrow Today*, we're going to show you how to embrace channel capacity instead of fighting against it. You're going to learn how to make decisions, establish priorities, and light your own motivating fire instead of continuing to chase the counterintuitive concept of multitasking. Most people still seem to believe that being busy is the equivalent of being important, but the highly successful have learned that being busy is a waste of time: being productive is the goal.

... knowing something doesn't change your life. *Doing* something does. Getting through this book (or a class) is one thing, but there's a huge difference between acquiring information and *understanding* it. And there's an even wider gap between understanding it and implementing it, or actually *doing* it. This is why there is such an emphasis in *Organize Tomorrow Today* to avoid trying to master all eight concepts at once. Doing so is a recipe for inaction and failure. Success comes one dedicated and focused step at a time.

The most successful people we see are the ones who take this information and use it in real life. Every day.

Follow the template, and you're getting a playbook for speeding up the process of getting from information acquisition to skill implementation.

Jason and Tom call it the Owner's Manual for Doers."

~ Jason Selk and Tom Bartow with Matthew Rudy from *Organize Tomorrow Today*

This is the third Note I've created on one of [Jason Selk's](#) books. The other two? [10-Minute Toughness](#) and [Executive Toughness](#).

I'm a huge fan of mental toughness training ([see the growing collection of Notes](#)) and [Jason Selk](#) is one of the world's leading peak performance/mental training experts. In this book, he partners with Tom Bartow, one of the world's leading financial advisor trainers.

Together, they give us some GREAT Ideas on how to, as the title suggests, "Organize Tomorrow Today." But it's more than that. My copy is nearly COMPLETELY marked up. It truly is an Owners' Manual for Doers—to the point, easy to read and super practical. I highly recommend it. (Get a copy [here](#).)

With that, let's jump in and explore a few of my favorite Ideas!

THE 2 MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS FOR TOMORROW

"To set yourself on the right track, ask yourself those two critical questions: (1) What are the three most important things I need to get done tomorrow? and (2) What is the single most important task I *must* get done? The questions work within your brain's 'channel capacity' to

"The key is to list important, ambitious, but realistic tasks that can reasonably be completed during the day. Small, day-to-day successes are the building blocks of achievement."

~ Jason Selk and Tom Bartow

"Taking a zero on one of your most important tasks is the equivalent of a professional athlete losing a game by forfeit. Passing altogether on your priorities completely erodes mental toughness."

~ Jason Selk and Tom Bartow

give you direction and prioritization in manageable doses. When you start your day, you know the three most important things you need to get done by the end of the day, and you know which of those three things is the big, glow-in-the-dark priority. You'll be amazed at how much clearer your decision-making becomes—and how much more efficiently you'll use your time—just by taking this simple organizational step."

Those are your two most important questions:

- (1) What are your "**3 Most Important**" things to get done tomorrow?
- (2) What's your "**1 Must**"? ← The glow-in-the-dark (love that image) hugely important thing that will most powerfully move you forward.

Simply implementing this one Big Idea can, literally, completely change your life. (Seriously.)

Jason and Tom talk about the fact that super successful people aren't trying to be "busy." They're focused on being PRODUCTIVE.

And, of course, you can't be truly productive unless you've slowed down long enough to figure out what actually needs to get done. (And then discipline yourself to do it.)

In [The ONE Thing](#) (see Notes), [Gary Keller](#) tells us we need to throw away our To Do list and start creating a Success List. Same Idea.

Let's Organize your Tomorrow Today.

3 Most Important:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

1 Must:

1. _____

Imagine your life in 5 years if you took the few minutes to establish these priorities every single day and then nailed it 90% of the time. (Take a moment to see and feel that.)

Now, imagine your life in 5 years if you DON'T take the time to establish those priorities every single day and/or you fail to nail it 90% of the time.

Which life do you want? Time to Organize Tomorrow Today?

YOU ROCKIN' THE ZEIGARNIK EFFECT?

"When you go to the effort to make a prioritized list of what you need to do the next day, you're essentially opening a loop in your mind. As you sleep, your brain will automatically start preparing for the successful closing of those loops. It's known as the 'Zeigarnik Effect.' In the 1920s, Russian psychology researcher Bluma Zeigarnik quantified the phenomenon after her professor, Kurt Lewin, noticed that waiters who hadn't been paid for an order had much more recall of the details of those orders than they did for orders that had been paid. Working from Zeigarnik's research, Lewin came up with the concept of 'task-specific-tension,' which persists in both the conscious and subconscious mind until the task is completed.

In other words, the mind doesn't like unfinished business! High-level mathematicians and successful writers have been using this technique for years as a tool for pushing their work forward. Before going to bed, they take a few minutes to read over the mathematical or literary work they did during the day—especially if they've reached a plateau or feel stuck. The mind then works all night to close the loop, and they wake up in the morning with 'inspiration.' It seems

"'Busy' isn't what gets rewarded long-term in the marketplace. 'Productive' is. ... The most successful people don't get everything done. They get the most important things done."
~ Jason Selk and Tom Bartow

magical, but it isn't so much magical as it is the result of the effective priming of the mental pump."

The Zeigarnik Effect. Love it. Couple things to note here.

First, we can model mathematicians and writers to use this little keep-your-mind-working-on-a-problem hack for our benefit by getting clarity on what we want to do tomorrow and having our brains help the cause while we sleep. (Awesome.)

Second, we need to be aware of how this can work *against* us if we go through the day with a ton of things unfinished. Just like that waiter who remembers the orders that haven't been paid, YOU remember all the little things you didn't quite complete.

In that context, that's not a good thing. It's one of the consequences of shallow work and skipping from almost-complete thing to almost-complete thing. The attention residue we pick up diminishes our performance on the next task.

Which is why we want to FINISH things—start strong, stay strong, finish strong. Repeat.

ARE YOU NAILING IT?

"What does 'nailing it' mean?"

If you've truly mastered one positive change, we call it 'nailing it.' It's become a popular shorthand catchphrase with many of our students. For you to have fully integrated the improvement and the changes it requires, it means that for three consecutive months, you've been able to complete the change on a daily basis 90 percent of the time or better.

Whatever improvement you choose—whether it's Organizing Tomorrow Today or committing to doing the Mental Workout—you need to be able to do it nine out of ten days for three months straight—with no excuses. If you can't do it, it means you need to increase your discipline or commit to a smaller level of intensity. Get started by proving to yourself that you can nail it, even if it's a smaller commitment. You can always increase later on. An essential element of performance is for people to learn to trust themselves. When you prove 90 percent of the time that you can nail it, you can't help but grow your confidence and self-trust."

Nailing it. That's what it's all about.

Important note here: Jason and Tom come back to the Idea of "channel capacity" nearly every other page. The basic idea is that we can only handle so much information at once. And it's not a lot. If you try to take on too much, you get overwhelmed and paralyzed.

They stress the fact that you need to constantly simplify things—from the amount of stuff you'll commit to doing in a day to the habit(s) you try to build.

Our equivalent? My (deliberate) repetition of the question: What's the ONE thing you know you could be doing that would have the most beneficial impact on your life?

We need to slow down and identify our KEYSTONE habit (a la [HABITS 101](#)) and then NAIL IT. 90 percent of the time we crush it. That's the target.

Of course, you can't hit that if you're trying to implement 1,000 things. Then you'll just give up and say this stuff doesn't work.

So, what's your #1 keystone habit?

P.S. In my interview with [Troy Bassham](#) about his book [Attainment](#) (see Notes), he shared a great difference between elite performers and decent ones. The decent performers practice until they get something right. The ELITE performers? They practice until they can't get it wrong. (<—I LOVE that distinction.)

"The reality is that our habits aren't so much formed as they are in a constant state of formation."
~ Jason Selk and Tom Bartow

How do *you* show up?

Here's to NAILING IT.

(I'm loving the Idea that 90% of the time we hit our **3 Most Important** and **1 Must**. Imagine life with *that* level of focused productivity. Then, if it's a top priority for you, let's NAIL IT.)

FIGHT-THRU (= THE KEY TO HABIT INSTALLATION)

"The discouragement monster, as we call it, is so dangerous because it saps your willingness to keep trying. You must remember that scoring often comes in spurts."

~ Jason Selk and Tom Bartow

"This is the point where 'I can do this' turns into 'This is harder than I thought,' or, 'Is it really going to matter if I miss a day' To make it through to the third phase, when the habit becomes second nature, you need to be able to win two or three of these important fight-thru battles with your yourself."

"Fight-thrus." So good.

Jason and Tom describe their take on habit formation. Three phases: The Honeymoon + The Fight-Thru + Second Nature. Basically: It starts fun. It gets hard. Then it's easy.

Too many people go thru the Honeymoon phase of habit creation when it's all sunshine and rainbows and, the moment it gets hard, they don't FIGHT-THRU—and, of course, their habit installation fails.

We need to recognize the natural process of installing a habit and discipline ourselves to WIN the fight-thrus. Jason and Tom give us 4 tips on how to make that happen.

- 1. Ritualize.** Make it easy to repeat your behavior. As scientists say, "reduce the variability of your behavior" if you want to use your willpower wisely to install a habit. Dilbert-creator Scott Adams says he doesn't waste a brain cell in the morning thinking about what he's going to do. It's RITUALIZED. #autopilot
- 2. Recognize.** Simply knowing (!) that you will inevitably encounter that little whiney voice trying to negotiate with you that **today** is the day to skip our commitment is a HUGE part of the process of winning fight-thrus. Quit being surprised. Recognize a fight-thru when it's happening and crush it. "Ah, this is a fight-thru. I've got this!"
- 3. Ask Two Questions.** We need to coach ourselves. Two questions = 1) "How will I feel if I win this fight-thru?" and 2) "How will I feel if I LOSE this fight-thru." <— Powerful.
- 4. Life Projection.** Take 30 seconds (right now!!!!) to imagine your life in 5 years if you consistently win your fight-thrus and install whatever new behaviors you're fired up about. SEE IT. FEEL IT. Get fired up about who you are becoming and what your life will look like.

Remember this: "The amazing things that world-class athletes are able to accomplish are usually chalked up to freak ability—and that certainly can be a factor. But a much bigger factor in those athletes reaching that level is their relentless ability to consistently win the fight-thrus."

Let's win the fight-thrus.

HERE'S YOUR NEW MENTAL TOUGHNESS WORKOUT

"Your mind is a muscle just like your bicep. If you want your bicep to become stronger, you must complete bicep curls on a regular basis. The same is true for your mind. If you want to become mentally tough, you must complete *mental* workouts consistently.

Muscle deterioration begins within seventy-two hours of your last workout. Just as this is the case with your bicep, it also holds true for your brain. The goal should be to never let two days go by without some type of physical activity, nor should you go two days without completing a mental workout."

*"Greatness is predicated on consistently doing things others can't or won't do. Simply put, success is **not** about being brilliant. It's about being consistent."*

~ Jason Selk and Tom Bartow

*"What *does* enhance self-image? Learning to talk to yourself about what you do well and how you want to improve."*

~ Jason Selk and Tom Bartow

Fascinating how your body starts to deteriorate within 72 hours of your last workout. (Plus, we're losing that natural hit of Ritalin + Prozac that John Ratey talks about in *Spark*.) As such, let's never go longer than two days without some type of physical activity.

And... Our brains are much more like our bicep than we may think!

In short: If we want to strengthen our minds, we've gotta hit the mind gym.

Jason is well-known for his mental training workout and we chat about it in our other Notes. He's optimized it even more in this book. Check out the book for the full goodness.

Here's a quick look at his 5 step, 100-second process:

1. Take a nice, deep **Centering Breath**. In for 6. Hold for 2. Out for 7. Ahhhh... A strong mind is a calm mind and there's no (!) better way to calm down than thru a centering breath like this.
2. Silently say your **Identify Statement**. Come up with a simple mantra that captures who you aspire to be. A pro athlete's example they share: "I am more mentally and physically prepared than the competition. I am a *dominant* Major League pitcher."
3. Walk thru your **Personal Highlight Reel**. Quickly replay three things that were awesome over the last 24 hours and see 3 things that WILL be awesome over the next 24. (in ~30 seconds total)
4. Repeat your **Identity Statement**.
5. Take another nice **Centering Breath**.

Voilà! You're mentally tougher.

(You do that every.single.day #compoundeffect styles? You're WAY tougher.)

HOW TO BE STRONG + RESILIENT

"When we focus on small, incremental improvements instead of perfection, the human spirit takes over, and all things become much more possible."

~ Jason Selk and Tom Bartow

"Strong, resilient people have what we call a 'Relentless Solution Focus,' or RSF. If a person with a great RSF was in the same situation and lost that big client, he or she wouldn't be some kind of emotionless robot—the loss would sting. But the immediate, laser-sharp focus would be on finding the solution path, and doing it in less than sixty seconds.

We say 'solution path' because many, many problems aren't solved with one lightning strike of an idea, obviously. A solution is a process, and there are steps to that process. In RSF, your goal when presented with a problem is to identify one step within sixty seconds that you can take that will make the situation better—even if only by a small increment of improvement. RSF is not about finding the 'perfect' solution but, rather, about just identifying some kind of improvement. It's called the '+1 solution,' because any improvement whatsoever to the current situation is part of a solution. The +1 concept has been credited numerous times with making the previously deemed impossible actually possible."

If we want to be strong and resilient, we need to be RELENTLESSLY (!) solution focused.

When something doesn't go our way, of course it sucks. But, with our relentless solution focus, we only allow ourselves 60 seconds to be bummed out about it. :)

Then, before our whole neurochemistry shifts into that negative stew (which, btw, makes it harder to actually see a solution), we steer the ship toward our "solution path" by thinking about just ONE *little* thing we can do to make the situation just a little bit better. The "+1 solution."

Anything upsetting you right now? Are you relentlessly focused on the solution path? Or kinda sorta marinating on the un-awesome of the situation?

Let's +1 it: What's one little thing you can do to improve the situation? (Now a good time?)

REPETITION, REPETITION, REPETITION, REPETITION

“Repetition, repetition, repetition, repetition. . . . Mastery only comes from effort and repetition. You wouldn’t expect your five-year-old to be able to tie her shoes the first time. In the words of the Zen master Suzuki, if you lose the spirit of repetition, your practice will become difficult. This was one of the absolute cornerstones of Coach Wooden’s teaching.”

“ Instead of telling yourself you aren’t special enough to get all the things you want in life, start telling yourself ‘ I deserve it!’ -and then start deserving it by taking action!”

~ Jason Selk and Tom Bartow

That’s from the second to last paragraph of the epilogue to the book. I smiled as I read it thinking about how I end most [Master Classes](#) with some variation on practice, practice, practice.

That’s really the essence of all our work together. Have a growth mindset. Know you can improve. Focus on experimenting, testing, practicing and putting in reps as you get 4% better day in day out. Repeat. Again and again. Compound. #done. Then repeat again. And again. And again. Knowing it’s *never* done and that’s what makes the whole process of mastery so fun. :)

Here’s to organizing tomorrow today as we keep the spirit of repetition burning strong!

B

Brian Johnson,
Chief Philosopher

P.S. I can’t read the word “repetition” without thinking of this brilliant line from [Dan Coyle’s Little Book of Talent](#) (see Notes): “*Repetition has a bad reputation. We tend to think of it as dull and uninspiring. But this perception is titanically wrong. Repetition is the single most powerful lever we have to improve skills, because it uses the built-in mechanism for making the wires of our brains faster and more accurate.*”

P.P.S. Remember: “When ‘normal’ people experience success, they have a tendency to respond by doing a little less. When mentally tough people experience success, they stay totally committed to what caused the success.”

If you liked this Note,
you’ll probably like...

[10-Minute Toughness](#)

[Executive Toughness](#)

[The ONE Thing](#)

[Deep Work](#)

[The Little Book of Talent](#)

About the Author of “Organize Tomorrow Today”

JASON SELK AND TOM BARTOW WITH MATTHEW RUDY



Dr. Jason Selk is one of the most sought after performance coaches in the United States. While serving as the director of mental training for Major League Baseball’s St. Louis Cardinals, Dr. Selk helped the Cardinals win two World Series championships, in 2006 and 2011. He has written two best-selling books, *10-Minute Toughness* and *Executive Toughness*.
Connect: enhancedperformanceinc.com.



Tom Bartow applied many of the concepts he learned from his best friend John Wooden, the famed basketball coach at UCLA, to create an advanced training program at Edward Jones for high-level advisors. Edward Jones’s advanced training program is still considered best in class throughout the nation.

About the Author of This Note

BRIAN JOHNSON



Brian Johnson loves helping people optimize their lives as he studies, embodies and teaches the fundamentals of optimal living—integrating ancient wisdom + modern science + common sense + virtue + mastery + fun. Learn more and optimize your life at brianjohnson.me.