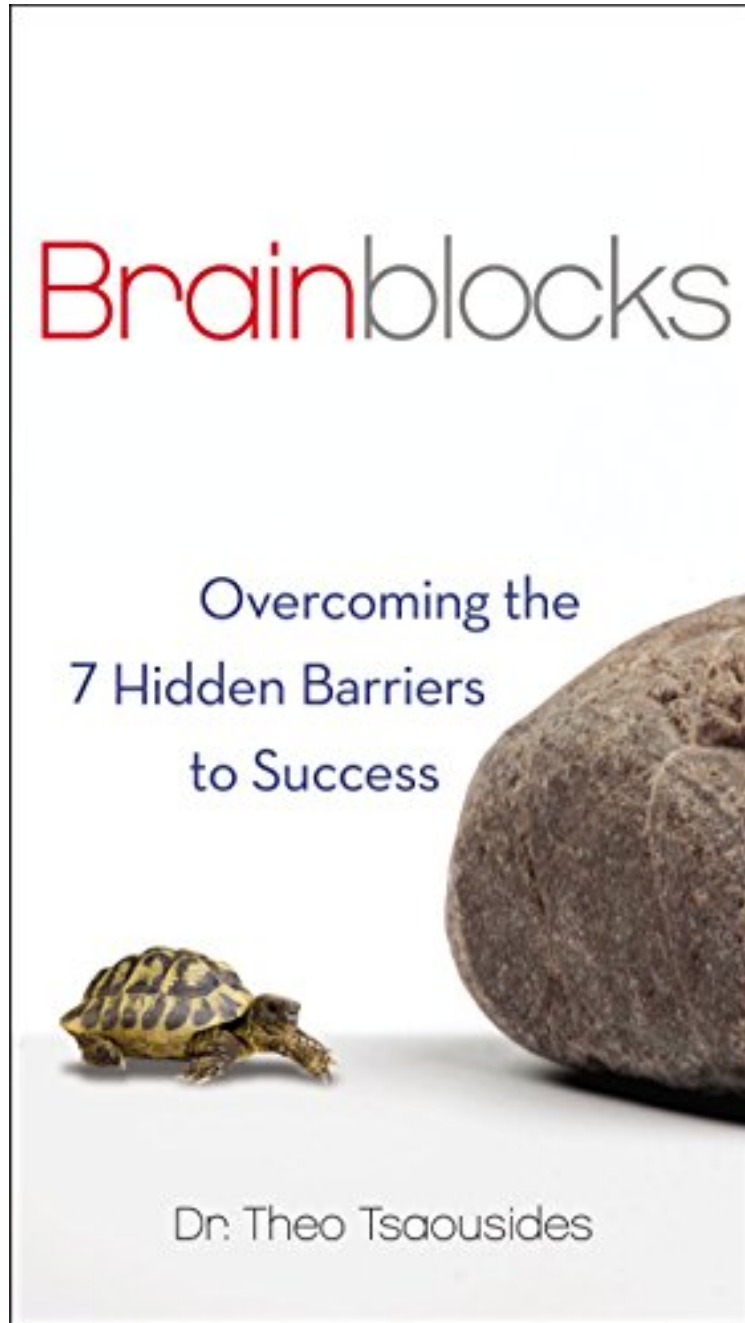


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Brainblocks: Overcoming the 7 Hidden Barriers to Success

Theo Tsaousides

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Theo Tsaousides : Brainblocks: Overcoming the 7 Hidden Barriers to Success before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Brainblocks: Overcoming the 7 Hidden Barriers to Success:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Imagine a Dr. who helps you get unstuck with "Slow Ride" by Foghat
 By Lisa Cummings I first saw the author as a keynote speaker and had to grab the book. He does such a great job of being both credible and approachable. On the credibility side, he's a Dr. who grounds this stuff in science and research. On the approachability side, he's smart and funny and makes things very human. For example, each BrainBlock has a "confessional" with a story so you can see what it looks like. I loved that. It's full of substance and useful tips. Although I read this cover to cover, it will also be a reference guide during my "BrainBlock" moments. The author offers seven Brain Blocks that you might have. He shows you how our brains are wired to undermine our success (yikers!)...and then gives you the good news that you can be aware of what's happening so you can engage your brain in new ways. The 7 Brain Blocks Are:- Self Doubt- Procrastination- Impatience- Multitasking- Rigidity- Perfectionism- Negativity And the "Slow Ride" reference is a good way to demonstrate the personality he puts in the book. One of his ways of overcoming a block is "mantras". Rather than presenting mantras in the boring way that many authors do, he gives an example of how he got over his Multitasking Block by slowing down his brain by repeating the song "Slow Ride" by Foghat. Now singing a hook of a cool song...that's a way I can put mantras to use. Very memorable and practical! And you're welcome! Now you'll be singing "Slow Ride" for the rest of the day.
 5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. like a best friend who wants to see all your ...
 By Gigiuno This is no ordinary self-help book and this is no ordinary author. Theo is the real deal. A neuropsychologist who has done the research, helped real patients and shares what works with all of us in this easy-to-read book. He writes as if he is talking to you, judgement-free, like a best friend who wants to see all your dreams come true. But, this best friend is also tough. He or she calls it like it is, keeps you honest and keeps pushing you forward but never so much you fall down. It's a quick read in a handy purse or backpack size for anyone who wants to rock the analog version. I'm glad I got started with this book. It's helping me stay on track and make better decisions.
 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. The author's down to earth style and "confessionals" make you feel that yours are not the only one out there struggling with these
 By Alex Turchin Reading this book has really helped me realize reasons that I have been putting off working on some important projects. The author's down to earth style and "confessionals" make you feel that yours are not the only one out there struggling with these brainblocks and gives you hope that you can manage them better. Also, I really love the strategies. Because there are several for each brainblock, there is something for everybody. They are easy to understand and implement and the best part is that there is no psychobabble! I plan to put this book on my desk and every time I catch myself procrastinating, doubting, being negative etc, I'll flip to the appropriate chapter and pick one of the strategies to use. Overall, awesome self-help book!

Brainblocks are the mental obstacles that keep people from achieving success, defined as setting, pursuing, and achieving a goal. Managing the brain is the solution to preventing mental blocks from interfering with achieving your goals. And neuropsychologist Dr. Theo Tsoulosides gives you the tools to improve:

- Awareness: the seven brainblocks to success (self-doubt, procrastination, impatience, multitasking, rigidity, perfectionism, negativity)
- the characteristic feelings, thoughts, and actions associated with each brainblock
- the brain functions involved in goal-oriented action
- brain glitches and how they create setbacks
- the cost of not removing brainblocks
- the best strategies to remove the blocks

Engagement:

- actively search for brainblocks in your actions, thoughts, and feelings
- recognize and label each brainblock as soon as it is identified
- practice each strategy consistently until it becomes second nature
- track your progress toward a goal

Through these strategies you will learn to overcome these cognitive obstacles and harness the power of the brain to achieve success in any endeavor.

About the Author Theo Tsoulosides is a neuropsychologist, clinical researcher, and more recently entrepreneur. He has published scientific articles in prestigious academic journals and has co-authored textbook chapters specializing in assessment and treatment after brain injury. In addition, Dr. Theo has delivered numerous workshops and presentations for professional audiences nationally and internationally. In 2010, he received a \$750,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Education to create and run a postdoctoral training program in neuropsychology and rehabilitation research at Mount Sinai. He is the founder of the LEAP Center, whose mission is to promote personal growth, successful performance, and emotional wellness.

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INTRODUCTION Do you ever wonder why some people accomplish so much in their lives and others keep falling short? What makes some people give up on their goals while others continue to persist? Why some people take forever to start working on their life goals and others need no second reminder? This book is about you and your goals. It is about the seven main reasons why you haven't achieved your goals yet. It is about your brainblocks. Your habits of thinking, feeling, and acting that keep you stuck in place, get you off track, and make you move around in circles. You know what they are. You experience them daily. But what you may not know is what causes them. Only

by knowing the reasons they exist will you be able to remove them. This book is a journey of discovering the secrets of success hiding inside your brain.

The New Year's Resolution Conundrum

How often do you come up with brilliant ideas about how to improve your life, how to boost your productivity, how to make more money, how to get a big promotion, how to be more fit and healthy, how to find love, how to help people fulfill their dreams, or simply how to just enjoy life more? How often do you make promises that you will kick your bad habits and replace them with new ones that will put you on the express lane to success? How often do you feel ready to make that important decision that will change your life forever? If you are like most people, you do all that at least once a year! Along with counting down to zero and giving passionate kisses, making new resolutions is the most popular New Year's tradition. New beginnings, new promises, renewed passion, and high hopes for a better body, a better salary, or a better love life! But . . . how often do you say: Yes! I did it! I hit the jackpot! Again, if you are like most people, not often enough. As soon as the New Year's festivities are over, the resolutions become faint memories. The truth is that most of us fail to achieve the goals we set on New Year's. We forget, we get stalled, or we give up. Year after year we state the same goals, we make the same promises, and we repeat the same excuses, but we see no results. Does failing to achieve our goals apply only to our New Year's resolutions? Or do all our goals have the same fate? Have we been sentenced to living a life without success?

A World Without Success Stories

Regardless of how you define it, success is something all people want. Success comes in many varieties. It can be small or big, daily or lifelong, material or spiritual, humble or grandiose, and noble or lowly. Regardless of its size, scope, or intention, success invariably starts with setting a goal and ends with achieving a goal. But the most important part of success is what lies between setting and achieving your goal. And that is pursuing a goal. That's what success is: deciding what you want (setting), working to make it happen (pursuing), and checking it off your list (achieving). The simplest definition of success: Setting, pursuing, and achieving your goal.

There is a plethora of resources and countless experts out there all intended to inspire and teach people how to set and achieve goals. There is something for everyone in the self-help buffet. Books, videos, podcasts, blogs, webinars, live events, trainings, and coaching on anything imaginable, from how to be rich or healthy to how to be cool or sexy. The self-help industry is like the Costco of good advice. Despite the abundance of resources, the truth is that most people talk about things they want in life, but relatively few actually set goals, and even fewer achieve them. The proportion of people who successfully achieve their goals is similar across different settings: no more than 10 percent! For example, studies have shown that among all people who set New Year's resolutions, only 8 percent actually achieve them. 1 Two months after the beginning of the year, most of us barely remember what our resolution was! The same 10 percent success rate is evident in the self-help industry. While this industry generates billions of dollars annually from products and services, statistics show a dismal 10 percent success rate in terms of people achieving their goals. Imagine the impact on society if only 10 percent of physicians, teachers, urban planners, business owners, or judges were able to achieve their goals. What would this low level of success rate mean for the health, education, livelihood, sustenance, and legal rights of the millions of people they serve? What if the goals you set for yourself had the same fate? What would your life be like if you could only achieve 10 percent of what you hoped for? What if nine out of ten things you wished to accomplish never happened? My guess is that a 90 percent failure rate of achieving personal, professional, financial, academic, humanitarian, or any other type of goal would very quickly make this world a very depressive, pessimistic, and bitter place to live in.

The Tough Part of Success

There are armies of experts on multiple topics offering hundreds of methods for setting and achieving goals, with promises that range from getting things done to making dreams come true. I am one of those experts. My job is to help people set and achieve goals. For that reason, I have a big investment in their success. I teach them a broad range of skills and strategies they can use to achieve their goals. I make sure the techniques I choose are tested and proven. What I do is based on science, backed by research, and used in many contexts, including businesses, organizations, medical settings, and schools. I even use these techniques myself to achieve my own goals. But the truth is that techniques alone don't work. Regardless of how effective we, the experts, claim them to be and despite the number of testimonials that we can provide to support the power of our methods, the reality is that a large number of people will continue to fail. And they fail because the most important factor in any success equation is not the method but the person who uses it. The key to success is what you do with what you know. And what you do is entirely controlled by you, not by the experts. I have worked with hundreds of people with a wide range of goals. Some wanted to be more successful at work. Others wanted to be better at making decisions or wanted to be more loved. And some just wanted to be happier. What has always been true is that some of them are able to accomplish their goals fast and others keep struggling. After many years of observing and learning, I made an important discovery. I realized what is different about the 10 percent of achievers. It isn't the methods. It isn't their genes, personalities, education, gender, or upbringing. It is a simple and observable characteristic: They pursue. They work toward what they want. Achievers take action. Setting a goal is fun and inspiring. It raises your motivation, it gets your spirits high, and it gives you something to look forward to. Promising yourself that you will eat more nutritious foods or that you will look for a more rewarding job or that you will travel more is very stimulating. Achieving a goal is rewarding and exciting. Seeing the results of your labor gives you a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment. But while the experts will show you how to set goals and will keep you pumped by

reminding you what it feels like to achieve your goal, no one will tell you much about the most effortful and mundane part of success: pursuing the goal. Pursuing a goal refers to taking all the steps you need to take to turn your vision into reality. It refers to the little and big tasks you have to do on a daily basis in order to accomplish your goal. It is the way in which you turn an idea into a plan and a plan into action. It is tracking your progress and adjusting your course. Pursuing is taking action. And that's the part that the 90 percent of nonachievers flunk. Action is the essential ingredient of success. Action is the essential ingredient of success. Whether your goal is to lose weight, write a book, build your dream home, or find love, the only way to get there is by doing something. Any goal you set requires action. And action starts and stops in the brain.

How the Biggest Asset Can Become the Biggest Setback

Our brains are wired for success. They are designed to set, pursue, and achieve goals. They all come equipped with a set of mechanisms that enable them to do that. These mechanisms are called cognitive functions, and they are involved in receiving, storing, transforming, and using information from our internal and our external environment. For example, attention is the cognitive function that focuses us on what information is relevant to our goals at any given moment. Should I be listening to the conversation between those two lovebirds sitting at the table next to me or should I stay focused on finishing this paragraph? Achieving success involves several cognitive functions. Our ability to set intentions, to envision the outcomes, to plan and strategize, to assess risk, to initiate our efforts, to keep track of our progress, to overcome obstacles, and to eventually celebrate our successes are all a result of our cognitive functions. And while all brains come equipped with these functions, not everyone knows how they work or how to use them more efficiently. For example, you are all aware that you can remember things that you have learned in the past, and that the brain function responsible for storing that information is called memory. You also know that sometimes your memory fails and you end up forgetting things. Think about the last time you went grocery shopping. Do you remember which grocery store you went to? Or how many items you bought? What you were wearing? The name of the person at the register? How much you paid? What song was playing as you were checking out? How many of these questions can you answer with 100 percent certainty? Here is a challenge for you. Next time you go to the grocery store, try to remember the name of the grocery store, the number of items you buy, what clothes you have on, the name of the person at the register, the exact amount of money you need to pay, and what song is playing as you check out. How many of these questions do you think you will be able to answer with 100 percent certainty this time? Clearly, you will remember more than before. What does that mean? That your memory function improved between visits to the grocery store? Doubtful. What it means is that you used your memory function differently the second time. You were actively concentrating, you used memorization techniques, and what was unimportant and forgettable became important and memorable. As a result you were much more successful in retaining the information and answering the questions. The same is true for all of the brain's cognitive functions. The more efficiently we use them, the better we are at accomplishing our goals. The less efficiently we use them, the lower our odds of success. Using your memory efficiently means learning and memorizing information in a way that helps you retain what you need to remember in the future, relevant to your goals. If your goal is to answer the grocery store questions listed earlier, you need to pay attention and memorize the answers. You could write them down, record them on your phone, or repeat them in your head until you know them by heart. If your goal is to get a good raise this year, you need to memorize the three salary negotiation techniques you learned at the recent seminar you attended called "How to Make Killer Negotiations" and remember to use them when you have that uncomfortable talk about the raise with your boss.

Brainblocks: How Our Brains Undermine Our Success

Our cognitive functions are subject to glitches. These glitches block our ability to focus, to think creatively, and to make decisions, and as a result, they affect our actions and how we pursue our goals. They create confusion and congestion, and as a result, we stop doing and we start drifting, stalling, or retracting. Our actions become purposeless and ineffective and no longer serve our goals. Such glitches happen a lot. So often, in fact, that after a while, they not only distort our actions but affect the types of goals we set, the kinds of outcomes we expect, and even the way we think about ourselves and others. We begin attributing successes to good fortune, good genes, or good habits and failures to bad luck, irreversible personality flaws, or poor habits. What we need to recognize is that how we think and what we do starts and ends in the brain. Personality traits that we traditionally associate with stagnation, inefficiency, failure, and despondency are nothing more than brainblocks: the products of glitches and the consequences of inefficient use of our brains. Brainblocks are the habits of feeling, thinking, and doing created by our brains that block our pursuit of success. And only our brains, or how we use them, can undo them. Brainblocks are the enemy of action. They turn motivation to inertia, productivity to busywork, and dreamers to languishers. They cause an array of problems, ranging from diminished productivity and strained relationships to serious clinical problems, like depression and anxiety. Slowly and systematically, they end up killing our dreams. What are the seven brainblocks and how do they undermine your success? In the next few chapters you will learn exactly what they are, how they affect you, what causes them, and how to remove them. You will learn what causes the self-doubt that blocks you from taking action and the procrastination that delays you indefinitely from getting things done. You will learn why impatience makes you rush into action prematurely and how multitasking, despite all the good press it gets, can shatter your focus into a thousand little pieces. You will learn how rigidity renders you blind to opportunities and why

perfectionism keeps you far from perfection. You will learn that negativity is the best way to put an end to your dreams. And most important, you will learn what to do to remove these brainblocks and clear your path to success.

Brain Management: Removing the Brainblocks

We have the equipment, we have the abilities; now let's put them to use and smash our brainblocks. Our brains are powerful, and knowing how to manage them better will resolve a wide range of problems. Brain management is the ability to use our cognitive functions in the best possible way and prevent the brain glitches from becoming brainblocks. Brain management is essential for success because it aligns our actions with our goals. Brain management is made up of two parts: awareness and engagement. Awareness means knowing what the brainblocks are, what causes them, how they interfere with goal pursuit, and how to defeat them. Engagement means doing what you now know is necessary to develop new ways of thinking and acting and be able to achieve any goal you set. Awareness and engagement work synergistically. One cannot happen without the other. To get something done, you need to know what to do. And simply knowing what to do alone does not mean you will do it. Brain management is about turning knowledge into action. Knowing the brain's tricks allows you to actually do something differently. For example, if you know that you tend to procrastinate, you also know that you should start working on a project much sooner, to avoid missing a deadline. But do you think that just because you know that, you will actually start working on the project sooner? Procrastinators do not suffer from lack of awareness. They suffer from lack of engagement. Given how fast the brain learns, brain management can quickly change the way you approach your goals, your work, and your entire life. However, here is an important disclaimer: Even with good brain management, the brainblocks themselves can never be fully eliminated because they are generated by brain mechanisms with tremendous evolutionary value. They exist to protect you and to guarantee your survival. This is why the solution is management and not once-and-for-all elimination. Management is about monitoring, adjustment, and progress. You may feel insecure from time to time, you may put things off till the last minute for many "last minutes," and you may keep whining about your bad luck, even though you promised to never complain again. Such slips are normal. Managing your brainblocks means catching yourself in the act to prevent them from becoming success blocks. Eliminating the brainblocks, on the other hand, is unrealistic and impractical.

How to Use This Book

Brainblocks is a guide to removing the blocks and restoring action. To do that successfully, first you need to learn to recognize the characteristic feelings, thoughts, and actions associated with each brainblock. When you are able to recognize the brainblocks and how they affect your daily life, you will be able to remove them more easily. You will learn strategies to undo the glitches that cause them and to create new habits that promote action. The techniques you will learn make awareness easy and engagement even easier. By managing your brainblocks, you will be able to remove the obstacles that stand between setting and achieving a goal, the obstacles that stand between you and your dreams. Each chapter is dedicated to one brainblock. The order of the chapters is not random. They are sequenced in a way that reflects the order in which the brainblocks interfere with your goal pursuit from start to finish. Some brainblocks won't let you get started, and others won't let you finish. Even if you don't read the chapters in sequence but choose to focus on the brainblock that you see as the biggest obstacle in your life, I recommend reading all the chapters because you may be surprised by how many of the things you say or do have serious side effects on your goals without your even realizing it!

Each chapter is divided into five sections:

- **THE CONFSSIONAL.** In this section, I share my own and other people's stories and examples, to show what happens when the brainblock is activated. You will learn about the secret ways in which we sabotage ourselves, without even noticing.
- **SPOTTING THE BRAINBLOCK.** In this section, you will find an in-depth description of the brainblock in question, including the characteristic thoughts, feelings, and actions that it creates, so you can recognize it more easily in your own daily life.
- **BEHIND THE BRAINBLOCK.** In this section, you will learn what types of glitches or misuses in brain functioning cause the brainblock and how brain science and psychology explain the symptoms.
- **BRAINBLOCK SIDE EFFECTS.** Brainblocks can have serious consequences for your physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health. In this section, you will find out what happens when you fall victim to your own brainblocks and what the future has in store for you, if you don't manage them.
- **SMASHING THE BRAINBLOCK.** In this section, you will be shown action strategies designed to train your brain to manage the brainblock, so you can remove it from your path to success and prevent it from becoming a permanent obstacle. As you read through the book, try to be more mindful. Observe your own thoughts, feelings, and actions. What do you tell yourself when you start thinking about your goals? How do you carry out tasks during the day? How do you interact with other people? Are your actions helping you move forward or are they signs and symptoms of your brainblocks? Focus on the strategies. Decide which ones work better for you and start applying them. Practice them. Remind yourself that to accomplish anything, you need to take action. And action is the key to removing the brainblocks from your path to success.

Before You Begin

Before you read further, take a minute and think about your most desired goal, something that you have been yearning after for a long time but haven't yet been able to accomplish. Maybe a stress-free life or a job that you actually love. A talent that you would like to develop, a trip that you have always wanted to take, a canvas waiting for you to paint on, or a parent who is hoping for forgiveness for ugly words uttered in the past. What is the reason these goals have not become reality yet? Which

brainblocks get in your way? Enjoy this journey of discovery and make this the last year you have to set the same New Year's resolution!

BRAINBLOCK #1 Facing the Monster Within

Self-doubt is the brainblock with many names. We call it lack of confidence, insecurity, self-consciousness, shyness, low self-esteem, no faith in oneself, and so on. A rose by any other name would smell as sweet or, in this case, as pungent. Self-doubt is not a rose. It is a fundamental lack of trust in yourself. It is a lack of conviction in your potential to achieve a goal. It is the flipside of confidence. It is fear. Self-doubt is the most fundamental brainblock, because it stops you from getting started. Not knowing what to do is scary. Fear chokes action and makes you feel vulnerable. You start to question your own abilities, your smarts, your strength, and your potential for success. Your focus shifts from what to do to how to protect yourself. Eventually, you get stalled. Self-doubt dictates what you can and cannot do in life. It determines how big your goals are, how high you set the bar, how far you want to reach. It keeps your ambition fenced. It supplies your mind with messages about how little you know, how undeveloped your skills are, how unfit for success you are, how difficult it is to make your dreams come true, how uncomfortable and overwhelmed you feel. Self-doubt is not the same as healthy awareness of your weaknesses. Knowing your strengths and weaknesses is a key component of success. By spotting your weaknesses you find ways to work around them. By doubting your ability, however, you abandon your efforts. Healthy awareness leads to action. Self-doubt leads to inaction. It makes your weaknesses appear enormous and your goals unreachable. It forces you to deprioritize your goals, to put them on the back burner, and to make them secondary.

The Confessional

Peter is vice president of sales for an international luxury brand. He worked very hard to get to that position. He started out as part-time floor salesperson for a multinational clothing company's local store, but fairly quickly he became a lot more than that. A year after he started, he was promoted to assistant manager and after two more years to store manager. Because he was doing so well, he was moved to a more central location and became manager of one of the busiest stores in the downtown area of a big metropolis. Within a year, his store became one of the most profitable in the company's long list of retail shops. The next move was inevitable. Peter was promoted to regional manager, overseeing more than twenty stores. He climbed up the management ladder at unprecedented speed. He was one of those born-to-be-a-manager people. Peter didn't come from a family of CEOs, he didn't have an MBA, and in fact, he didn't even have a bachelor's degree. But he was focused, ambitious, and a hard worker. But with promotions come responsibilities. And one of those responsibilities included participating in upper management meetings, where managers, directors, vice presidents, and CEOs all gather to review, report, and plan the company's future. Each regional manager was expected to give a presentation to the quorum, a brief overview of how the store was doing. This was Peter's first such meeting, and he was very apprehensive. He had no experience with public speaking. When it was his turn to go up, his knees started giving out. He barely made it to the podium. He uttered a couple of incomprehensible sentences, and then silence. He kept looking down and could not articulate a single word. Fraught with embarrassment, he decided that the best thing to do was to go back to his seat, and skip the presentation, leaving the audience puzzled and equally speechless. Days went by. Peter hadn't heard from his bosses, who maybe out of compassion, confusion, or annoyance didn't say anything about the event. But he was having his own self-punishment meetings in his head. He kept hearing a voice, a derisive hiss, repeating in a stern tone: "You can't do the job." Peter was brainblocked. Doubts started filling every curve and corner in his brain. The doubts went beyond fear of public speaking. He started questioning his abilities, his potential for more promotions, and his career choices. The self-doubt was so overwhelming that it started interfering with his work, affecting his relationships, and making his life miserable. Two months later, he resigned, leaving behind him what could be a very successful career. He spent the next twelve months unemployed, uninspired, and scared about his future.

That's self-doubt. Spotting the Brainblock

Each brainblock has a characteristic action. The primary action of self-doubt is hesitating. You are always on the brink of taking action, but you don't take the next step. You are standing at the edge of the diving board contemplating whether you should jump, but you don't. You stop pursuing.

Primary Action: You hesitate

What are the signs of self-doubt?

- 1. YOU BELIEVE THAT**
Your problems are bigger than your ability to solve them
You don't think you have the skills, the talent, the personality, or the energy to deal with challenges.
You have nothing to offer
What you have to say is not valuable, you can't have a meaningful impact on someone's life, you can't make an important contribution to the world, and no one gives two hoots about your message.
You are doing the best you can
You don't take on bigger bites than you can chew, you don't want to choke. You know that many things in life are out of your reach, so you mitigate your expectations of success accordingly.
You have to agree when you want to disagree
Even if you think you are right, you'd rather be perceived as nice and agreeable than confrontational and argumentative.
especially at work
You won't approach your boss for a promotion or a raise. You don't point out problems. You follow all the rules and procedures. You appear to have no initiative, no confidence, no aspiration.
- 2. YOU AVOID**
Trying new things
New people, new environments, and new activities seem like chores.
Social situations
You don't start conversation easily, you speak softly if at all, you avoid eye contact, stare at the floor, and stand in corners, behind pillars, or near the exit. Your favorite moment is when you leave.
The spotlight
It blinds you. Being the center of attention makes you uncomfortable. You will not take the stage, you will not make the toast, and you will not volunteer to sing karaoke.

Feedback

You are

vulnerable to criticism. You don't share opinions, you don't share ideas, you don't share creations, to avoid being criticized. Even if you think that your creations are fabulous, when it's time to show the world, you would rather hide them in the closet. And also big life changes: You are very sluggish at achieving goals like quitting a job you don't like, pursuing a new career path, going back to school to study something you like, moving to a new town, buying a house, breaking up, getting married, having children.³ YOU CRAVE
Security: You'd rather stay in your comfort zone: the comfort of your own home, the company of close family and friends, and the ease of your familiar routines.