Survival of The Skillest

Thriving in the Learning Jungle

Prof. Bala Ramadurai

Love to keep in touch

https://balaramadurai.net/about/

bala@balaramadurai.net

http://in.linkedin.com/in/balaramadurai
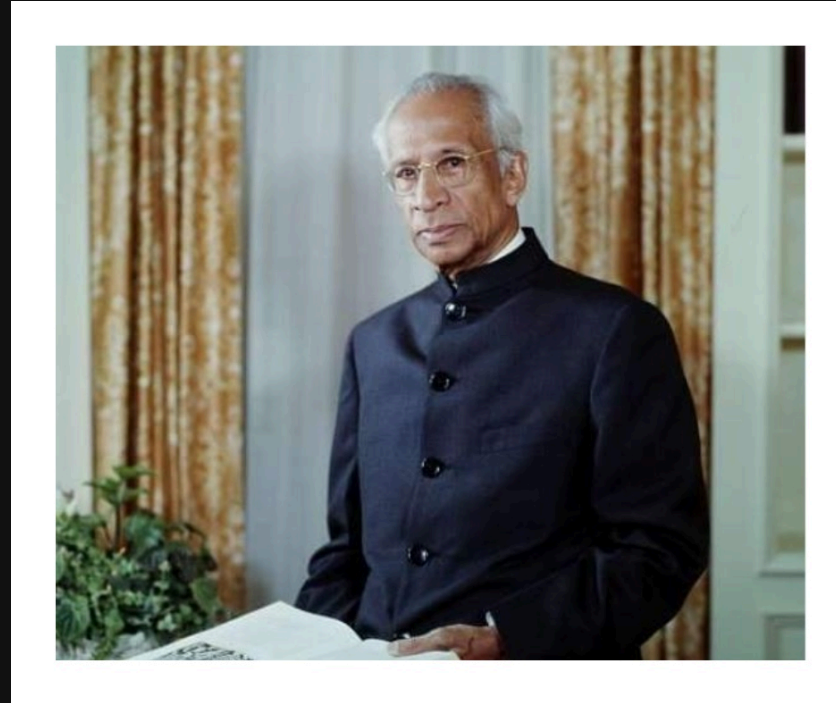
Multi-talented Teacher

"When we think we know, we cease to learn."

• *Bharat Ratna S. Radhakrishnan*

Skill

Skill (noun) is the knowledge and ability that enables you to do something well.

Source - Collins Dictionary

Why should you learn a new skill?

1. Get ahead in your career
2. Look good/cool in your community/peer group
3. Someone forced you to

What skills should you learn?

1. Bungee jumping
2. Teaching your pet to pick up the newspaper without tearing it to shreds
3. Python rearing, I meant, coding

What stops you from learning new skills?

1. Lack of time
2. Lack of motivation
3. Internal rebellious forces

Scholar and the teacup

Solve - Tea Cup Story

Empty Your Teacup
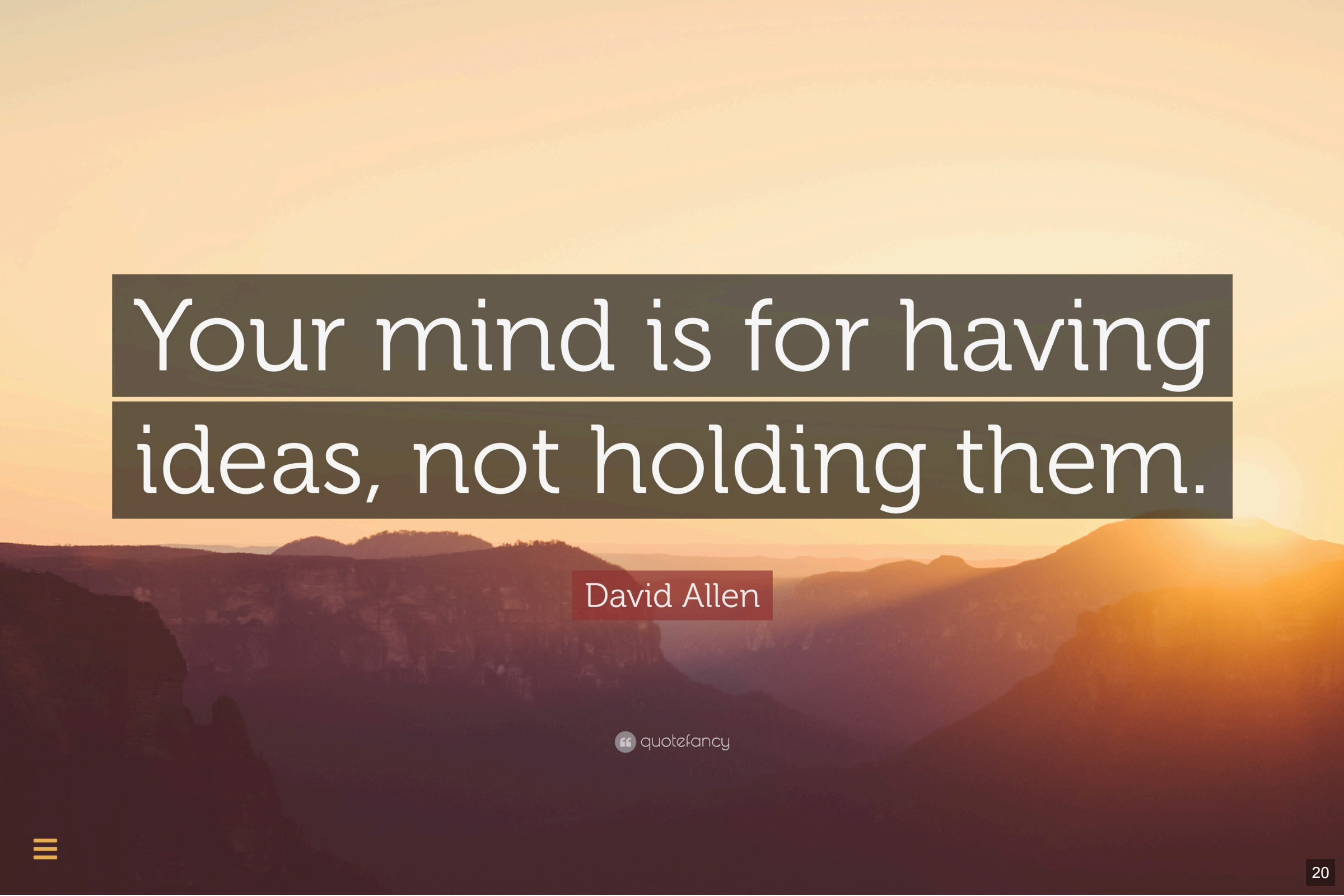
How do you "empty your teacup"?

Write down your thoughts

Task for you - Empty Your Teacup

1. Create a folder in your Documents folder called "Inbox"
2. Create a file called "TODO.txt" or "TODO.docx" or "TODO.org" (Or use a notebook)
3. In that org, text or docx file, do the following:
4. Write down unfinished tasks - personal and professional
5. Write down some things that worry you, right now
6. Write down some tasks or actions that you are waiting for someone

Getting things done
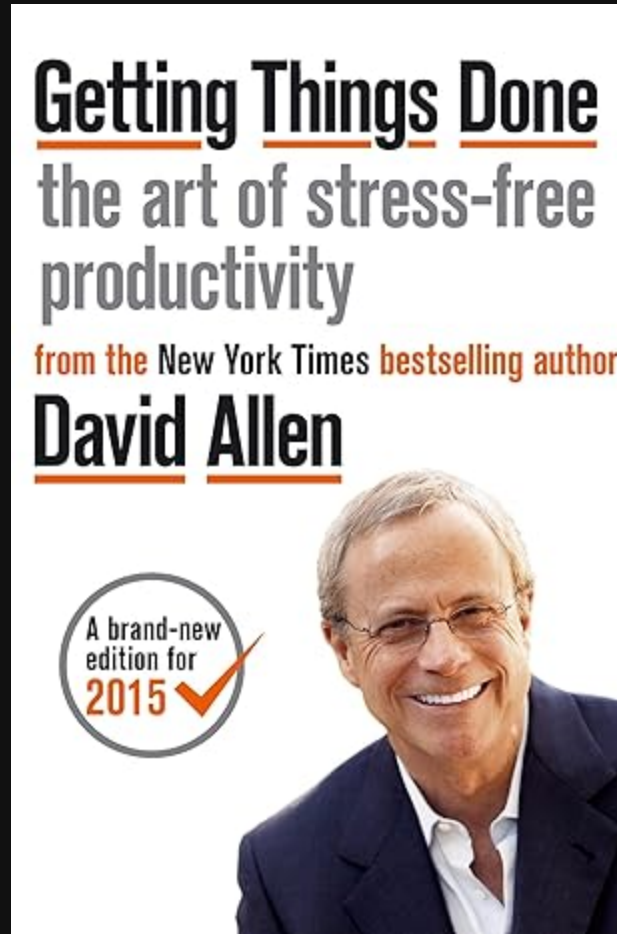
Your mind is for having ideas, not holding them.

David Allen

quotefancy

Perform one of 4 actions on the tasks in your list

Delete
Strike through the task or hit the delete key or change the state to CANCELLED

Defer
Add what you should do to your calendar or into a reminder system or SCHEDULE (`C-c C-s`)

Delegate
Send this as a task to your colleague or student or assistant

Do
Set a timer for 2 minutes and finish the task, right now

Tip - Don't skip any of the items from your list

You can do the same process

- to your Email inbox items
- to your messaging inbox items (e.g. - WhatsApp, Matrix, Slack)
- to your physical inbox on your desk

What if the email or message or task is something that you might need in the future?

Archive or move it to a place you may refer to later

What if it is something that requires multiple steps?

The task becomes a **Project**

Project is a collection of tasks

Examples are:

- Finish a course on Coursera or NPTEL or Udemy
- Teach a course in your college/school
- Organize a conference
- Arrange a birthday party for your spouse

Here's how one can handle projects

- Create a folder for each project
- Create a text or word doc and title it as "TODO.txt" or "TODO.docx" or "TODO.org"
- In the TODO file, you can do the following:
- Write down the success criteria or deadline of the project
- Write down all the tasks that need to be done
- Write down the next immediate action that needs to be done for the project to move forward

Example of a project

```
Goal of the project - Deliver a talk about my organization system
and make it like a workshop with pauses for activities

** DONE Create an abstract for the talk
** DONE Send the abstract of the talk
** DONE Research about some quotes on skill building
** DONE Write an outline for the talk
** DONE Create a calendar reminder for the conference
** DONE Prepare slides [2024-08-27 Tue 09:30-11:30]
** DONE Revise slides [2024-10-22 Tue 06:45-07:30]
** NEXT Record the talk [2024-10-22 Tue 10:00-11:30]
** TODO Send the recorded talk and the pdf of the talk
** TODO Thank coordinators
```

Tasks for you - Project

1. Think of a project that you have to get done
2. Create a folder on your computer or phone with the name of the project
3. Create a TODO.txt or TODO.docx or TODO.org (Or use a fresh leaf in your notebook)
4. Write down the tasks associated with the project

What if you have multiple projects?

- Create a folder for each project
- Add a text file or docx or org called "TODO"
- Write down the tasks for each of them
- Find out the next actions in each of them and mark as **NEXT**

What if the project stops before completion?

- Have a folder in your computer or phone for abandoned projects (called Resources)
- Move this project to that folder

What if you successfully complete the project?

- Write an end report with the following questions answered
    - What did I enjoy the most in the project?
    - What could have been better?
    - What did I learn from the project?
- Move the folder to a folder called **Archives**

What if the project is ongoing and doesn't really end?

This is an **Area**

Examples of Areas:

- Gardening
- Paying bills
- Blogging

For Areas, create a folder for each area

and have a "TODO" file for each area

What if you forget to visit the TODO files?

- Have a weekly review with yourself

Weekly Review

- is a weekly appointment with yourself for you to stay in control of your life/career

In the weekly review, you need to

- Empty your teacup (Write down thoughts/tasks in your Inbox/TODO file)
- Process all your items in the TODO file
- Process all your emails from the last week (Do/Delete/Defer/Delegate)
- Process all your messaging app messages from the last week

In the weekly review, you need to

- Archive all your emails and messaging app messages that are processed
- Look through the project TODO files to see if the next action is marked
- Look through the project folder list to see if some of them need to be archived or moved to Resources

☰

Task for you - Weekly Review

- Set an appointment with yourself on your calendar and title it "Weekly Review"
- Make it repeating every week

This is such a microscopic view of my life, what about the big picture?

- Have a **quarterly review** with yourself, once every 13 weeks (marked on your calendar)
- Have a **yearly review** with yourself, once every year (first week of the year, academic or calendar year)

Quarterly review and Yearly review contains

Big life questions

How much money did I make?

Big life questions

How much money did I save?

Big life questions

How many people did I help?

Quarterly review and Yearly review contains

Big life questions
Whom do I plan to help in the future?

Big life questions
Which projects did I enjoy?

Big life questions
Which projects are best avoided?

Big life questions
Did I balance my life with work well?

Now that you know how to manage the now, how do you plan for the future?

GE	MindTree, TRIZIndia	**Academia and Corporate**
Research Scientist	Facilitator	Entrepreneur, Author
PhD, writing, teaching, teammates	TRIZ, people, org alignment	**Marketing, writing, sales, hiring, people**

Your turn

- Build your own 9-windows to plan for the future

Summary - Survival of the Skillest

Empty your teacup
   before engaging with the work in front of you
PARA - Projects, Areas, Resources, Archives
   create this folder structure
Reviews
   Weekly, Quarterly and Yearly
9-windows
   for your future career planning
Apply PARA
   to your future plans

References

1. **Forte, T. (2020). Building a Second Brain: A Proven Method to Organize Your Digital Life and Unlock Your Creative Potential**. PARA Method by Tiago Forte.
2. **Allen, D. (2001). Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity**. New York: Viking Penguin.
3. **Tasshin (Fogleman, M) (2017). Implementing A Second Brain in Emacs and Org-Mode**. Available at https://tasshin.com/blog/implementing-a-second-brain-in-emacs-and-org-mode/

Acknowledgments

Some images used in this presentation were generated with the assistance of AI using tools such as Dall-E and Adobe Firefly. These AI-generated visuals were employed to enhance the content and presentation quality.

What parts of this talk are you planning on implementing?

- Please write these in the Etherpad