

*'Thinking about thinking is a useful shortcut that many people avoid. If you're stuck, Jamie Smart can help you understand why.'*

**Seth Godin**, Author of *The Icarus Deception*

# CLARITY

Clear Mind • Better Performance  
Bigger Results

Jamie Smart<sup>®</sup>

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“Take your time reading this profound book. Jamie Smart is about to blow apart every circumstantial excuse you ever came up with. He’s about to put the steering wheel back in your hands.”

**Garret Kramer**, Founder of Inner Sports and Author of *Stillpower*

“The insights you’ll get whilst reading *Clarity* will resonant in how you manage day to day but, more importantly, provide a framework for refreshing your priorities, goals and drive.”

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“The world of leadership, sales and customer engagement has changed radically over the past ten years. People are more savvy, better informed and sick of the same old story. Jamie Smart cuts through the noise of the marketplace and shows you what really works. Profound, practical and instantly applicable; *Clarity* is essential reading if you want to make your mark in the 21st century.”

**Paul Charmatz**, Former Managing Director, Camelot

“Jamie, you really hit the bullseye with this brilliant book; it’s a must-read for everyone who wants clarity of mind.”

**Joe Stumpf**, Founder of By Referral Only and Author of *Willing Warrior*

“Jamie Smart takes an outdated paradigm of success and turns it on its head. Pull up a chair, get a copy of *Clarity* and discover how you can experience an exponential increase in clarity and quality of life.”

**Rich Litvin**, co-author of *The Prosperous Coach* and Founder of The Confident Woman’s Salon

“Jamie Smart is *brilliant!* In his book *Clarity*, he has unlocked an insight into the real-life matrix. Be ready to have your world turned inside-out because, as Jamie so effortlessly demonstrates, *this* is how it works.”

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“At last – a book that explains the importance of understanding the nature of thought and how the answers are on the inside! I fully endorse and share Jamie’s vision for the ‘Thought Revolution’.”

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“Jamie Smart writes in a way that speaks directly to the challenges people face in today’s business environment. I’m buying a copy for all my clients.”

**Cheryl Bond, Ed.D.**, President, Essential Resilience

“*Clarity* is an amazing book that provides you with the one realization you need to find happiness, wisdom and clarity in life. I highly recommend this book to anyone trying to deal with life stressors and find true wisdom and well-being.”

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“*Clarity* is an utterly engaging and powerful book that brilliantly elucidates what is undoubtedly *the* most important revolution in psychology.

Jamie shares his understanding using a multitude of real-world examples that bring this understanding to life without jargon or hype.”

**Chantal Burns**, Leadership Coach, Teacher and Consultant,  
[www.ChantalBurns.com](http://www.ChantalBurns.com)

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“This amazing book delivers the single most profound insight deep into your mind. All you have to do is not get in the way!”

**Jason Bates**, CEO of Freeformers, [www.freeformers.com](http://www.freeformers.com)

“This book is the kick up the backside the self-help and success genre so badly needs. A word of warning – this book is very different!”

**Simon Hazeldine**, Author of *Neuro-Sell*, International Speaker, Performance Consultant

“If you want real leverage and creativity in your life, read this book.”

**Catherine Casey M.A.**, Clinical Psychology, Principle Based Consultant, San Jose, California

“*Clarity* is awesome. 500 words in and I was on fire and it didn’t stop... And what was particularly pleasant was it felt good. Do what every high-performer or entrepreneur looking for modern solutions to live a better life should do: get *Clarity*.”

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**Amanda Menahem**, HR Director, Hastings Direct

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**Robert Holden Ph.D.**, Author of *Shift Happens!*, *Authentic Success* and *Loveability*



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*To my daughters,  
Matilda and Tallulah*

# Author's Note

Thomas Kuhn's groundbreaking book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, introduced the term "paradigm" to describe the prevailing worldview that underpins a scientific field. A paradigm shift – the superseding of such a worldview – is massively disruptive to normal science. Kuhn explained that a new paradigm opens up ways of perceiving and understanding reality that weren't previously available.

Unfortunately, the words "paradigm" and "paradigm shift" have been hijacked by modern marketers, and are used to describe everything from flash-in-the-pan web start-ups to the latest celebrity fad-diet. In reality, the emergence of a new paradigm is a rare and revolutionary phenomenon.

This book includes quotations from a variety of people, ranging from scientists and philosophers to entrepreneurs and media mavens. I've included these quotations because I like them and how they fit with the chapters. However, I am not suggesting that these individuals endorse(d) (or were even aware of) the paradigm this book is pointing to. In fact (except where otherwise noted) I am certain they did not.

It is my assertion that what this book endeavours to describe is a genuinely new paradigm, in the Kuhnian sense. Ironically, it may not meet the scientific criteria for a paradigm as they are currently defined. If my assertion proves to be correct then, in the long term, the criteria may be redefined to include it. Or not. Either way, I invite you to evaluate it in the laboratory of your own life, and decide for yourself.

To your increasing clarity of mind and understanding!

Jamie Smart, 2013

# Introduction

***“What information consumes is rather obvious:  
it consumes the attention of its recipients.”***

Herbert Simon, Economist,  
winner of the Nobel Prize  
in Economics, 1978

**“If a pond is clouded with mud, there’s nothing you can do to make the water clear. But when you allow the mud to settle, it will clear on its own, because clarity is the water’s natural state...”**

Clarity is your *mind’s* natural state.

For many years, I’ve been sharing this simple metaphor in workshops and seminars with business leaders, entrepreneurs, consultants, change-workers and private individuals. As people allow their mud to settle, clarity emerges, and they discover they have what they need for the job at hand.

So what is clarity, and why does it matter? How does clarity work, and why do so many people struggle to find it? Most importantly, how can you find the clarity you need and start benefiting from it?

It’s well known that outstanding leaders in every field, from Olympic medal-winners to visionary entrepreneurs, profit from the flow-states that a clear mind brings. With clarity of mind comes the qualities that drive sustainable results. These qualities and results are what individuals and organizations are searching for. But, due to a simple misunderstanding, we’ve been looking in the wrong place until now.

The purpose of this book is to correct the misunderstanding and help you experience greater and greater clarity, with all the benefits it provides. The book asks and answers the following questions:

**1 *What is clarity?*** It turns out that clarity is a kind of “universal resource.” When we have a clear head, we have everything we need for the job at hand. Ask a nervous speaker what’s going through their mind when they’re onstage, and they’ll explain their fears, worries and anxieties. Ask a confident speaker what they’re thinking about onstage and the answer’s almost always the same: “Nothing!” This is the case in every field of high performance, from the classroom to the playing field, from the boardroom to the bedroom; when you’ve got nothing on your mind, you’re free to give your best.

**2 *Why is clarity essential?*** You’re going to discover why clarity is so important for living a life that’s successful on the *inside* as well as on the outside. You’re going to discover that many of the most desirable qualities people struggle to “develop” (such as intuition, resilience, creativity, motivation, confidence and even *leadership*) are actually innate, emergent properties of an uncluttered mind. These drive the results people desire. Clarity is the source of authentic leadership and high performance. It allows us to be present in the moment, and have an enjoyable experience of life. A sense of purpose, direction and entrepreneurial spirit are natural for people with a clear head. So are happiness, freedom, security, love, confidence and peace of mind.

**3 *How does clarity work, and how can you get it to work for you?*** You’re going to be introduced to *Innate Thinking*®, a model of the natural capacity for experience – thinking, feeling and perceiving – that every person is born with. This innate capacity generates 100% of our experience of life, moment to moment.

Clarity is a naturally emergent property of innate thinking – it isn't something you *do*; it's something you already *have*. The mind has its own “self-clearing” function, capable of guiding you back to clarity, regardless of what state (or circumstances) you're in. While this is extremely evident in small children, all but a fortunate few have it conditioned out of them by the time they reach adulthood.

As you start to deepen your understanding of innate thinking, you're going to reconnect with your mind's natural self-clearing function. As a result, you'll find that you start having a) an effortlessly clear mind, b) more time for what's important, c) improved decision making, d) better performance where it counts and e) more of the results that matter to you. Some of the “side effects” you may notice include improving relationships, reducing stress levels, more passion and an increasing engagement with life.

**4** *Why do we need clarity now, more than ever?* We're living at a pivotal point in history; millions of people are faced with uncertainty, complexity and increasing chaos. As individuals, as organizations and as an entire species, clarity is the key to solving the big issues that face us, if we want to create a sustainable future for ourselves, and the generations that follow us.

In 2011, I made a commitment to the 80,000 members of my online community that I would send out an early draft of some of the material in this book. People read the chapters and posted their comments, questions and feedback on Facebook pages, instantly sharing them with the people in *their* networks (something which would have been unimaginable even ten years earlier). In the 18 months between sharing those chapters and writing this introduction, the acceleration of communication, technology and information has continued. Apple's iPhone 5 sold out 20 times faster than the previous model (five million units on the launch weekend alone). In January 2012, the social media phenomenon [Pinterest.com](http://Pinterest.com) became the fastest site in history to reach the ten million user mark (it took less than two years). Facebook has just announced that it has over a billion active users (that's a seventh of the population of the planet).

Communication, technology and information: they're accelerating, getting more pervasive and more compelling, with no sign they will ever slow down. The benefits are significant; we're supported by a digital infrastructure that was unimaginable 30 years ago. But as the Western world continues transitioning from a manufacturing economy to a knowledge economy, it's hobbled by educational institutions, social structures and habitual ways of thinking developed for a bygone era of smokestacks, whistles and assembly-lines.

Our mental clarity is under attack! Hyperlinks, smartphones and social media voraciously consume our precious attention. And, as that attention gets gobbled up, our minds become over-revved, weary and congested. Clogged with everything from breaking news and text alerts, to fears, anxieties and limiting beliefs, the overcrowded, speedy mind is the single biggest cause of stress, lack of confidence and bad decisions. Mental congestion results in time poverty, strained relationships, fumbled goals, poor performance and unrealized potential.

And mental congestion is expensive. The painful cost to individuals in terms of anxiety, distraction and conflict has a devastating knock-on effect; the price

businesses are paying for lack of clarity is astronomical. Decreased productivity, lack of employee engagement and stress-related illness are some of the more obvious costs. But there's a much bigger (and less visible) price being paid in terms of missed opportunities, untapped passions and squandered creativity. While businesses recognize that there's an issue, they're unclear about what the problem actually is. So they block Facebook, or ban mobile phones, never realizing that these are *symptoms* of the problem, not its cause. Like weeds taking over a flowerbed, the over-revved, busy mind is voraciously consuming our most precious resources.

“Disruptive” is the watchword, as business-as-usual quickly becomes a thing of the past. 15-year-old Nick D'Aloisio writes an app in his bedroom (Summly). It goes viral and attracts the attention of Yahoo and News International, as well as over a million dollars in funding. Twitter overtakes the news media as the fastest way to get a message out to the masses. Lean start-ups use technology and soft innovation to steal market share from long-established businesses. Companies that have built their success over decades using old-school strategy and long-term planning get hamstrung by teams of people who are agile, creative, resilient and responsive.

All of which presents us with a serious challenge: As our world becomes increasingly uncertain, complex and chaotic, we seem to have less and less time, attention and wisdom to navigate it with.

*At a point in history when we most need clarity,  
it appears to be in shorter and shorter supply...*

And so we try to compensate, as individuals and as organizations. From time management to mindfulness, from speed-reading to positive thinking, we try to get back in control. And, at first, it looks like it's helping; we feel like we're back in the driving seat. But then we lose motivation, or forget to use the technique; our attention gets drawn elsewhere or we fail to apply what we've learned.

It's not working. And it's not your fault.

Without even realizing it, we've been using an industrial-age *misunderstanding* of how the mind works to try to deal with the challenges of a digital world. As you continue reading this book, you're going to start undoing the conditioning that's been keeping you from clarity until now, and notice yourself experiencing a clear mind more and more frequently (with all the benefits it brings). At the times when your mind *is* clouded, you'll know what to do (and more importantly, what *not* to do). The conditioning is based in three main areas:

- 1 Superstitious thinking: the outside-in misunderstanding.** This widespread piece of cultural conditioning mistakenly attributes clarity (and the lack of it) to a variety of circumstances. While this can easily be shown not to be the case, the conditioning is extremely persistent when it goes unchallenged. You're going to be introduced to a relaxing and enjoyable way of reading that will help you to “see through” this conditioning, and begin having insights and realizations that will make a difference to you immediately. As you deepen your understanding of innate thinking, you'll find stale habits of superstitious thinking dropping away, and clarity emerging to take their



place.

**2** *The move from a manufacturing economy to a knowledge economy.* Just as factory workers need to keep their machines clean and well oiled, knowledge workers, creatives, managers and leaders need to take similar care of their minds. Individuals and businesses are paying the price as time-scarcity, attention-poverty and information-saturation clog the “mental machinery” we rely on. But there’s good news. People are born with a powerful immune system that protects us from disease and illness. The immune system reflects an innate tendency towards health and wellness that also shows up in the body’s ability to repair wounds, breaks and other injuries. It is a little-known fact, however, that people also have a “psychological immune system,” able to quickly restore even an extremely perturbed mind to clarity and well-being. As your understanding of innate thinking continues to deepen, you’ll find the clarity, intuition and resilience you need to prosper in times of uncertainty, complexity and change.

**3** *Attempting to find clarity using outside-in methods.* The mind is a self-correcting system. The primary condition needed for a self-correcting system to find its way back to balance is simple: an absence of external interference. Outside-in methods such as positive thinking, affirmations and other techniques are examples of external interference. Other examples include smoking, drinking too much and internet addiction. While they can be used to clear the mind in the short term, they are not sustainable. In the long run, they often make matters worse if they give the busy-minded person even more to think about and do (I’m assuming that the last thing you need is more on your mind).

As you read this book, there’s nothing you need to do, think about or implement...

- You won’t need new regimes, systems or processes to remember.
- You won’t be given lists of techniques, tactics or interventions to put into practice.
- You won’t have to reframe, monitor or manage your thinking.

The book is designed to effortlessly activate your innate capacity for clarity. As you’re going to discover, innate thinking will take care of the implementation for you.

### **DISTINCTION: Acting it vs. Catching it**

If you’ve ever pretended to have a cold (perhaps while phoning in sick to work), you’ll know that it’s not that easy or convincing. It’s tough to fake a sneeze, never mind the other unpleasant symptoms. This is an example of **acting it**. Most business and personal development books aim at giving you the things to think, change and do so you can “act” in a certain way to get the results you want.

On the other hand, when you genuinely *have* a cold, the symptoms emerge effortlessly. They’re entirely convincing because they’re *real*. This is an example of **catching it**. This book is designed so that you can “catch” an understanding that’s more closely aligned with how your mind and life really work. As you catch the understanding, it will spontaneously result in the “symptoms” of increasing clarity, resilience and peace of mind, with all the other qualities and behaviours that naturally proceed from those states.

For this reason, the book has been designed differently from a traditional business or personal development book. It doesn't contain lists of things to do or key points to remember, and doesn't attempt to be coolly objective. Instead, it includes:

- Distinctions like the one above, clarifying important points.
- Simple "thought experiments" that you can conduct in less than a minute.
- Mini case studies from the experiences of my corporate and personal clients.
- Real-world stories as well as numerous metaphors and analogies.
- Scientific explanations expressed in down-to-earth terminology.
- Examples from history, current events and popular culture.
- Personal details and anecdotes from my own life.
- Reality checks where necessary.
- Diagrams and illustrations.

While you may find yourself reading this book again and again, you don't have to work at it. You're going to start seeing that you have a lot more going for you than you may have realized until now. One suggestion: this book is cumulative; Part Two and Part Three have plenty of interesting case studies and business examples, but they will not make much sense until you've read Part One. Your first time through, I strongly encourage you to read this book from the beginning.

It may sound like a bold claim, but the understanding you're going to be exposed to is, quite literally, effortless. The changes you can expect to see as you start to get a feel for innate thinking share three important qualities:

- 1 Your changes will be *natural*; a perfect fit to who you are.
- 2 Your changes will be *sustainable*; it's time to say goodbye to struggle and backsliding.
- 3 Your changes will be *generative*. This means that the positive impact of what you'll be learning will show up in many different aspects of your life, without you having to "make it happen."

As you read this book, you may be struck by the universal nature of what you're learning. People are often stunned that no one has ever told them this before. Paradoxically, they also remark that they've always known this on some level. As you start to experience the profound impact of increasing clarity in your own life, you may start to notice yourself feeling more optimistic and hopeful for your fellow human beings. Clarity is our best bet if we are to meet the challenges of our rapidly changing world, and leave a sustainable legacy for the generations to come.

But that's for later. The first step is for you to start discovering just how much *more* you've got going for you than you've previously imagined (even if you already know you've got a lot going for you). I want to assure you that you have the capacity for sustainable clarity, and all the benefits it brings. But first, a question:

Q: If you're caught in a trap, what's the one thing you have to do before you can escape?

A: You have to realize that you've been caught in a trap.

Until you realize you've been caught in a trap, you're very unlikely to get out of it. But once you know about the trap, and you can see how it works, then escape is pretty straightforward. Especially if other people have escaped from the same trap, and can show you how.

So please allow me to reveal the trap that's ensnared millions of people, including me...

**keep exploring ✦ connect with others**

**share your discoveries ✦ deepen your understanding**

At the end of each chapter, you'll find a section containing a reflection point. This is a statement or question that will help you integrate what you are learning even more deeply. For example:

*Reflection point: We each experience greater clarity from time to time. As you look back now, what are some of the more memorable occasions when you've found yourself experiencing an unexpected increase in clarity?*

When you reach a reflection point, pause for a moment. You don't have to figure out the question or "get it right". You don't even have to answer it. Just reading the question and reflecting on it for a moment is enough to continue your process of integration.

This section will also contain a website URL to enter into your browser and a QR code that you can scan using your smartphone. These will take you to web pages containing material relating to the chapter you've just read, ranging from videos and audio recordings to shareable articles, photos and infographics. In addition to the resources, you'll find features that allow you to post your comments and share what you're learning with others.

Experience shows that sharing your discoveries is a simple but powerful way for you to continue integrating what you're learning, as your understanding of innate thinking continues to deepen. I encourage you to explore, comment on and share these resources as you make your way through the book. You can start now...

[www.ClarityBook.biz/introduction](http://www.ClarityBook.biz/introduction)



# **PART ONE**

## **The Essential Foundations**

# Chapter 1

## Misunderstanding: The Hidden Trap

***“None are more hopelessly enslaved than those who falsely believe they are free.”***

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe,  
Poet, playwright, novelist  
and philosopher

**“An addict is someone who’s trying to use a visible solution to solve an invisible problem...”**

I was no stranger to addiction when I heard this. I started drinking when I was 12 years old and didn’t stop for good until I was 30. In the process of recovering from alcoholism, I explored a variety of approaches ranging from the spiritual to the material and all points in between.

I found value in much of what I learned, and my life improved in ways that I didn’t even imagine were possible. But, in the process, I discovered an even deeper addiction, one that sits at the very heart of modern culture. This addiction is so subtle, it’s almost *invisible*; a superstitious and life-eroding trap that has hooked countless millions of people; the trap I call “the *hidden hamster wheel*.”

## The hidden hamster wheel

As you’re going to discover, the hidden hamster wheel is a pervasive example of superstitious thinking, and one of the most common barriers to clarity.

It’s based in a superstition that’s taken to be “obviously true” by most of modern society. It’s so subtle and pervasive that it shows up in everything from children’s books to leadership programmes; from movies to marketing campaigns.

When a person deeply believes in a superstition, it informs everything they believe, everything they do, and how they do it. When a culture believes in a superstition, it gets reinforced from all sides.

## The Power of Misunderstanding

In the 1800s, it was widely accepted that illnesses such as cholera and the plague were caused by “bad air” (also known as atmospheres or miasmas). At the time, huge numbers of people were moving to Soho in London, with an associated increase in sewage. The council of the day decided to dump the excess waste into the River Thames, unknowingly contaminating the water supply.

The impact was felt in 1854 when the Broad Street cholera outbreak claimed the lives of 618 Soho residents in just a few weeks. The physician, John Snow, was sceptical of the miasma theory, and managed to trace the epidemic to a water pump in Broad Street. His analysis of the outbreak pattern was compelling enough that the council removed the pump handle and the epidemic ended.

The miasma theory was a misunderstanding that was seen as fact. As a result, the decision to pump sewage into the water supply was taken from *within* that misunderstanding. While you and I know it’s crazy to let human waste anywhere near your water supply, that’s because we have a better understanding of how the world works; an understanding that just wasn’t available to the people trapped within the miasma misunderstanding.

Misunderstanding can lead to needless misery, suffering and even death. But as soon as people get a clearer understanding of the nature of reality *as it already is*, there can be a massive and widespread improvement in quality of life.

John Snow, Joseph Lister, Ignatz Semmelweis and others had insights that allowed them to see through the misunderstandings of the time, leading to the creation of germ theory and modern medicine. As a result, millions of people are alive today who *wouldn’t* be if we were still living in the miasma-theory superstition.

## Thought Experiment

Imagine this: It’s 1853, you live in Soho, London. It’s crowded and smelly, so you’re in the habit of carrying a small bunch of flowers to protect you from illness; a posy. Everyone you know does the same thing, and the posy industry is big business.

Then, one day, you meet a scientist who’s convinced that diseases aren’t caused by bad smells; that they’re transmitted by tiny *invisible* creatures he calls “germs” and “bacteria.” Would you believe it? Maybe, maybe not. Most people would probably say, “*Don’t be silly – it’s not as simple as that. Everybody knows that illness is caused by bad smells. It’s obvious...*”

## An essential question

If you were to be presented with the evidence that one of the most widely-held beliefs of modern society was in fact a misunderstanding about how life works, would you be able to listen with an open mind? The fact that you’re reading this means that the answer is probably “Yes,” so here goes...

The life-damaging misunderstanding that I call the *hidden hamster wheel* is the

mistaken idea that our “core states” such as security, confidence, peace, love, happiness and success can be provided or threatened by our circumstances; by something “visible.”

We have it because we’ve been conditioned to believe that there’s somewhere to get to, and that “there” is better than “here.” And “there” comes in a variety of tantalizing flavours that look something like this:

I’ll be [*happy/secure/fulfilled/peaceful/better/successful/ok*] when I...

- Get the money/the car/the yacht/the house – the “there” of *stuff*.
- Find the right work/hobby/exercise/pastime – the “there” of *doing*.
- Have the right partner/friends/children – the “there” of *people and relationships*.
- Write the book/start the business/learn the language – the “there” of *accomplishment*.
- Can take a year off/travel the world/eat at the best restaurants – the “there” of *lifestyle*.
- Achieve time freedom/financial freedom/social freedom – the “there” of *freedom*.
- Lose the weight/stop smoking/start going to the gym – the “there” of *self-improvement*.
- Change my thinking/my limiting beliefs/do my affirmations – the “there” of *mindset*.
- Meditate properly/find the right practice/get enlightened – the “there” of *spirituality*.
- Accept myself/love myself/just let go – the “there” of *surrender*.

You may have experimented with none, some or all of the above. You may have made big changes and improved your life in a variety of ways. Or maybe not. At times, you may have felt like you’re nearly there, like you’re very close, like the pot of gold’s just around the corner. And yet...

No matter how close you get, doesn’t it always seem like there’s a little more you need to do? A little further to go? Just a little bit more to fix, change or improve? Or a lot more?

I know, because I’ve done it – virtually everything on this list and more. I got value from many of my efforts but, sooner or later, after a week or a month or a year, I’d find myself feeling in some ways like I was back where I started, feeling like there was something missing, something wrong, something I couldn’t quite put my finger on...

As it turns out, the story behind that sense of “something missing” doesn’t just stop people from enjoying their lives to the full – it often stands in the way of having the life you really want. You see, as strange as it may sound, we’ve fallen into a trap. And it’s a trap that’s so subtle, most of us have never even noticed it. Subtle, powerful and all-pervasive.

The “*I’ll be happy when...*” trap is an example most people can identify with. The core states and circumstances vary, but the basic structure of the superstition is the same:



I'll be [*core state*] when I have [*circumstance*]

It's based on an even simpler structure:

[*circumstance*] causes [*core state*]

And like pieces of Lego, this simple structure can be used to assemble all kinds of larger structures:

I couldn't be [*core state*] if I lost [*circumstance*]

I'm [*core state*] because of [*circumstance*]

I can't be [*core state*] because I don't have [*circumstance*]

I was [*core state*] until I lost [*circumstance*]

I'm convinced that [*core state*] comes from [*circumstance*]

They can take a variety of shapes but, at heart, they're all based on the idea that our felt experience of life comes from our circumstances, from something relatively visible.

You may have seen studies showing that feelings of well-being and high self-esteem come from accomplishments, or from doing vocational work, or from meditating. But that's all an example of the superstition in action. When I use the word "circumstance," I'm using it in the widest possible way, to refer to pretty much anything you can imagine, including:

- Physical environment (e.g. home, holiday destination, workspace).
- What a person does (e.g. work, hobbies, exercise).
- Techniques (e.g. meditation, affirmations, reframing).
- Stuff (e.g. houses, boats, cars).
- Status (e.g. job title, position, medals).
- Material wealth (e.g. money, shares, income).
- People (e.g. partners, friends, children).
- Etc.

The idea that our core states are, at least to some degree, the result of our circumstances seems so "obvious" to people that calling it into question can seem ridiculous at first.

And while many people who have explored the domains of "brain-change" (through NLP, spirituality, personal development, meditation etc.) would say that they *know* that their core states don't come from their circumstances, their behaviour often suggests that they *don't* really know it.

In fact, people often replace one set of circumstances with a "higher level" version of the same thing...

- I'll be happy when I change my limiting beliefs.
- I'll feel fulfilled when I know that I'm on-purpose and doing work I love.
- I'll be on-track once I become an authentic leader.
- I'll feel secure when I'm generating passive income.
- I'll feel a sense of freedom when I have the lifestyle I want.
- I'll be able to enjoy myself when I retire.
- I'll be OK when I go on the next course/read the book/do the exercises –

etc.

The circumstances may be different but the superstitious structure is still in place:

*[circumstance] causes [core state]*

Once again: we've been conditioned into the superstitious thinking that our clarity, security and well-being come from outside of us; that there's somewhere to get to, and that "there" is better than "here."

## Reality Check

*"Don't be silly!" I hear you say. "Everybody knows that circumstances give us feelings. I'll give you some examples right now..."*

- *"My sense of security comes from the fact that I've got a good job, and money in the bank.*
- *"I feel a sense of love and connection because I've found the right partner.*
- *"I feel stressed out because I've got a high-pressure business.*
- *"I feel peaceful when I go for a walk in the park.*
- *"I feel relaxed when I go on holiday.*

*"Are you really trying to tell me that these examples are just a superstition? That my work doesn't actually stress me out? That my security doesn't come from money? That I don't feel love because of my partner? That I don't like going on holiday?"*

Yes and no.

Your examples of your experience are real for you. I'm sure you can identify numerous circumstances where you experience certain feelings. I'm not saying you don't enjoy the things you enjoy, or that you shouldn't want the things that you want. What I'm saying is that the feelings aren't the result of the circumstances – they're coming from something else entirely. And, as you start to understand where they're coming from, and how the system works, some wonderful things can start to happen.

But I'm getting ahead of myself.

These days, I experience more clarity than I ever thought possible, with all the considerable benefits it brings. But I didn't get here in the way you might expect.

In brief: I grew up in an alcoholic household and started drinking heavily when I was 12 years old. By age 19, I was a scholarship engineering student and a full-blown alcoholic. The alcohol was like rocket fuel for my life – I got jobs, was promoted rapidly, and started experiencing many of the trappings of success – expense accounts, foreign travel, luxurious surroundings – but on the inside, I was slowly falling apart.

At the age of 30 I got married. A month later, her bags were packed; so I decided to stop drinking in order to save my relationship.

Oh yeah – I missed one. I'll be happy when I get a cigarette/a drink/a line of coke – the "there" of *addiction*.

That was in 1996, and I haven't had a drink since. Today I live a fulfilling life that's beyond anything I dreamed was possible for me, but how I got here is a story of struggle, frustration and heartbreak (much of which I could have avoided if I'd known what you're going to be discovering in this book).

Just to give you an idea, in the time-period from 1996 to 2008, I...

- Got married, had two daughters and moved to London.
- Managed several multi-million pound projects and became fascinated with the process of how individuals and organizations change.
- Was paralyzed by a combination of fear of failure and fear of success (I felt like I was a fraud, always worrying that I'd be "found out").
- Read hundreds of personal development books and went on dozens of courses.
- Quit my job and became a consultant, doing strategy workshops, team-building, executive coaching and training.
- Tried my hand at stand-up comedy and overcame my fear of public speaking (mainly by doing lots of public speaking).
- Lost weight, gained weight, lost weight, gained weight, lost weight, gained weight etc.
- Spent countless hours talking to a Freudian psychoanalyst and participated in various addiction recovery programmes.
- Learned NLP (neuro-linguistic programming), built a successful training company and grew a tribe of over 80,000 people.
- Was left by my wife, and struggled with worry, anxiety, depression and suicidal thoughts.
- Had numerous false horizons, thinking I'd finally "got it," only to find myself feeling like I was back where I started.

By the end of 2008, I was unhappy, stressed-out and at the end of my tether. I felt like I'd been giving it everything I had for over a decade. While some areas of my life were better than ever, in many ways I felt like I'd been running on the spot. I had many of the circumstances of success (passive income, time-freedom, foreign travel etc.), but I wasn't having a *feeling* of success. I was on the verge of giving up.

I understood *intellectually* that material success wouldn't give me a more profound and fulfilling experience of life, but I'd been *conditioned* into believing it would. The trick of the mind that tells us that our feelings come from somewhere other than our thinking is both persuasive and persistent.

Then I was introduced to the understanding you're going to be discovering in this book. As I write, it's four years on, and they've been the best years of my life. I'm experiencing a sense of clarity, peace, security and aliveness unlike anything I've had before. And as my level of understanding has continued to increase, my relationships, results and external circumstances have been improving too.

The good news is that it can be replicated. My clients are getting similar results, including:

- less stress, more clarity and peace of mind;
- being more creative and innovative, finding solutions to problems more

# Chapter 2

## The Power of Insight

*“We cannot teach people anything; we can only help them discover it within themselves.”*

Galileo Galilei,  
Astronomer, physicist  
and mathematician

- whether to accept or reject it
- if/how we're going to apply it
- etc.

Just check – you may be doing this as you're reading this passage, saying “*I must remember this,*” “*That makes sense,*” “*That's nonsense*” or somewhere in between. That's OK. Reading for information can be useful when you're evaluating data, and making decisions about its validity. But the huge increase in the sheer *volume* of information available means that reading in this way is often contributing to mental congestion. It moves us further away from clarity. A person who's reading for information has “something on their mind,” so the mind isn't free to do what it does best – generate fresh, clear thinking.

*When it comes to clarity,  
reading for information  
is like drinking salt water;  
it just makes you more thirsty...*

## Reading for insight

Reading for insight is reading with “nothing on your mind.” When you read for an insight, you put your existing conceptual models to one side and allow yourself to be impacted by what you're reading.

### The magic eye

Back in the 1990s, evolving technology led to the creation of “magic-eye” images. At first glance, a magic-eye image looks like a repeating, two-dimensional pattern, but if you look “through” the image, with a soft-eyed, relaxed gaze, something amazing happens. A three-dimensional figure suddenly leaps into your awareness, a figure that was totally invisible when you first looked at the image.

People often sat staring at the 2D images, “trying hard” to see the 3D image hidden within it, but nothing happened until they relaxed and allowed the image to emerge.

Reading for an insight is sort of like looking at a magic-eye picture. You don't really need to “think about” what you're reading – you just relax and allow yourself to be impacted by the words. The insight that can clear your mind and give you fluid, fresh thinking isn't in the words anyway; it's a capacity that's right there inside of you, “pre-loaded” into your consciousness.

Another example is music. When you listen to music you enjoy, you're not trying to decide whether you agree with it or not. You're listening to be impacted; to enjoy it and have an experience. When you're reading or listening for insight, you “get a feel” for what the person's saying, seeing beyond the written (or spoken) word to what the author's really trying to convey. You allow an intuitive knowing to emerge from within your consciousness (this is what's happening when you get a sudden “a-ha.”)

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