

BOOK SUMMARY

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THINK LIKE DA VINCI – 7 EASY STEPS TO BOOSTING YOUR EVERYDAY GENIUS BY MICHAEL J. GELB

The author of the book examined the life and work of Leonardo Da Vinci and tried to figure out the secret of his genius. The result is something he called “seven steps to genius every day” which consist of *Curiosita*, *Dimostrazione*, *Sensazione*, *Sfumato*, *Arte/scienza*, *Corporalita*, and *Connessione*.

The core of the book explains these seven steps in details.

1. *Curiosita*

Curiosita is an *insatiably curious approach to life and unrelenting quest for continuous learning*. One characteristic of the great minds is they go on asking confounding questions with the same intensity throughout their lives. In Da Vinci’s case, his loyalty, devotion, and passion were directed to the pure quest for truth and beauty.

Great minds ask great questions. You can increase your problem-solving skills by honing your question-asking ability. By cultivating a Da Vinci-like open, questing frame of mind, we broaden our universe and improve our ability to travel through it.

Here are some ways to apply *Curiosita*:

- Keep a journal or “notebook”
Carry a journal with you everywhere and write in it regularly. You can write your thoughts or do thinking exercises there;

- Theme observation
Choose a theme for the day and record the observations in your notebook; and
- Stream of consciousness exercise
Choose any question, and write your thoughts and associations as they occur, without editing. The secret of effective stream of consciousness writing is to *keep writing*.

2. Dimostrazione

Dimostrazione is a commitment to test knowledge through experience, persistence, and a willingness to learn from mistake. The finest teachers know that experience is the source of wisdom. And the principle of **Dimostrazione** is the key to making the most of your experience.

Here are some ways to apply **Dimostrazione**:

- Check your belief and sources
Determine the dominant source of your information. See if you hold any beliefs for which you have no experiential verification;
- Three points of view
Try making the strongest possible argument against your belief. Try reviewing your belief “from a distance” (for instance, as if you lived in a different country). Seek out friends who might offer different perspectives;
- Practice internal anticommercial martial arts
Go through your favorite magazine and analyze the strategy and tactics of each advertisement. Note which advertisements affect you most strongly and why; and

- Learn from “anti-role models”

Make a list of at least three people who have made mistakes that you would like to avoid. How can you learn from their mistakes?

3. **Sensazione**

Sensazione is the continual refinement of the senses, especially sight, as the means to enliven experience. Da Vinci believed that the secrets of **Dimostrazione** are revealed through the senses, especially sight. *Saper vedere* (knowing how to see) was one of Leonardo’s mottos, and the corner stone of his artistic and scientific work.

Here are some ways to apply **Sensazione**:

- Describe an experience in detail

For example, you can watch sunrise or sunset and describe the details of the experience in your notebook;

- Study the lives and work of your favorite artists;

- Learn to draw, and

- Listen to the sounds around you

Learn to listen from the loudest (e.g. traffic) to the softest (e.g. your breathing) sounds.

4. **Sfumato**

Sfumato is a willingness to embrace ambiguity, paradox, and uncertainty. Da Vinci’s phenomenal ability to hold the tension of opposites, to embrace uncertainty, ambiguity, and paradox, was a critical characteristic of his genius.

Here are two ways to apply **Sfumato**:

- *Make friends with ambiguity*
List some situations from your life where ambiguity reigns (e.g. waiting to hear if you were accepted at the college of your choice) and describe the feeling; and
- *Cultivate confusion endurance*
Sharpen your senses in the face of paradox. You can do it by asking questions like “How are my strengths and weaknesses related?” or “What is the relationships between my saddest moments and the most joyful ones?”

5. Arte/Scienza

Arte/Scienza is the development of the balance between science and art, logic and imagination. It is “whole-brain” thinking.

You can use one simple but powerful method for cultivating a synergy between logic and imagination in your everyday thinking, planning, and problem solving. The method is *mind mapping*. Through regular practice mind mapping trains you to be a more balanced thinker.

Here are ways to apply **Arte/Scienza**:

- *Learn the rules of mind mapping*; and
- *Practice your mind-mapping skills*
It is probably best to make your first few mind maps on relatively simple, light-hearted subjects.

6. Corporalita

Corporalita is the cultivation of grace, ambidexterity, fitness, and poise. Da Vinci’s extraordinary physical gifts complemented his intellectual and artistic genius.

Here are some ways to apply **Corporalita**:

- Develop a fitness program

It should include aerobic conditioning, strength training, and flexibility exercises;

- Develop body awareness

You can develop body awareness by studying practical anatomy. Explore your body map; and

- Cultivate ambidexterity

Leonardo and Michaelangelo regularly switched hands as they worked. You can try to use your nondominant hand for things like brushing your teeth or eating your breakfast. Then you can try to use your nondominant hand for writing.

7. Connessione

Connessione is a recognition of and appreciation for the interconnectedness of all things and phenomena. It's systems thinking. One secret of Da Vinci's unparalleled creativity is his lifelong practice of combining and connecting disparate elements to form new patterns.

Here are some ways to apply **Connessione**:

- Look at things that at first glance seem unrelated, and find different ways to link them

For example, you can try to find connections between a bullfrog and the Internet, or mathematics and The Last Supper;

- Imaginary dialogues

"Talking" with an imaginary role model is a time-honored and very effective way to gain insight and perspective. You can also imagine discussions on your problem between different characters; and

- Origin-all thinking

Think about the origin of things. Choose an object and consider all the elements involved in its creation.

Conclusion

How to Think Like Leonardo da Vinci is a good book to learn about mind development with holistic approach. It talks about improving your thinking through imagination, logic, and even body. Your brain is much better than you think. Your brain:

- is more flexible and multidimensional than any supercomputer;
- can learn 7 facts per second, every second, for the rest of your life and still have plenty of room left to learn more;
- will improve with age if you use it properly;
- is not just in your head. According to renowned neuroscientist Dr. Candace Pert, “...intelligence is located not only in the brain but in cells that are distributed throughout the body....The traditional separation of mental processes, including emotions, from the body is no longer valid“;
- is unique. Of the 6 billion people currently living and the more than ninety billion people who have ever lived, there has never, unless you are an identical twin, been anyone quite like you. Your creative gifts, your fingerprints, your expressions, your DNA, your dreams are unprecedented and unique; and
- is capable of making virtually unlimited number of synaptic connections or potential patterns of thought.

The approach is not surprising since the model is Leonardo Da Vinci. Just look at how Wikipedia describes him: a scientist, mathematician, engineer, inventor, anatomist, painter, sculptor, architect, botanist, musician and writer. This book give insights on how someone with such diverse talents thought. This practical guidebook loaded with illustrations and exercises, provides the tool needed in enhancing your aptitude, particularly in business and career.