

THE PRODUCTIVE SOLOPRENEUR



A Solopreneur's Guide To Getting
More Done Without Burning Out

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CHAPTER 1

WHY SOLOPRENEURS STRUGGLE WITH BURN OUT



Chapter 1: Why Solopreneurs Struggle With Burnout

Being a solopreneur means being an entrepreneur that runs *everything* themselves. There are countless advantages to this kind of business model, and thanks to the web, it's now more feasible for more people than ever before.

The notion of running an entire *empire* single-handedly would have seemed like an impossible pipe-dream only a few years ago. Today though, this is what more and more people are living as their reality. The internet is such a powerful force multiplier that it allows many people to truly become "digital polymaths."

Take video game development as a perfect example. Once upon a time, during the days of the ZX Spectrum and other early hardware, it was possible for a single developer to create a game in their basement and release it to the world to mass acclaim. But then computers developed further, and computer game graphics became photo-real. Today, the budget for a "AAA" title is gigantic, and the projects require thousands of people working around the clock for years.

For many years, it was impossible for a single developer to compete with the major game studios. But then things changed.

Tools like Unreal Engine and Unity provided ready-made physics and graphics rendering pipelines, even providing drag-and-drop interfaces for developers to streamline production. Then came freely available assets such as 3D models, music, textures and more: created by the community and distributed with a creative commons license. Often these were free.

Suddenly, a single developer could leverage powerful tools and the hard work and creativity of the community to develop a game that would look

almost as graphically impressive as something built by a much larger studio.

And slowly, the industry saw the rise of the "indie developer." Solo projects like *Hyper Light Drifter*, *Undertale*, *Minecraft*, *Thomas Was Alone*, *Stardew Valley*, *Spelunky*, *Braid*, *Cave Story* and others have gone on to sell *millions* of copies!

Then there are the distribution platforms that allow individual creators to upload their projects to be easily discovered. There are video and photo editing tools that make it easier than ever before to create marketing materials. And there are forums, social media platforms, and SEO, that help creators to reach a massive audience.

A single person can be an *entire* games business. And by taking this route, they can potentially reap **HUGE** rewards. Not only do they get to bring to life their creative vision, but they also get to take home all of the profit for themselves.

Building a game is not an easy project, though. It still requires a huge amount of hard work, coding skill, passion, and creativity. The most successful indie games also manage to sidestep the issue of "photorealism" with striking graphical styles that help them to stand out, while also reducing the amount of work necessary for the creator.

But this is just one example of how tools can empower individuals to take on much larger organizations. There are countless other examples of this: from owners of successful blogs to creators of highly popular YouTube channels. You can be an affiliate marketer. You can make money reselling hats or any other physical product.

The latter is a business model that has been *particularly* transformed by the power of the web: thanks to sites like Alibaba it's now possible to work

directly with manufacturers that will produce your products and then deliver them directly to your customers. The best part is that they don't even reveal themselves, meaning that, as far as the customer is concerned, you have your own factory!

Any of these business models are available to the proactive individual who is willing to learn and who knows how to spot an opportunity. With a little creativity, you can even create your own business model that simply didn't exist before!

Challenges of the Solopreneur



But while the solopreneur lifestyle is liberating in many ways, it can also be extremely challenging. That's because it requires you to wear a lot of hats and to take full responsibility for every aspect of your business.

Even if you are simply running a blog and selling affiliate products, this can be a surprisingly challenging lifestyle. Suddenly, there is no employer. There is nobody who is going to take responsibility for your business. There is no one to blame if things go wrong.

Likewise, there is no guaranteed paycheck. There isn't even guarantee that you'll have *work* this time tomorrow.

Things can be going extremely well one day, and terribly the next.

What if Google removes your site from its listings and you can't sell any more products?

What if your one big client moves on and you have a quiet spell lasting for months?

What if a shipment of products goes missing?

As the solopreneur, you must be ready to weather all these scenarios. Not only that, but you must also make countless huge decisions.

You run a YouTube channel, and you want to sell an eBook from there. But how much do you charge for it? What eCommerce store do you use to sell it from?

What if your loyal audience finds it offensive that you are now charging for information, and thus they leave you?

What if the WooCommerce store crashes because you have an outdated PHP version on your server? And what if that means you lose thousands of preorders?

And do you let that other creator you met upload videos to your channel? What if those put off your viewers because it's not what they came to see? What if they like the other person's content *more* than yours??

Juggling work is also extremely difficult – especially if you want to maintain *some* semblance of a work/life balance. This is especially true for a service provider. In this scenario, there is no delineation between work hours and downtime.

That is to say, that you *could* work 9-5, but you could *also* work 9-9. That latter option would mean you earn a LOT more money! Do you really need to be relaxing in the evening when you could be getting closer to your goals?

What if you don't finish your work on time? Do you work a little more?

What if there's something you want to buy?

Again, the number of variables is huge, and you are constantly forced to make these decisions. Even when you are "relaxing," you will still be questioning whether you *could* be doing something more useful. You might still be worrying that that work wasn't done to standard.

Then there are the emails from customers who couldn't download/didn't like their products. And from clients who don't like your work. There are the comments on your YouTube videos from people who don't understand what you're trying to do and seem to have a vendetta against you.

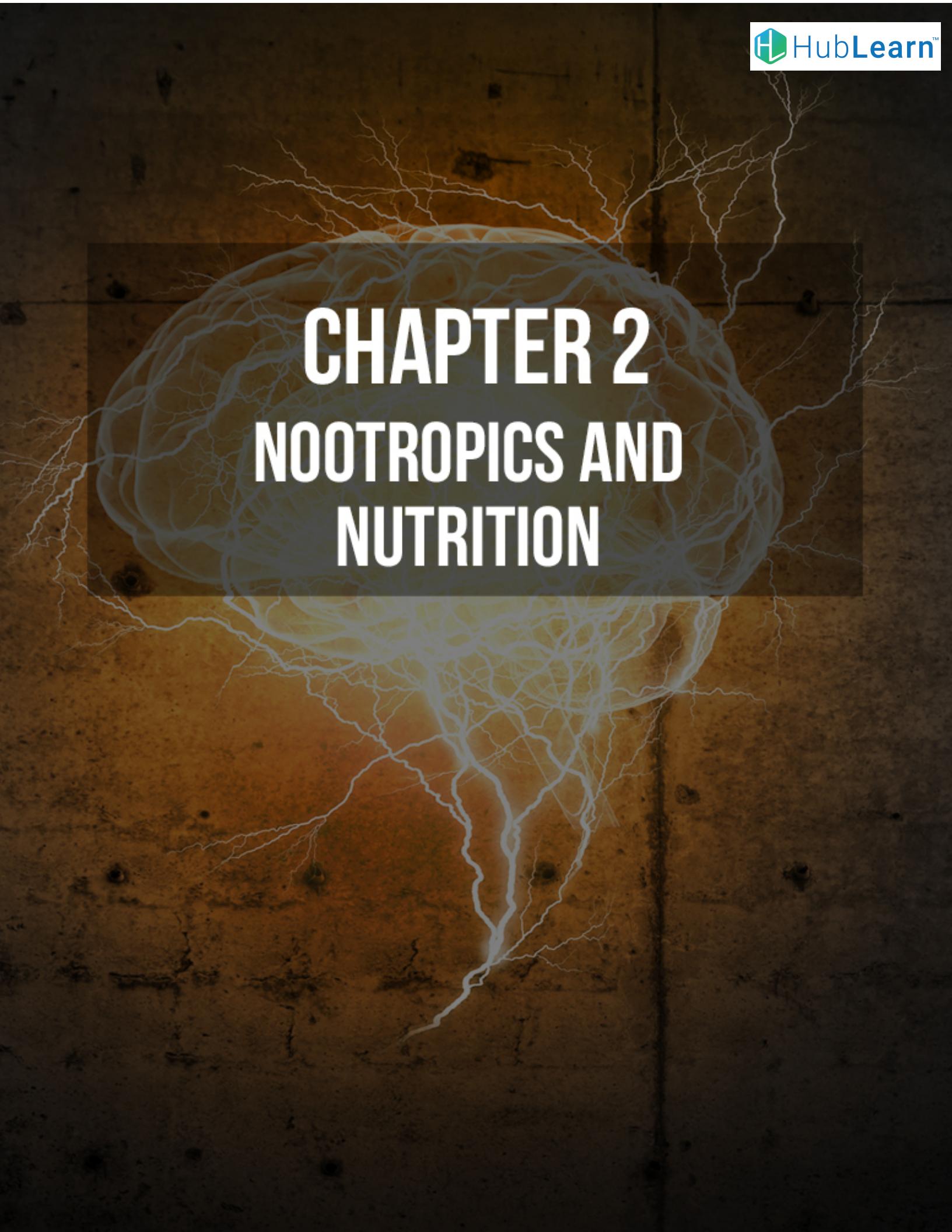
It's stressful!

You are, after all, a *pioneer*. And with a new type of career, we need a new approach to health and productivity.

But here's the thing: it's not just about trying to "survive" in business. The truth is that the more we improve our focus, energy, creativity, and health, the more we will produce. As a solopreneur, everything you sell and everything that earns you money *comes from you*.

If you want to be more successful, that means that you need to produce more. And if you're going to produce more, then you need to manage your energy levels and focus. You need to learn how to get the most from your brain and body.

And this can result in a **HUGE** increase in your productivity and profits. Because when you're a solopreneur, learning how to double your output, means doubling your profit!



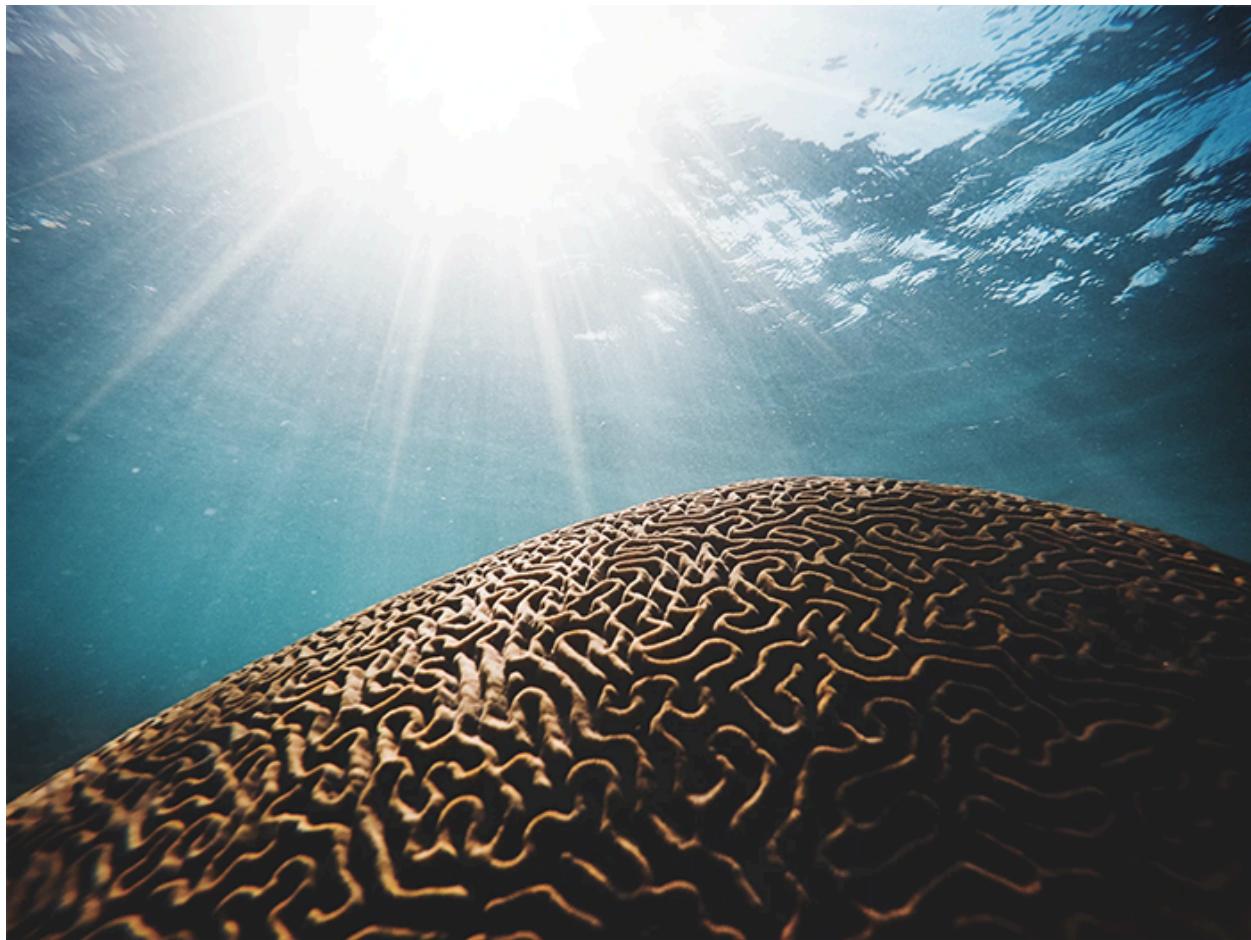
CHAPTER 2

NOOTROPICS AND NUTRITION

Chapter 2: Nootropics and Nutrition

Let's jump straight into the deep end with a concept that has been gaining a huge amount of attention online, and that has the potential to transform your productivity and wellbeing: nootropics.

Nootropics are "smart drugs." That is to say that they are medications, supplements, and drugs that *in some way*, boost cognitive performance. Many of us start our day with just such a "smart drug." That's caffeine!



But while caffeine certainly has its benefits, it's not going to turn you into Albert Einstein or Steve Jobs.

Is there a pill out there that *can*? Is there such a thing as a real-world NZT? (The smart drug depicted in the film *Limitless*). According to some people, the answer is yes. And interestingly, nootropics are reportedly in wide use throughout Silicon Valley.

One of the most outspoken advocates for the use of nootropics (which is pronounced "noo-oh-tropics") is the self-proclaimed biohacker "Dave Asprey." Dave Asprey gave the world Bulletproof coffee and has achieved no small amount of success. He credits Modafinil with much of this success.

So, just what is modafinil? Modafinil is a wakefulness agent that is prescribed for narcolepsy. It is also given to shift workers and those who travel abroad for their work and experience a lot of jetlag.

The precise "mechanisms of action" (how it works) are not fully understood, but it is believed to work on orexin – a chemical that helps control the sleep-wake cycle – and to increase levels of dopamine in the brain.

Not only does modafinil allow someone to work harder and for longer without burning out (ideal if you're a solopreneur who likes going out, or if you have a young family), but it also appears to heighten focus and motivation while you're working! This is the closest thing many people have found to a *Limitless* pill.

But is it safe and smart to use? That's a much more complex and nuanced question. Modafinil has no *known* side effects (other than potentially causing mild headaches and suppressing appetite). It is not addictive and has a low potential for abuse. However, it is also a controlled substance in many regions, meaning you have no choice but to buy from illicit sources. Not only that, but the long-term studies have yet to be carried out.

Moreover, the brain is actually an extremely complex piece of machinery. Raising dopamine increases focus and memory, but did you know that it also leads to a spike in cortisol? This can cause anxiety and actually *blunt* your creativity. That means that although modafinil might be useful for filling out spreadsheets, it could *hurt* your ability to plan for the long-term future of your business.

Not only that, but modafinil *also* has an effect on your bowel movements. It stays in your system for 10-12 hours (which may interrupt sleep), and it can't be taken with alcohol. And while modafinil may prevent you from *feeling* as though you need as much sleep, it won't carry out the same important functions that sleep performs (see next chapter). In other words, you are creating a "biological debt" that needs to be paid.

For all these reasons, you must think very carefully when choosing to use a powerful agent like modafinil.

But before we write it off completely, consider this use-case scenario:

- You use small amounts of modafinil *only* when you are focused on a task that doesn't require a large amount of creativity. For instance: if you need to answer lots of dull emails, do keyword research, etc.
- You use small amounts of modafinil for around 1-2 months and use this as a way to enforce positive habits.
 - Here's the thing: getting into productive flow states is extremely difficult at first. But what many people don't realize, is that this is a learning process like anything else. You aren't "bad at focusing," you just need practice! Modafinil will help you to start your day in a focused way and learn to churn out huge amounts of work. THEN you can come off of it. You can set the neural pathways and learned the behavior. While the effects of the

modafinil leave, those benefits remain.

- Microdose with modafinil (25mg being a good option) and only for a few days at a time when you really need it.

If you practice this approach, you can enjoy the benefits of modafinil – of which there are plenty – without the downsides.

You are essentially upgrading your brain, in order to get more done. You are approaching a business model like a *transhuman*.

If that's a bit too much of a leap for you and you don't like the idea of using any pharmaceuticals to achieve maximum productivity, there is an alternative option.

Nutrition for Optimal Mental Performance

Here's the thing: nootropics are substances that positively affect the brain. That includes *all* substances that can enhance cognition. Well, guess what? There are plenty of foods that can be defined as "nootropics" by this definition! And plenty of ingredients found in foods.

Here are some examples:

- L-Theanine – L-theanine is an amino acid found in green teas like 'yerba mate' – which Darwin famously called the world's '**most perfect stimulant**'. In fact, combining caffeine and theanine is one of the most popular practices among nootropic-users, seeing as L-theanine helps to take the 'edge' off of caffeine, thereby preventing nervous jitters and anxiety. This is the perfect combination to stack with caffeine anhydrous.

- Huperzine A – Huperzine A increases acetylcholine, one of the most powerful and abundant excitatory neurotransmitters in the human brain. In short, this helps to increase alertness and focus and has been demonstrated to increase memory and creative thinking in numerous studies. Huperzine comes from a Chinese moss plant called "huperzia serrata." No lab involved!
- Choline – Choline is the natural *precursor* to acetylcholine. That means it is what the brain uses to *make* it. Get more choline in your diet from eggs, and you'll enjoy enhanced mental clarity and creativity.
- Omega 3 fatty acid – This is a substance found in oily fish. Omega 3 has countless benefits for the brain and body alike. This lipid is used to create cell walls, which helps to make them extra supple and allows other chemical signalers to pass through. It increases brain plasticity (learning), boosts mood, reduces inflammation, and much more.
- Vitamin D – Boosts the mood, supports the immune system, and increases the production of testosterone – which in turn enhances focus, motivation, and energy.
- Magnesium – Magnesium boosts testosterone, enhances sleep, aids with brain plasticity, encourages relaxation at rest and more.

But here's the thing: this list goes *on and on and on*.

Simply switching to a much more nutritious diet then can have profound implications for mental performance, mood, and recovery. This is CRUCIAL if you want to get the most from your brain.

A varied diet has even been shown to be critical to support the microbiome: the healthy bacteria that live in the gut and elsewhere throughout the human body. These critters are responsible for producing neurotransmitters (that boost our mood and performance), as well as supporting our immune system and providing energy. They even breakdown food to improve the absorption of nutrients!

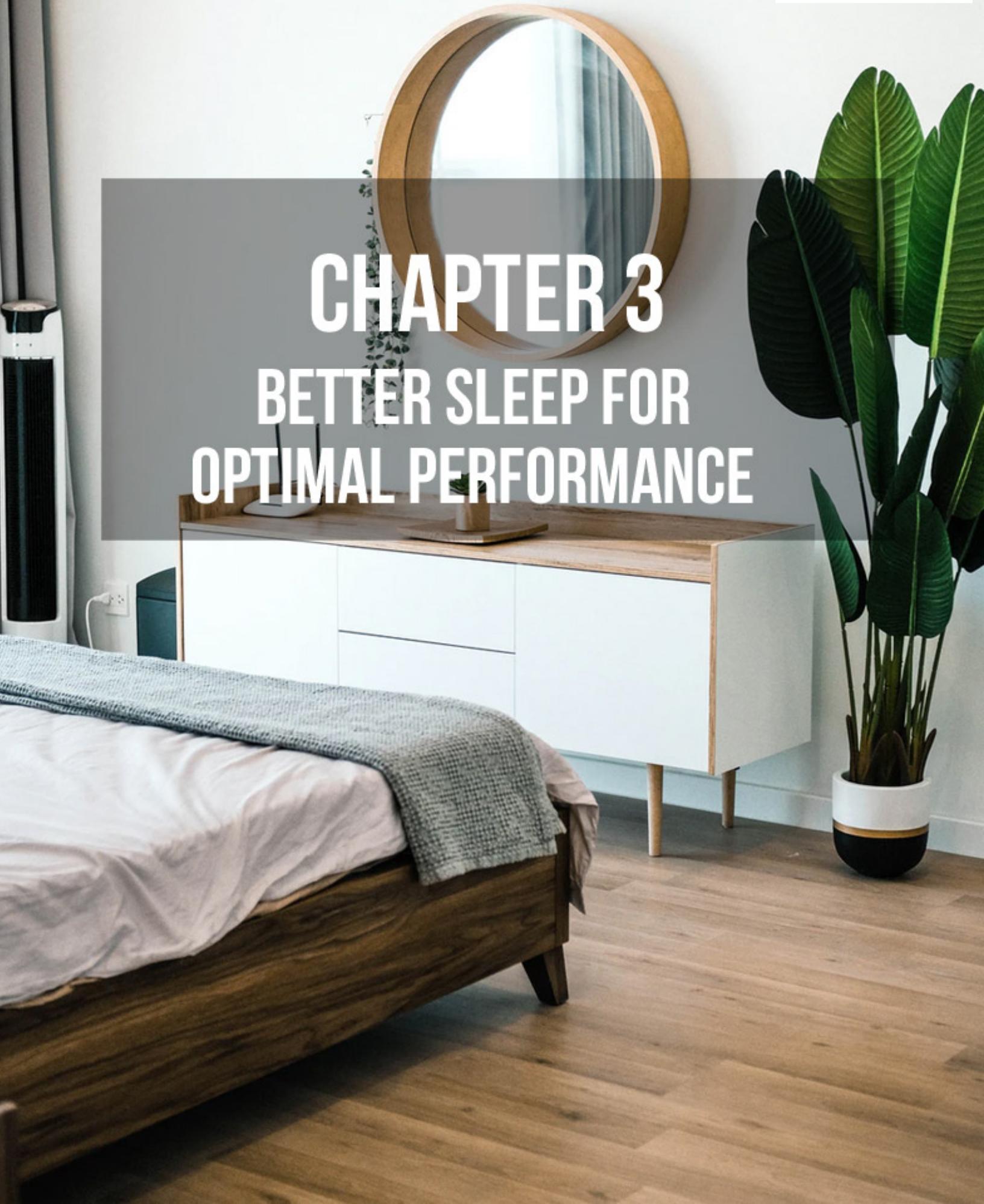
Don't underestimate the importance of your immune system if you want to be a productive solopreneur: getting sick can cost you hundreds of dollars if not more!

Think about your brain as a high-performance sports car: you need the very best fuel and oil if you want to eek out every last bit of performance! So eat right. That means avoiding processed, sugary foods. It means avoiding ready meals.

It means seeking out the widest variety of foods and ingredients you can, and then preparing them manually. If you start eating home-made bolognese and soup every night instead of pizza and takeaway, you'll boost every aspect of your mental function, energy, sleep, mood, and long-term health.

CHAPTER 3

BETTER SLEEP FOR OPTIMAL PERFORMANCE



Chapter 3: Better Sleep For Optimal Performance



In the new digital economy, it should come as no surprise then to hear that many people are looking for ways to find an edge. People are turning to brain training apps, stimulants and even 'smart drugs' to try to boost their ability to understand and retain information.

But there's an easier way. And a far more *effective* way.

It might not be glamorous or exciting, but *by far* the most effective way to upgrade your brain is simply to get more sleep. If you sleep better, you will boost your concentration, your creativity and your memory.

To find out why and to learn how you can take advantage of this, keep reading.

How Sleeping Boosts Focus

So, how exactly does sleeping improve your brainpower?

The answer is that no one knows entirely. Science has uncovered many of the mysteries of sleep, but many more remain elusive. Here is what we do know.

During the day, your brain uses up an awful lot of energy. Roughly 20% of all the energy you use in fact goes towards operating your grey matter.

For this to work, your brain cells use mitochondria. These are small 'energy factories' that live inside your brain cells and which are responsible for utilizing ATP (adenosine triphosphate), which is the body's 'universal energy currency'.

ATP is composed of three phosphate groups, which are held together by powerful bonds. The mitochondria breaks these bonds in order to release energy, and this is used for everything from our metabolic processes, to RNA synthesis, to moving muscles.

When you break a molecule made of three phosphates, you end up with adenosine *diphosphate* (made of two phosphates) and adenosine monophosphate. You also end up with some leftover adenosine, which is essentially a by-product of the breakdown of ATP.

Adenosine is also a neurotransmitter. That means that it is used to communicate between brain cells and to tell our brain things about our current state and what kind of mood it should be in. Other examples of neurotransmitters include things you've probably heard of like cortisol, serotonin or dopamine.

Specifically, adenosine is an *inhibitory* neurotransmitter. That means that it reduces activity in the brain. More specifically, it increases the activation threshold, so that more effort is needed to make the neurons fire.

So, this substance builds up in the brain over time as we use our neurons. By the end of the day, we will often then feel groggy and fatigued, simply as a result of all that build-up. When we sleep, the brain 'flushes' this adenosine out our system and our neurons are able to fire again more easily! This is why we feel more awake and better able to focus.

Simply put, if you sleep more during the night, you'll be more alert and awake during the day. And if you're more alert, you'll be better able to focus and better able to absorb and retain new information and/or solve mental puzzles.

Brain Plasticity

Not enough reason to start prioritizing your sleep? Well, how about this: sleeping also enhances your neuroplasticity.

Neuroplasticity describes the brain's ability to grow and change shape just like a muscle. Our neurons are all connected and create a kind of web called a 'connectome' in our brain. This connectome encodes all the information we have stored, and it allows us to re-experience that information at will.

The more plastic we are then, the more easily we can form new connections, reinforce them, and thereby reliably encode more information.

Well, just like your body, your brain also grows and repairs itself during the night. This occurs via the production of hormones and neurotransmitters such as nerve growth factor which are released in greater quantities throughout the night.

So, the best way to learn is to study hard for a while, expose yourself to that new information, but then *sleep* shortly after to give that information time to get deeply ingrained in your grey matter. One without the other just doesn't work!

How to Enhance Sleep

Hopefully, those few paragraphs have provided enough incentive to improve your sleep.

The next step is to actually *fix* that poor sleep. So how do you go about achieving that? Here are some quick and powerful tips:

Sleep with the Window Open

Many people believe that light is one of the most important cues that the body uses to "set" its internal clock (an external zeitgeber used to control the internal pacemaker – in psychological terminology). In truth, temperature is actually just as important according to recent studies. To make use of this, sleep with the window slightly open. This will also help seeing as our bodies prefer sleeping in a slightly cooler environment.

Invest in a Good Quality Mattress



Sometimes we get so caught up trying to find "hacks" to improve sleep, that we forget the basics!

Just investing in a high-quality mattress can make a huge difference to the quality and quantity of your sleep, as well as your back health!

Have 30 Minutes of Downtime at the End of the Day

Before bed, you should avoid doing anything that is going to put you in an aroused and active state of mind. That particularly includes things like playing computer games, or even watching TV! Reading a book, meditating, or just relaxing outside are all far better options.

CHAPTER 4

CREATING AN OPTIMAL WORK ENVIRONMENT



Chapter 4: Creating an Optimal Work Environment

If you work from home – as many solopreneurs are likely to - then you're likely to have found that remaining productive and maintaining focus are two of the biggest challenges you face on a day to day basis. For some reason, we find it harder to work when we're not actually *at* work, and this often results in our mind wandering or us finding procrastination in all kinds of places.

One of the best ways to counter this effect is to design a home office that encourages focus and that you actually want to work in. If you're working from your own home, then you'll have far more freedom in what you can do with your office space, and you should really take advantage of this fact. At the same time, if you work this way full-time, then you're probably going to spend the *majority* of your life at your desk and/or in your office, and as such, you should make the most of it by making it as conducive to productivity as it can be.

This will not only improve your quality of life on a day-to-day basis but will also ensure that you are as productive as you can be and always doing your best work.

The Ground Rules

Firstly, make sure that you don't cut any corners and that you're willing to spend a fair amount on your office to make it as nice as possible. The first place to invest this money is on a new desk, and this will have the biggest impact on your work. The desk should fit with the décor of the room but at the same time, make you feel professional and be something you want to show off. Sitting at your desk should feel like manning a space ship, and if it does, then you will feel good about yourself when you work which will rub off on the quality and quantity of what you churn out. The hallmarks of a

good desk are to have as many compartments as possible, to have lots of space for working on, and for having (or being a part of) at least one right angle.

The compartments are important as they'll mean you don't have to keep getting up to get things. At the same time, they just 'feel' organized, and if you feel organized, then your brain will automatically be more organized in the way it stores and processes information.



By right angle is meant that when you sit at your desk, you should have a surface in front of you to work from and a surface to your left or right. The best options will also have a third surface behind you or to the other side or will have multiple layers in front.

On these different layers, you should then organize multiple work or information stations. That means multiple computers or at least multiple

monitors, it means lots of places to store ring binders, filing cabinets and folders, and it means lots of places for you to write shorthand notes to yourself. If your desk doesn't come with all these things, then you can use other smaller tables, cabinets and shelving arrangements all within reach.

The reason that this is so important is that it allows you to work on multiple things at once. For example, you can have one monitor for writing a document while you have another monitor in charge of showing you the relevant information you need to work on that.

Alternatively, you could have one of your monitors or computers taking care of your email so that you don't have to keep checking in explorer every two minutes. Meanwhile, you might have a work zone for jotting notes which will mean you can note down things as they come to you. By the same token, simply having this many different work zones is another way to make yourself feel professional and with lots of lights and screens surrounding you, you'll feel on top of things as though you have all the information you need to tackle anything that comes up and can multitask if necessary. This concept of 'work zones' is the same one that's used in kitchens and is a great way to stay on top of your work.

Another good item to have among these things is a notice board. This will go on the wall behind all of your surfaces and will be the place to pin up things you need to remember which will improve your productivity by preventing you from sitting idly for ages while you wrack your brain for what it was you were meant to be doing.

While this will all look very slick you should avoid making it look too 'cold', and a few simple distractions such as desk toys (a cat's cradle, solitaire etc. etc.) can be a great way to prevent yourself from getting *more* distracted by worse things such as Facebook, and if you chose them well, then they will add to the décor of your work environment.

Finally, amongst all this, you should have a swivel chair which will allow you to spin from one work zone to another without getting up and to reach all of your storage to get whatever it is that you need. Again, it will also help create that feeling of being at a high tech' work station' and having everything that you need right at your finger-tips, and this will mean you feel on top of everything and appropriately effectively.

My number one tip for boosting productivity *and* happiness as an online solopreneur: is to head to coffee shops. In a coffee shop, you get a change of scene to prevent cabin fever, you are watched (meaning you can't just slack), and you keep your work and private lives nicely separate. The background chatter of café patrons and the smell of coffee all only add to a highly productive state of mind.

CHAPTER 5

WORK/LIFE BALANCE FOR THE SOLOPRENEUR: GETTING IT RIGHT!



Chapter 5: Work/Life Balance for The Solopreneur: Getting it Tight!



If you are going to succeed as a solopreneur or really as *any* kind of professional who works from home, then you need to manage your work/life balance properly. This is one of the biggest downfalls for so many people who start working online.

The problem, as outlined in the introduction to this book, is that it is all too easy to bring work home with you when you work *from home*. This means that you never get to switch off. The body works in a series of cycles and requires balance. If you are always on, then eventually you WILL switch off. And this is the crash that we associate with burnout.

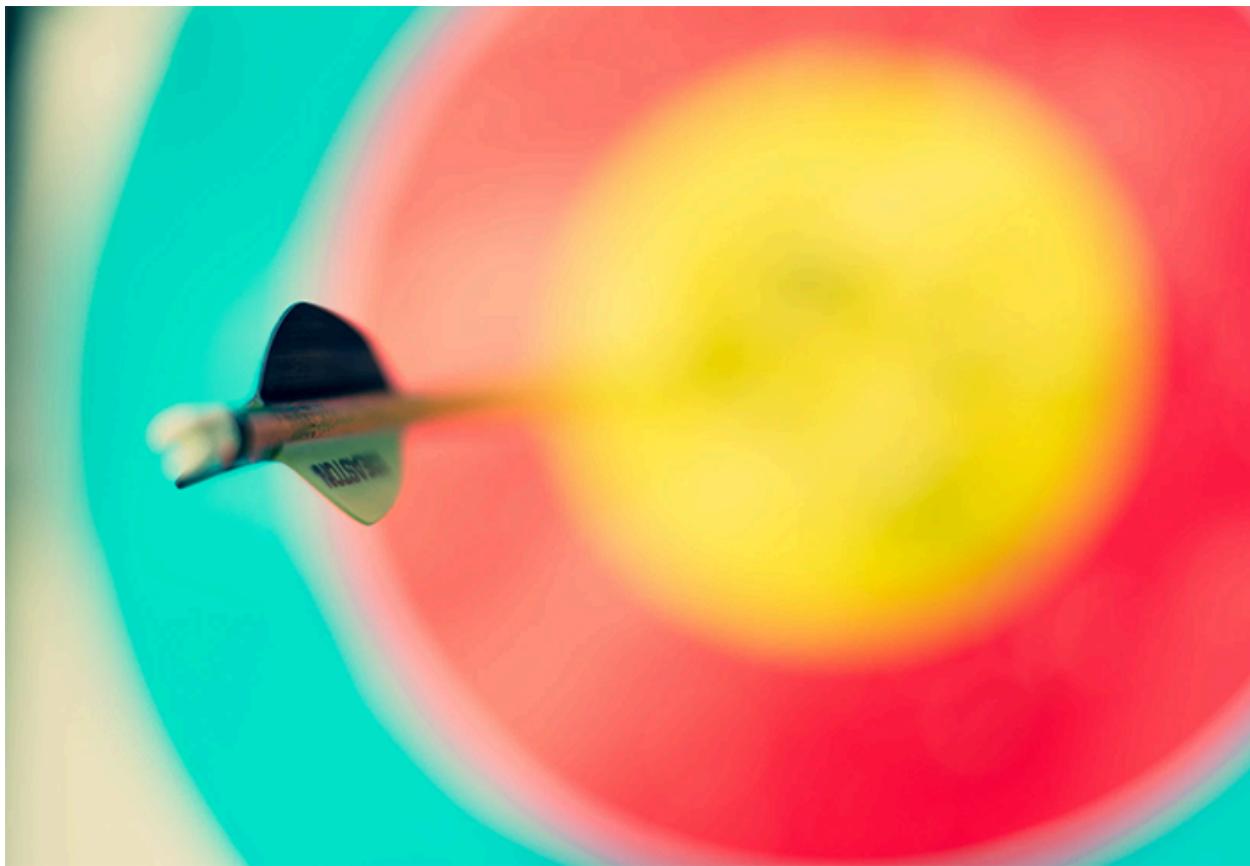
Not only that, but this can also work the other way around. That is to say: if you can't switch off from *home* when you get to work, you will struggle to focus, and you'll find you have even more stress as your mind is pulled in multiple directions.

So, what can you do?

Understanding Decision Fatigue

Let's start with 'decision fatigue', a phenomenon that sees the quality of our decision-making start to decline over time. This shows us that decision making requires energy and that with time, we can exhaust that energy. In other words, your ability to make decisions is finite, and so it's important that you apply a little resource management.

This is hard when you consider the huge number of different decisions that you face on a daily basis: from what to have for dinner, to what to wear, to whether or not to go out. Expenditure of energy on these smaller, meaningless decisions can actually leave you with *less* capacity to make the decisions that matter.



How do you avoid this? Cut back! Famously, Steve Jobs attempted to reduce decision fatigue by actually wearing the same outfit every single day, thereby giving himself one less decision to make!

Reduce the number of decisions you make at work and during the day by finding routines that work for you and attempting to stick to them. You'll find this gives you more mental clarity and energy at work and helps you to leave at the end of the day without stressing.

Information Overload

Information meanwhile comes at us from every angle though. Your phone is constantly ringing and beeping, you're probably working on a computer for a big part of the day and walking down the street you probably see a ton of billboards, ads and screens.

Every time this happens, your body is 'aroused' and your attention diverted. This prevents you from enjoying a calm state of mind and means that you're that much more likely to feel exhausted and overwhelmed by the time you even *get in* to work!

One tip? Try turning down the brightness on your phone all the way. This can help you to cope with the addictive nature of pulling it out of your pocket to look for notifications. Another tip is to spend some time meditating each day – you can counteract all that noise and stress by taking a few moments every day to just let your mind be still and calm.

Having multiple devices can also help a lot. That means one phone for work, and one for downtime. Leave the work phone in the office when you're not using it!

Be Strict

Finally, you NEED to be strict with yourself as a solopreneur about when it's "work time" and when it's "downtime." Think of it like switching between two different mental states: a work mode and a relaxed mode.

This is one of the big benefits of creating a designated work environment – and especially adorning it with iconography and imagery and places you in a productive state of mind.

You can even try taking on a "role" and adopting another personality. Frederik Nietzsche would reportedly accomplish something similar by taking on another persona during writing and imagining himself talking with great philosophers from history. While that might be a little grandiose for your liking, using ritual and altering your mindset, this way can be a powerful tool.

Just as important, though, is to *leave behind* that side of yourself when you turn off the computer.

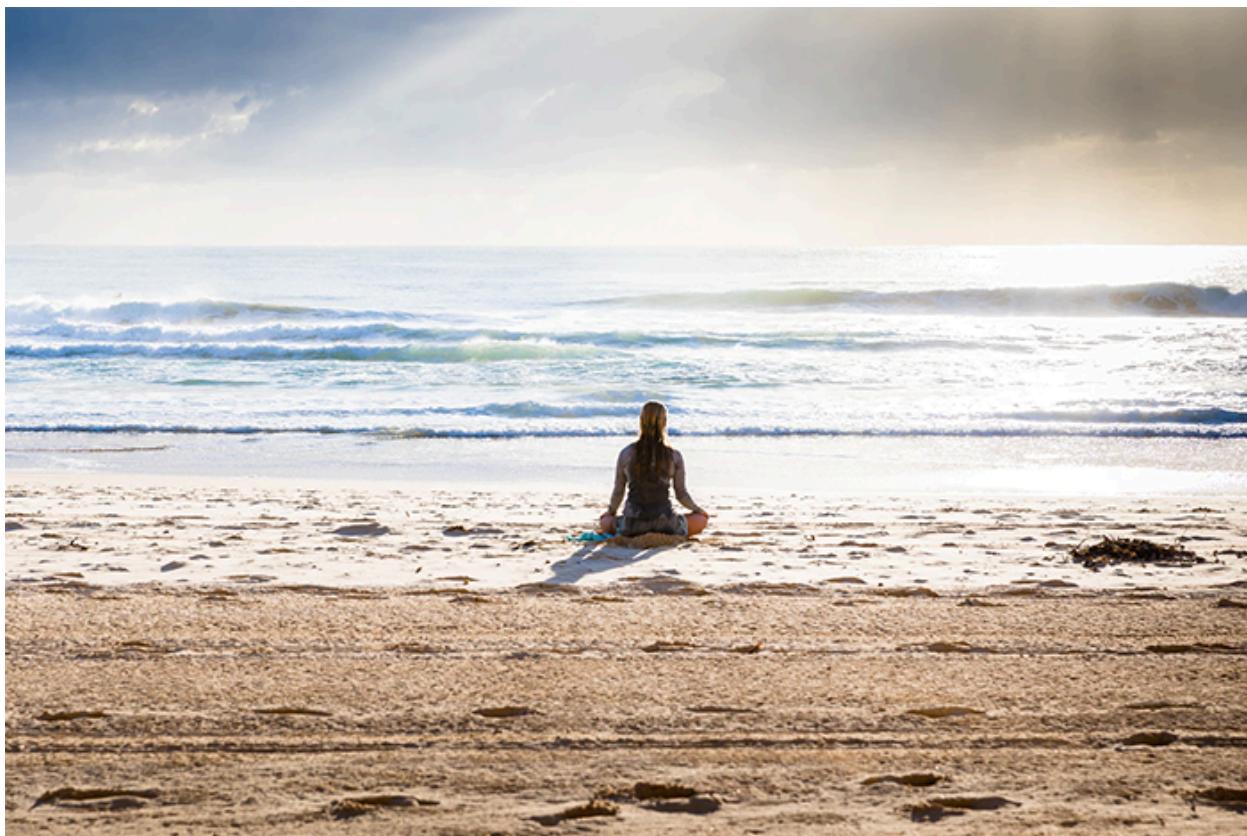
Of course, deciding that you are "not going to think about work" is easier said than done. But that's where the skills learned in the next chapter will become essential.

CHAPTER 6

WHY MEDITATION IS THE SOLOPRENEUR'S SECRET WEAPON



Chapter 6: Why Meditation is The Solopreneur's Secret Weapon



If you take just one thing from this book, it should be this: you need to start meditating.

Why? Because meditation is the solopreneur's secret weapon. This is what you will use to not only achieve more productivity and stay more focused, but *also* to boost your mood, to recharge after a hard day, and to generally improve your work/life balance and mental health as someone who works online.

How does this work, and how do you get started?

Read on!

Firstly, meditation will help you to improve your brain function by directly upgrading your brain. Countless studies have demonstrated the significant benefits of meditation, and these include the following:

- Increased cortical thickness: The key frontal regions of the brain actually get thicker and heavier as new connections and cells are created. This has been shown to correlate with an increase in IQ scores!
- White cells proliferate: White cells are the "caretakers of the brain" though recent studies seem to suggest they also play a lot of other important roles. Meditation appears to improve signaling through white cells and prevents them from deteriorating.
- Neurochemical balance improves: Meditation alters the balance of neurochemicals, which may help to combat numerous mental health issues like anxiety and depression. It also helps us to stay more focused, more of the time.
- Aging slows down: Worried about losing your smarts as you age? Meditation combats this and can likewise reduce your risk of Alzheimer's and other conditions that become more likely as we get older.

But while all this can have amazing, direct benefits for your productivity, the *real* benefit comes from the fact that meditation provides a powerful, rejuvenating rest. This is something that many of us are missing.

If you've ever seen Shaolin monks perform, you'll know that they're capable of seemingly *superhuman* feats. They can bounce off their heads, smash bricks across their stomachs with their bare hands, and stand on one hand. How?

The answer is intense training. But how they managed to train this intensely *without* collapsing is the real mystery! And according to a few outspoken monks, the answer is Qi Gong – their form of moving meditation. They say that you need balance: fire and water. The more fire, the more water.

If you are working extremely hard all day, that puts you in a ramped-up physiological state: that's a fight or flight state where you are producing hormones and chemicals like adrenaline and cortisol. This increases muscle tension, heart rate, breathing and focus. But it *also* suppresses things like digestion, immunity, and more.



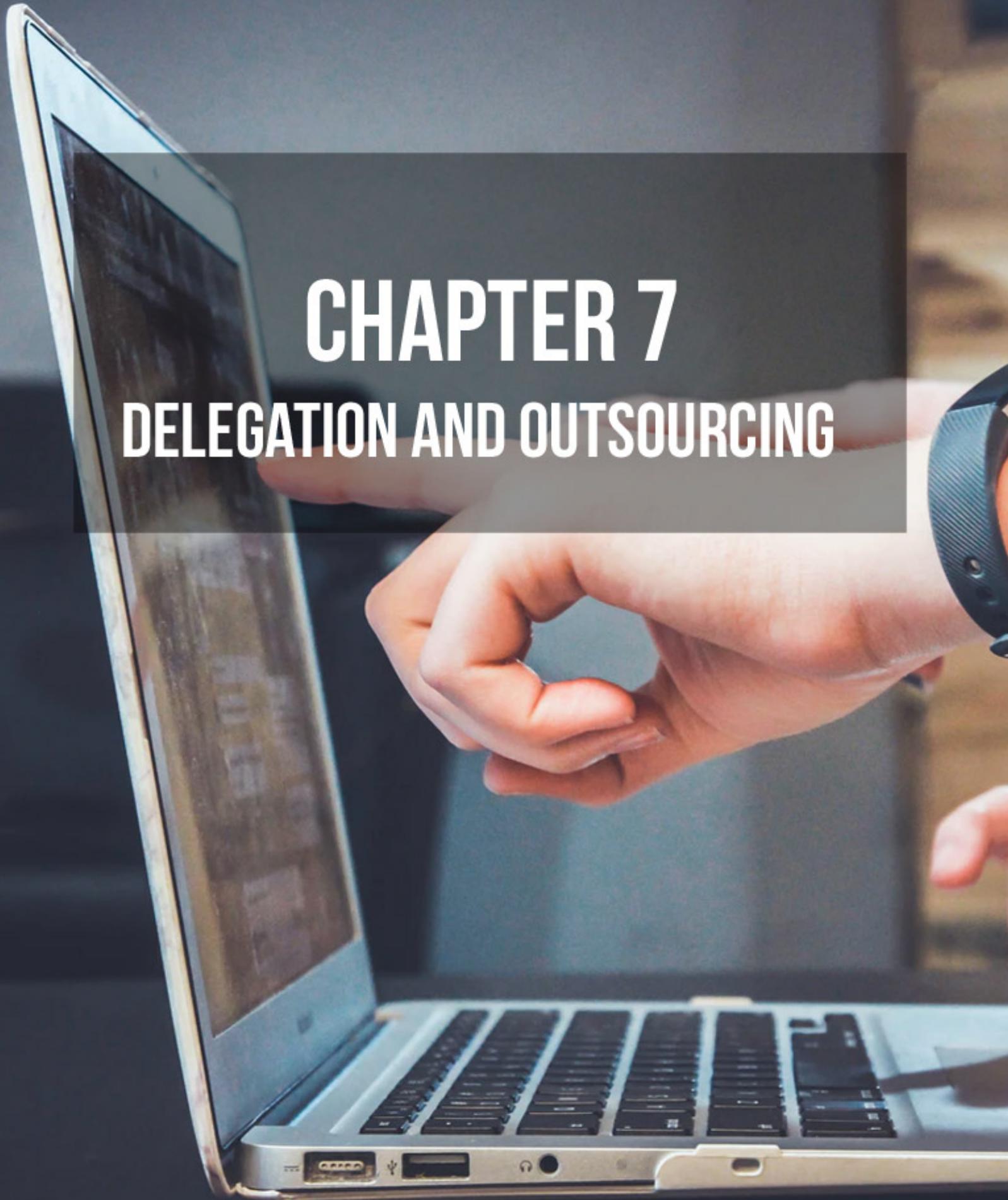
If we are stressed in our daily lives as well AND then add poor sleep and nutrition on top of that, we end up spending extremely little time in a

parasympathetic "rest and digest" state. We are constantly breaking ourselves down and never allowing ourselves to recover.

Meditation offers a solution. This should be thought of as the mirror image to the high-intensity work and productivity demanded of you during the working day.

CHAPTER 7

DELEGATION AND OUTSOURCING



Chapter 7: Delegation, Outsourcing, and Automation: How to Earn More and Work Less

What if there was one skill you could learn that would replace all others?

Well, if such a skill were ever to exist, it would undoubtedly be outsourcing and/or automation.

In other words: you need to learn to trust others, and to take on just a little less responsibility yourself!

Delegation is the process of handing work over to someone else on your team. Outsourcing is the process of giving someone *outside* your team a chance to contribute (usually, this means finding a paid freelancer).

Automation means finding a tool that can do the work *for* you.

As a solopreneur, there is a high chance that you are a "control freak." That is to say; you may struggle to let go and allowing someone else to try and help with your business. Maybe that's why you became a solopreneur in the first place! And just maybe, it's what helped you to be successful.

But using these methods doesn't have to mean letting go of control. It means that you get *more* control over the things that matter, while the "busy work" is handled elsewhere.

For example, why not use a virtual assistant to handle menial jobs that you don't have time for?

A virtual assistant is essentially like your very own PA, except with one key difference: they work entirely remotely. In most cases, a virtual assistant will likely be stationed in India or elsewhere overseas and will provide you with any services that don't require amazing English and that don't require them to be there in person.

You can actually use a virtual assistant in your everyday life. Imagine never worrying that you've forgotten your anniversary again! Or how about being able to book a holiday without actually checking a single website yourself?

But for an internet marketer, the uses of a virtual assistant are more focussed on profit and productivity.

Let's say for instance, that you want to send a round of emails as an internet marketer. In this case, you might need to collect a list of emails – perhaps of bloggers that allow guest posts on their blog, or maybe of potential business partners. Instead of wasting time finding those contacts, you can use a virtual assistant in order to collect them for you and you then simply send the email.

Or how about getting them to check for dead links on your site? To respond to your emails for you when you're not available? Or to submit your site to directories and research keywords?

The potential jobs are endless, and the best thing about these professionals is that very often they only charge \$3-\$6 an hour. The money you can make in that time by doing *other* things makes this a fantastic return on investment and hugely increases the amount of work you can do in any given amount of time.

Another option that doesn't occur to many people is using virtual assistants in order to help with their *personal* lives. And this is also where delegation can come in handy. If you're struggling with your work/life balance, then perhaps that's because you're taking on too much work at home? Maybe you need a bit more help?

Speak openly and honestly with your partner about the way you are sharing tasks, and maybe you can find a solution that works for you both.

Automation is the final and *ultimate* solution. Here, you are outsourcing to a machine or program that can take care of work for you. Because an automated system has no limit as to how much work it can produce, this allows you to potentially scale your business infinitely. The best part? That income is now *passive*. That means that you can potentially earn money while you sleep – which as it happens is *really* good for your energy levels and work-life balance!

Try setting up automated systems and outsource solutions with dropshipping, eCommerce platforms, affiliate business models and more. This will allow you to step away from your business, which is ultimately the end goal – as we'll see in the final chapter.

CONCLUSION



Chapter 8: Build The Lifestyle That Will Make You Happiest

We've looked at many different strategies that you can use to restore balance to your lifestyle as a solopreneur. We've seen how to improve sleep, how to get more done with nootropics and nutrition, and how to switch off from work when all is said and done.

But we need to end on another note. Because what is all this for, if you are only going to continuously increase the amount of work you pile on?

What is the *goal* that you are striving for by taking on a hundred different roles in your one-person business?

It's time to reflect on work/life balance a little deeper and to focus on improving this **MORE** in order to achieve lasting happiness, contentment, and health.

What is Success to You?

Many of us have a certain idea of what makes someone successful. We consider successful people to wear suits, for instance, and we probably expect them to stand gazing out of the windows of high-rise buildings onto the streets below.

Of course, these people are highly paid – that's how they afford such nice suits and such *high up* offices. And of course, we know that with this financial success comes a lot of responsibility. Our picture of someone who is conventionally successful will also be of someone who is constantly on the phone, constantly sending emails and likewise often running board meetings.

But while this might be what we picture when we consider success, it's important that we separate this notion from what success means to *us*.

Otherwise, you can end up highly stressed, highly overworked and potentially making yourself ill.

Traditional Notions of Success Vs What You Actually Want

The reason many of us picture success the same way is that this is the 'cultural norm' and this is what we have been brought up to think of as success. There are a few different versions of course, which include being a doctor, or perhaps a lawyer. Either way, these are high-stress, high-pressure jobs that come with high salaries and status, and that would make your Grandma proud.

And this is the kind of work that many of us will end up falling into. We leave college or University, and we find that jobs aren't being offered up on a plate in quite the way we perhaps thought they might be. As such, we find ourselves lacking any stable form of income and probably wanting to get out of parents' basements ASAP.

After looking around for work that inspires us and giving up, we start looking for work that will provide a stopgap. Work that will put food on the table while we wait for something even more exciting to come along.

Maybe we work in logistics. Maybe sales. Maybe we work in a high street store.

And then opportunities come along, and we take them. That might mean training to become a team leader, which leads to manager. Which leads to area manager. Which leads to the suit and the high-rise office. Maybe a flashy car to go home in.

And while it's not anything we were ever particularly passionate about, it is enough to make us feel accomplished, and it's enough to make Grandma proud. And if you were to follow your dreams of becoming a painter, an actor or an entrepreneur at *this* point, then that would mean giving up everything and starting again from scratch.

This also becomes harder and harder op even think about once you are supporting a family. Once you are thinking of buying a house with your wife/husband. Once you have bills coming in that you need to pay and a credit card loan because you bought that car. And the massive widescreen TV.

This is only one way it comes about. The other way is that you decide young that you like the looks of being a doctor, or a lawyer, or a CEO. You think it looks glamorous, and your parents really like the sounds of it too, and so together you push to get you into the right school, the right college and the right apprenticeship early on. You grow and develop yourself and climb the ranks.

You realize it's soul-destroying, sure. But now it's kind of a bit late, isn't it?

This is the exact same thing that happens to the solopreneur who views the "end goal" as being to build as large an empire as possible. To earn huge amounts of money while hiring more members of staff and taking on more and more responsibility.

Knowing What You Want

The problem comes from the fact that very few of us know what we really want. Worse, we don't know what we really *need* in order to be truly happy and inspired. We think that we should push ourselves to go after the traditional signifiers of success and accomplishment, and we think that we

should stick to wanting the things we always *used* to want when we were younger.

But the first separation you need to make is between the status and the *idea* of a particular job and then the reality.

Because a lot of people go after jobs that they really like the idea of. They love the sounds of being 'in charge', and they think it would be great to work for a really big company. Maybe they love law programs, or maybe they love technology.

But working as a manager in a big tech company has little to do with tech. And wearing a suit doesn't feel glamorous even the third time you do it. If your *day to day* involves making lots of phone calls, taking on more and more work and generally piling more and more stress on yourself, then perhaps you should reconsider it as a job. Being a doctor is great for some people, but for others, it means working ridiculous hours, with a huge amount of pressure, in an environment that can be seen as fairly unpleasant. And don't expect the respect that once came with the title!

Likewise, if you are already in a job that you don't love, you need to *really think* about whether taking a managerial role is right for you. It ultimately will amount to the exact same thing but with a lot more stress and pressure – which could be enough to drive you a little out of your mind!

On the other hand, you also need to consider whether the end result is something that drives you. Because if you love the work you do on a daily basis but don't feel you're contributing to society or building something you care about, it will ultimately be hollow.

For the solopreneur, the goal should be to maximize income while minimizing the amount of work and stress. By doing that, you can worry a

little less about perfectly optimizing your sleep and diet: because your lifestyle isn't crushing you under the weight of your work!

Either *that* or you find a way to turn what you LOVE into your job. That's the true power of the solopreneur lifestyle, and it's one that can address MANY issues with taking on too much responsibility and work.

Lifestyle Design

It is very convenient for the economy if you keep killing yourself to take on more responsibility, but it's not so good for your health. If you are stressed *and* bored on a daily basis, working long hours with no time to exercise or spend with the people you love, then you will burn out slowly. You will sleep less, you will eat worse, and you will push your loved ones away.

Wearing a suit to work does *not* objectively make you more successful. If you would be happier working as a garbage collector so you could spend the whole evening with your family, then that is just as 'successful'.

Successful means doing things that matter to you and living a life you think is fulfilling.

I'm not going to tell you not to go after your dreams and not to go after that highly paid job, or to pursue that medical degree. You might get huge reward from this work.

What I'm telling you instead, is that you should:

- a) Really think about whether this is a job you really want. Really ask yourself whether you will be happy in that career at the highest levels. Speak to the
- b) Think about what is important to you and what sacrifices that level of 'success' will bring. When you have a young child, will you really want

to be working 12-hour days? Will you be upset at the thought of not having time to exercise? To spend pursuing hobbies? Are the sacrifices ones that you are willing to make?

- c) Ultimately, make sure that the job you go after is something that YOU are truly passionate about. Don't do it because it is what you think you're 'supposed to do'. Don't do it because your Grandma will be proud. Do it because it is *intrinsically* rewarding.

I say all this as a cautionary tale. Two people, I know recently chased career paths that they had simply landed in and that paid well, and both of them ended up burned out and depressed.

On the other hand, I know someone who works 12-hour days *every day*. He just called me from America at 1 am his time to discuss work. But he *loves* what he does, and that's *why* it's not a nightmare for him.

If you're going to reach the top levels of success, it means sacrificing a lot of your energy, your relationships and your spare time. This only ever makes sense if you absolutely LOVE what you are doing: the day to day of it, the end result and the industry.

For the rest of us, there is actually a point where we reach diminishing returns and where we could be just as happier earning a little less but having a lot more time to spend with our families or to spend painting...

Don't define your success by your salary or by your responsibility. Define your success by your happiness. As a result, you'll be MUCH healthier as well.

As a solopreneur, you are in a unique position of being able to define precisely the work/life balance you wish to design.

THE PRODUCTIVE SOLOPRENEUR



CHECKLIST

CHECKLIST

Benefits and Challenges of the Solopreneur Lifestyle

- Being a solopreneur provides you with unique business advantages
- You can control every aspect of your business, which lets you put a more consistent message across and gain a stronger following
- You can keep 100% of the profits!
- However, being a solopreneur also means juggling countless balls in the air and taking on 100% of the responsibility – for what is usually a complex business
- To succeed, you need to **OPTIMIZE YOURSELF**

Focus and Productivity

- The flow state is the state of perfect performance, achieved by being 100% focused on a given task
- Flow states take TIME to achieve. You must push THROUGH the wall
- You also need to eliminate all distractions
- Consider the effect your environment is having on your ability to focus
- Use meditation to learn to switch between tasks and to focus intently. This can GROW YOUR BRAIN
- DO everything you can outside of your work to enhance your productivity when you start

Setting Up the Space

- With lifestyle design you can work anywhere.
- Work from home OR from coffee shops/a joint office
- Ideally you want to work out of the house to create psychological separation
- Make sure your workspace provides you with some opportunity to meet people and to stretch your legs
- Think about your comfort and make sure you have a supportive chair, your arms at a comfortable right angle, your chin raise so you're looking straight forward and no glare on your screen – this is easier to set up when you work from home
- Changing where you work regularly also helps a great deal

Separating Work and Home Life

- This is where a lot of people fall down – you must be on when you're on and off when you're off
- Don't bite off more than you can chew with clients
- Dump your 'bad clients' that cause you stress – remember, your priority now is your own health!
- Use autoresponders on your e-mail to make sure you aren't stressing about not answering a message
- Use a virtual assistant to outsource work you don't enjoy/that makes you stressed
- Have a separate work phone
- Have a separate work bank account
- Set targets for how much to earn in a day and consider anything above this to be a bonus
- Under promise and over deliver to your clients
- Likewise, be strict with your friends and family. Tell them you are not available to help them move at weekdays or to meet up for lunch.

Lifestyle and Health

- Your sleep should be considered priority one – this will drastically impact on your work
- Don't use screens an hour before bed
- Have a hot shower
- Sleep with the window open to better regulate heat
- Consider things that can upset sleep like light, noise, mold, pollen and temperature
- Stretching is a very good thing to use to combat the negative effects of sitting
- Stretching before bed can help you sleep
- Meditation can help you to learn mental discipline for better sleep and better work ethic
- Make sure you are exercising regularly – again it combats sitting
- Come up with a workout plan you find enjoyable and you'll be more likely to do it
- Join a gym that's nearby or create a home gym
- Any movement is better than none!

- That said, HIIT is great for maximizing fitness benefit and fat burning
- Eat a healthy diet filled with nutrients to support brain health, sleep and muscular development
- Consider the benefits of using nootropics – supplements that enhance brain function, focus, creativity, and more
- Outsourcing and Automating
- The ultimate goal for many people, will be to automate and outsource much of their work
- Learn what to outsource – the things that don't provide immediate value
- Realize that outsourcing and delegation apply to your life outside of the office too
- Have the right goals: strive to work less, not to create more responsibility for yourself!

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Separating Work and Home Life

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THE PRODUCTIVE SOLOPRENEUR

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THE PRODUCTIVE SOLOPRENEUR

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RESOURCE CHEAT SHEET

Books

The Four Hour Workweek, by Tim Ferriss

This book is the original text on lifestyle design and teaches you everything you need to know when it comes to minimizing your workload and maximizing your enjoyment of life. All his books are good but the premise of this one is particularly relevant to the subject of this book.

The Four Hour Body, by Tim Ferriss

Tim Ferriss followed up *The Four Hour Workweek* with *The Four Hour Body* which provides a detailed look at how you can optimize your health and fitness training. The two go hand in hand perfectly.

Vagabonding, by Rolf Potts

Tim Ferriss taught us to use the internet to live the lifestyle we wanted to *first*. But before Tim Ferriss, there was Rolf Potts who taught us to do the same *without* running a home business. *Vagabonding* served as the inspiration for *The Four Hour Workweek* and is just as seminal and important.

The Personal MBA, by Josh Kaufman

The Personal MBA is a book that aims to provide a full MBA in a single book. Of course it won't help you to pass an interview but if you're running a business from home, the skills in here are invaluable. It also has a surprising amount on the psychological impact of running a business from home, which is particularly relevant and helpful.

The Rise of Superman, by Steven Kotler

Not everything in this book is great but it serves as an introduction to flow states – which is an interesting and relevant concept that will help you to get more work done, more effectively.

Sites

<http://www.fourhourworkweek.com/blog>

We've raved enough about Tim Ferriss already. This is his blog.

<http://www.bulletproofexec.com>

This is the blog of Dave Asprey, a guy who has a similar approach to Tim Ferriss and who is very interested in biohacking and performance enhancing.

<http://www.marksdailyapple.com>

Mark's Daily Apple is a great fitness website that has lots of advice on diet, training and lifestyle. This can perfectly complement your productive solopreneur lifestyle!

<https://www.youtube.com/thomasfrank>

Thomas Frank's YouTube channel features study and productivity tips.

<http://www.stevehollan.com>

Steve Pavlina provides "personal development for smart people." While that might sound a little arrogant, his tips are very useful in a lot of cases.

Tools

IFTTT

<https://ifttt.com/>

IFTTT can automate a great many of your social media tasks and other online jobs. It works by linking different accounts and creating associations between them such that an action or event on one, can trigger something happening on another.

List of Virtual Assistants

<http://www.virtualassistantassistant.com/virtual-assistant-companies>

Looking to outsource your workload? This website can help. Use VAs in order to outsource the more menial aspects of your business, so you can focus on the things that really provide value. They can even help you to organize your life *outside* of work!

Closet

<http://closetapp.com/>

This is an app that lets you upload your wardrobe so that all your clothes are easy to flick through and so you can visualize how they go together in different outfits. Of course it also features the ability to let you plan ahead so that you can know what you're wearing for the coming week.

Todoist

<https://en.todoist.com/>

Todoist is a great app that lets you build to-do lists. These can then be accessed online, or by using a mobile app. You'll receive notifications and it can even play nicely with a range of other services.

Google Calendar

<https://www.google.com/calendar>

One of the best calendars available for your smartphone or the web. This app syncs with just about any other app you can imagine, it ensures you can access your schedule from anywhere in the world and lets you share it with others too.

Asana

<https://asana.com>

Asana is one of many different project management apps, with others including the likes of Basecamp. These are great for working collaboratively and also just keeping track of what you have left to do in a day.

Fabulous: Motivate Me

<http://www.thefabulous.co/>

A beautifully designed website and app that uses a ‘science based’ coach to help you achieve your goals and stay on track.

Pomodoro Keeper

<https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/pomodoro-keeper-free-timer/id867374917?mt=8>

Try the Pomodoro technique yourself and start working on your tasks in blocks of time, free from distractions.

Freedom

<https://freedom.to/>

This app will help you to block distracting apps and set a range of rules to govern your online behaviour.

Headspace

<https://www.headspace.com>

This is an app that will teach you the basics of meditation.