

Exploring how we can master ourselves by looking at how authors and experts say it is possible with your host Suswati Basu.

Intro music

Welcome to season 3 episode 103 of How To Be...with me Suswati as your timid presenter, guiding you through life's tricky topics and skills by reading through the best books out there. I can't quite believe this is the last episode of the season after being on the road for most of 2023. We hope you've found it useful and informative so far.

So our final episode of the season takes into account the new year, and setting goals in motion. But this can require an important ingredient - clarity. The way you think can influence your emotions, and your emotions can shape your approach to life. By clearing your mind of unwanted thoughts, you can better manage everyday challenges both in the short term and over the course of your life.

So how do we achieve clarity?

Here is Dr Hafeez Ahmed, who is a married dentist with three kids, former whistleblower, survivor of CSE, and author of "The Philosophy Fridge" on his thoughts.

DR HAFEEZ AHMED: This crazy world, addicted to high speed everything, I make a conscious effort to prevent my mind from running away. I do it by thinking in a way that allows me to see two to three steps ahead of the one I'm taking. I live in the hope that this practical approach will also reduce the rate at which my mind degenerates.

(Back to host)

Our first book is from Jamie Smart, who is a Sunday Times bestselling author, educator, speaker and coach who presents regularly at major conferences worldwide. Smart has been a keynote speaker at conferences for organisations ranging from the NATO Defense College to the mental health charity, Rethink and the Council of the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries. His corporate clients range from household names like Hewlett Packard to The Specialist Works, an SME ranked as one of the Sunday Times's 100 Best Small Companies to Work For. He has appeared on Sky TV and on the BBC, as well as in numerous publications including The Times, The Daily Telegraph, The Huffington Post and Psychologies Magazine. He is also the author of the books RESULTS: Think Less, Achieve More, The Little Book of Clarity and The Little Book of Results. We're talking about his book Clarity: Clear Mind, Better Performance, Bigger Results. It was great speaking with Smart, hence here is a snippet of our chat, but find the full interview on www.howtobe247.com or on the YouTube channel.

JAMIE SMART: It's funny, I think we can be less or more clear from one day to the next or from 1 hour to the next, but it's interesting. What I opened my book clarity with is a quote from Herbert Simon, who said, what information consumes is rather obvious. It consumes the

attention of its recipients. And we're inundated with information through everything from social media to Netflix to the Internet to artificial intelligence or what have you, which has all kinds of benefits, right? Like, there's all kinds of good things about it, but there's a meme, which is that data is the new oil. That data is the most precious substance on the planet. But my sense is actually that attention is the most precious substance on the planet. It's not a substance, but the most precious commodity on the planet. So that's what all the social media apps are fighting for, your attention. And if you stop and think about it, your attention is what your moment to moment experience is made of. And so your experience of life is a function of your attention and what you're doing with it. And so I think it's why clarity is, for many people, harder to find than ever, because we've got all these calls on it. Plus the world is changing very rapidly, which gives us lots we can be thinking about and that sort of thing. But also, we've been living in a mediaeval misunderstanding of how our minds work, and that puts stuff on our minds. So we've got a whole bunch of things that are contributing to it. But fortunately, there's a very, very simple answer to it. Psychology is a very new field, right? Like, it's sort of right at the beginning, but as a field, it's in its pre paradigm phase. So it's why psychology isn't considered to be a hard science, like physics or chemistry or something like that, because the principles that underpin it haven't yet been widely recognized, and that sort of thing. William James, the godfather of psychology, said, if principles for psychology are ever discovered, it'll be the greatest innovation since fire, since man discovered fire. Well, it looks to me like the principles behind psychology have been discovered, but, understanding of those principles is not widely distributed at the moment. Well, I think it's for the same reason that people used to think that the sun went round the earth because it looks like it does, right? Like, it's a phenomenon called hedonic forecasting. And as human beings, we believe that we're very good at predicting how we'll feel in future scenarios, but it turns out we're rubbish at it. We're not good at it at all. And so, if you ask almost anyone in our society, would you like to have a big bag of money? Would you like to win the lottery? That sort of thing. Most people are like, yeah, I'd love that. Now, even though we know that that's not going to make us happy, it might solve some problems, there are some practical purposes to it. But we know that if being wealthy would make you happy, then OK magazines would be full of happy people with stable relationships, low therapy bills, no drug problems, all that sort of stuff. But the truth of the matter is, there's no proof against that. And it's because we are confused about how our experience is created. See, it seems to us like we're looking out through little windows in our head at a world out there. That's how it looks. That's how it looks to me. Right. But what's actually going on is data is pouring in through our senses, and then our deeper psychological and neurological properties are going, what must be out there for me to be receiving this data? And then our psychologies literally hallucinate a 3D Kind of virtual reality. we relate to it as though it's an actual reality, which is useful for practical purposes. But then we can do the whole thing. I'll be happy when things happen. There's actually this historian in my book, clarity, about a fellow called Carl, who I was working with. And Carl, he had for years had a dream of getting a Mazda sports car, this Mazda Mx five. And he was sure that once he had it, he would be happy, and that would be it. He got it. And within a couple of weeks, he was like, oh, man, it didn't work. I guess I needed a Ferrari. So I had a chat with him about this very thing, and he had an insight. He suddenly realised, oh, you've been looking outside of you for something that can only come from within you. And it totally changed the game for him. And that was kind of the first insight I had into this, as I realised, oh, you've been looking outside of you

for something that can only ever be found within. Now, I'm not talking about stuff like, I don't know, phones or shoes or cars or houses. Obviously, the world is a good place to get those. But the sense of happiness, peace of mind, well being, security, calm, resilience, all of those are innate qualities they're built in. Happiness is so simple, a baby can do it. Babies aren't born needing therapy. And the only reason babies are being turned into mentally ill teenagers and adults is because they're being taught things that aren't true, taught things about themselves, about what they're capable of, what they're not capable of and how their minds work and those misunderstandings that they're having layered onto them of literally making them sick. Well, give me a simple example. I bet everyone who's listening either had or knows a kid who had a teddy bear when they're growing up. A teddy bear or security blanket, something like that. The reason we have those transitional objects as little children is because the adults in the room know that the child is going to have a feeling of comfort and security and peace and well being, and they're going to attribute it to the teddy bear or the blanket or whatever. But that's a trick of the mind, right? Like the teddy bear or the blanket, the teddy bear is full of stuffing. It can't give the child a feeling. That feeling is going to come from within the child 100% of the time, 0% of it comes from the teddy bear. And, we know that as adults, we can see, yeah, obviously that's what's going on. But then all too often we think it works differently with the adult teddy bears, of jobs or partners or achievements or objectives, or physical health or social status or money in the bank or whatever. And we genuinely believe, just like the little child genuinely believes, that their peace and well being is coming from the bear. As adults, we genuinely believe that our peace, well being, security is coming from the job, the money, the relationship. When all the while it's coming from the other direction. It's coming from inside, coming from inside you. That's where it's always come from. So this is kind of a bold statement I'm making. I'm not saying anyone should take my word for it. It's worth testing it out in your own life, and seeing what happens. My assertion is that every beautiful feeling you've ever experienced is coming from within you. You have an innate capacity for clarity. And by clarity I mean all the different elements that come to us when we've got a clear mind, including love and connection, peace and well being, security, creativity, all that sort of stuff. We have that innate capacity. The only thing that ever gets in the way of it is what I call contaminated thinking arising from what I call the outside in misunderstanding the mistaken belief that we're feeling something other than the moment. Like our experience of life is being created from the inside out, real time, 100% of the time. It's kind of wild to think that it doesn't look like that, right? It looks like we're looking out through our eyes and walking around in a world that's already there. And for practical purposes it is. But our experience of it is being created real time in this hot second. And when we catch a glimpse of that, it simplifies everything. And, when we don't know that, we can genuinely feel like our experience is being created from out there and our heads fill up with contaminated thinking. But the moment you see that, the moment you realise where your experience is coming from, it brings you back into the moment and allows you to do what makes sense. It's kind of the same in every field of high performance. When you've got nothing on your mind, you're free to give your best, whether it's athletes or musicians or dancers or creatives. Everyone always says the same thing when they're not thinking about it. When they're in the zone and they're in flow, that's when they give their best. So, yeah, that's what the clarity equation is, which is clarity equals capacity minus contamination. You have an innate capacity for all these qualities. And the power

is in realising. You don't experience that clarity by doing something. It's about what you're not doing when you're not, caught up in contaminated thinking that clarity can come to the surface.

(Back to host)

"Clarity" by Jamie Smart is a book that delves deep into the power of understanding the inner workings of our minds and how it can transform our lives. Smart shares his insights with various individuals, from business leaders to everyday people, emphasising that clarity is not something we need to chase after – it's already within us.

Imagine your mind as a pool of muddy water, and clarity as the clear water beneath the surface. As the sediment settles, clarity naturally emerges, providing answers and insights for any challenge. It's the secret sauce that powers exceptional individuals, unleashing qualities like resilience, creativity, and motivation.

Smart aims to debunk misconceptions and help readers tap into their own wellspring of clarity. He introduces the concept of subtractive psychology, which consists of simple yet potent principles that clear the mind and unlock latent abilities. These principles lead to effortlessly clear thinking, enhanced decision-making, improved performance, and a more fulfilling life.

In today's chaotic and uncertain world, clarity is our lifeline. It's the key to addressing pressing issues and building a sustainable future. Despite the challenges we face, clarity is not scarce; it's already within us, waiting to be discovered.

"Misunderstanding: The Hidden Trap" is a section of the book where Smart shares his personal experiences with addiction and recovery. However, the real revelation comes when he uncovers a subtler and more pervasive addiction that plagues modern culture – the "hidden hamster wheel." This addiction stems from the common belief that our core emotional states depend on external circumstances or visible solutions. Smart argues that this belief is deeply ingrained in society and leads us to chase external goals, thinking they will bring lasting fulfilment.

To illustrate this point, he presents historical misconceptions, like the miasma theory, which had catastrophic consequences. The core message is that our clarity, well-being, and core emotional states don't come from external circumstances; they originate within us.

The book encourages readers to reflect on moments when they fell into the "I'll be happy when..." trap, where they overestimated the impact of external events on their happiness. Smart's journey from addiction to clarity serves as a testament to the power of understanding this hidden trap, leading to greater clarity, reduced stress, improved relationships, enhanced creativity, and overall well-being.

"The Power of Insight" highlights the transformative potential of realisations and insights over intellectual understanding. Smart recalls a coaching experience where he realised his

inadequate listening skills and points out that traditional learning methods focus on intellectual understanding and information accumulation, hindering real insight.

The book introduces the distinction between "reading for information" and "reading for insight." Reading for information involves analysing and categorising new information, while reading for insight creates space for intuitive understanding to emerge. This type of understanding is immediate, motivating, personalised, adaptive, and enduring.

Smart encourages readers to read with an open mind, allowing space for insightful realisations. He emphasises that insightful understanding aligns with reality and can drive meaningful changes in behaviour. It's like knowing one's own folly and choosing to cease the pursuit. This insightful understanding leads to natural motivation and personalised guidance for change, unlike intellectual understanding, which often remains inert until acted upon.

The book asserts that realisations have the power to bring clarity and facilitate personal growth, advocating for embracing insightful understanding as a catalyst for transformative change.

"How Perception Is Created" delves into the idea that our perception of reality is a construct of our minds rather than a direct reflection of external stimuli. Smart introduces the analogy of dreams in the movie "Inception" to illustrate that our waking experience is also generated by our minds, utilising sensory data.

He discusses perceptual adaptation experiments conducted by George Stratton in the 1890s, where wearing inversion glasses initially turned his perception of the world upside down. Over time, his perception corrected itself, revealing the mind's role in shaping reality.

Smart encourages readers to contemplate their surroundings and acknowledge that their entire experience of objects and sensory input is a product of their consciousness. Our perception is likened to wearing virtual reality goggles.

The concept of thought as the "reality principle" is introduced, suggesting that we create our unique experiential reality using thought. While brain science plays a role in perception, it is thought that ultimately constructs our subjective experience.

The book emphasises that people have the power to think and experience any perception, leading to individualised realities. It stresses that 100% of our experience is mind-made, citing examples of how people can perceive different realities in the same situation based on their thoughts. Smart highlights the importance of understanding the role of thought in shaping our reality and its connection to achieving clarity.

"The Power of Principles" discusses the profound impact of understanding the principles that govern our perception and experience of reality. It begins with a quote by Alan Alan, an escapologist and illusionist, highlighting the art of misdirection in creating thoughts in spectators' minds.

Smart explores the concept of happiness and well-being, emphasising that these feelings do not depend on external circumstances but are internally generated. It introduces the distinction between the "inside-out" and "outside-in" perspectives, clarifying that our experience is always created from within, shaped by the principle of THOUGHT.

He provides historical examples of misperceptions, such as the belief in a flat Earth and a geocentric universe, to illustrate how our experience can be deceiving.

Two common attribution mistakes are discussed: attributing negative emotions to external factors and positive emotions to external achievements. It emphasises that all feelings are THOUGHT-generated and originate within the individual.

The author introduces the three formless principles behind clarity: THOUGHT (the reality principle), CONSCIOUSNESS (the experience principle), and MIND (the power principle). These principles are described as the source of 100% of our experience, creating our perception of reality from within.

The book highlights the importance of understanding these principles, comparing them to principles of flight that revolutionised aviation. It explains that grasping these principles leads to clarity of thought and dispels the outside-in misunderstanding.

He presents seven deep drivers of clarity: Clarity, Direction, Resilience, Creativity, Connection, Authenticity, and Intuition. These drivers underlie individual and business success, and understanding the principles behind them provides leverage for personal and professional growth.

Smart concludes by emphasising that clarity, well-being, and inner security are our natural states and can be accessed by aligning with the principles behind clarity. He also mentions the context-sensitivity of the mind and the continuous opportunity for adjustment and learning.

"The Psychological Immune System" delves into the role of thought in shaping our emotional experiences. It begins with a quote by Gregory Bateson, highlighting the disconnect between how nature operates and human thought processes. The author introduces the idea that people often mistake their emotional responses for external causes when, in fact, they are feeling their own thoughts.

Smart highlights that individuals are poor at predicting their reactions to imagined scenarios, attributing emotional responses to situations rather than recognizing them as thought-generated. He draws parallels between our psychological experiences and the body's immune system, both designed to maintain health and well-being.

He compares visible thoughts to the tip of an iceberg, with most of our thinking remaining invisible. He then clarifies that feelings are the visible face of our total thinking and discusses how misunderstanding this leads to mental clutter and decreased clarity.

Smart delves deep into the inside-out understanding of reality, emphasising that our experience of the world is created from within us, rather than being imposed by external circumstances.

Fear is explained as a survival signal that can be misattributed to situations like flying, highlighting the importance of realising that feelings stem from thought. Smart illustrates this with examples of disasters where early warning signs were ignored, emphasising the need for insightful understanding in everyday life.

Analogies like the pain withdrawal reflex and children's mental resilience demonstrate how our psychological immune system operates naturally but can be conditioned as we grow older. Smart introduces the concept of waking up from conditioned thinking through realisation and insightful understanding.

He likens the process to rumble strips on a road, where recognizing that feelings come from thought is the beginning of the psychological immune system's self-correction process. He reassures readers that everyone possesses this innate ability.

The book challenges the misconception that our thoughts possess material-world qualities and introduces Leonard Orr's idea of the mind having two functions, a thinker and a prover. This distinction underscores how thoughts are malleable and subject to change, debunking phrases like "deep-rooted issues" and "big problems."

Smart further explores why people become entrapped by habitual thinking, highlighting how conditioning paves over their innate self-correcting mental processes. He encourages readers to realise the illusory nature of thought and suggests that contaminated thinking is the primary obstacle to clarity, security, and peace of mind.

The author also discusses the relationship between thought, stress, and clarity, emphasising that everything in our experience is created by thought. Stress arises from the mistaken belief that our feelings come from external factors when, in reality, they arise from our thoughts in the moment.

The solution to stress is presented as gaining an insightful understanding of the inside-out nature of life, leading to a reduction in stress levels and a different response to previously stress-inducing situations. Smart challenges conventional psychological paradigms and offers an alternative perspective on addressing mental health and life's challenges.

He then delves into the concept of clarity and its connection to the understanding of thought and perception. Smart uses analogies like the Wizard of Oz and early reactions to film to illustrate how people often respond to illusions as if they were real. He introduces four levels of

understanding, where Level 4 involves realising that thought creates our experience through the principles of MIND, THOUGHT, and CONSCIOUSNESS.

The comparison between understanding the nature of film and thought illustrates how insight can change one's perception and response to experiences, representing a new paradigm in psychology with transformative possibilities.

Smart explores the innate clarity and peace of mind that exist within every person, emphasising that our understanding of how life works has a significant impact on our experiences and results. The analogy of a gyroscope illustrates the mind's self-correcting nature, constantly gravitating towards clarity and well-being.

The author also delves into the concept of creativity and disruptive innovation, highlighting the importance of looking beyond the known and into the unknown for fresh ideas and breakthroughs. He encourages readers to embrace the unknown as a rich source of creative potential and highlights the clarity and peace of mind that come with fresh insights from this realm of thinking.

The book discusses the concept of authenticity and the true identity of individuals, emphasising that people are connected to a formless, intelligent energy behind life. Recognizing this essence can lead to security, well-being, peace, joy, and happiness.

Smart suggests that individuals can align themselves with this deeper understanding to navigate life and have a more fulfilling experience. He underscores the idea that people are already what they have been searching for and encourages readers to relax, allow wisdom to guide them, and stay open to the unexpected emergence of authentic desires.

Being present is described as paying attention to the current moment, free from the distractions of contaminated thinking. Smart illustrates how contaminated thinking can lead to dissatisfaction even in favourable circumstances and how presence can turn seemingly boring situations into rich and fulfilling experiences.

The book emphasises that being present aligns us with reality, reduces wasted time in insecure thinking, enhances decision-making, productivity, and overall well-being. It also suggests that many problems are a result of contaminated thinking and that being present helps people see reality more clearly.

Smart explores the concept of resilience and the idea that clarity, insight, and peace of mind are always within reach, even when problems seem overwhelming. As clarity of understanding deepens, problems often appear different, solutions become apparent, and creativity and resilience emerge.

He encourages readers to recognize the power of their innate clarity and well-being and to understand that life is not a series of problems but a mystery to be experienced. By awakening

to their true nature and the principles behind life, individuals can live with more clarity, insight, and a deeper sense of well-being.

The book also delves into the concept of connection and relationships, emphasizing that everything is connected because everything is made of energy. Contaminated thinking creates the illusion of separation, leading to feelings of loneliness and conflict.

It highlights the value of connection, intimacy, and love in human relationships, as well as their natural and fulfilling nature. Smart recommends deep listening and allowing a connection to develop, leading to profound and creative conversations.

Using examples like the London riots, the book suggests that neediness, greed, anxiety, stress, anger, resentment, and a lack of wisdom are all symptoms of contaminated thinking resulting from the "outside-in misunderstanding." Smart argues that as people begin to understand the inside-out nature of life, they can naturally live from a more profound and fulfilling experience.

He also acknowledges that life has its challenges but believes that having clarity and wisdom about the inside-out nature of reality can provide resilience and the ability to make a positive difference in one's life and the lives of others.

Smart discusses the concept of a rise in consciousness as a form of "penicillin for the mind." He draws an analogy between the infinite elevator of consciousness and how it can lead to an increase in clarity of understanding, providing peace, perspective, and greater mental clarity.

He suggests that a rise in consciousness can transform the way individuals relate to their thoughts and eliminate contaminated thinking. He then explains that understanding orientation, focusing on understanding how life works, can be more effective than achievement obsession, which is solely goal-oriented.

The author emphasises that this shift in perspective can lead to a decrease in the intensity of perceived problems and a more accepting attitude toward weaknesses and imperfections, ultimately guiding individuals to live a more fulfilling life.

Smart discusses the idea of "doing nothing" as a means to achieve greater clarity and understanding. He distinguishes between misguided action, driven by the belief that it will fulfil desires or prevent negative feelings, and inspired action, guided by an inside-out understanding.

Aside from this, Smart challenges conventional approaches to leadership development, happiness, and mental health, advocating for a shift in perspective that can lead to more effective and impactful results.

He distinguishes between misguided action, driven by external desires and fear of negative feelings, and inspired action, guided by an inside-out understanding. This shift in perspective

encourages individuals to focus on understanding the principles behind clarity and looking inward for insight into life, actions, and well-being.

Smart highlights the shortage of effective leaders despite numerous leadership programs, attributing this to a misunderstanding of leadership qualities. He identifies leadership as an innate capacity buried beneath layers of contaminated thinking and suggests that everyone can awaken and nurture their leadership potential through increased clarity of understanding.

The author underscores the importance of understanding the inside-out nature of happiness, emphasising that happiness and well-being are already within us, not dependent on external circumstances. Shifting from an "outside-in" to an "inside-out" perspective allows for a deeper experience of life, regardless of external factors.

Gratitude, appreciation, and insights into the principles behind clarity are highlighted as keys to a richer life experience. Smart draws parallels between these principles and the universality of gravity, suggesting their transformative potential for individuals and businesses in an evolving world.

The book explores the transition from the Information Revolution to the "fourth wave" or "THOUGHT revolution," characterised by complexity and uncertainty. Smart identifies the need for clarity, wisdom, and presence to navigate these challenges effectively.

Early signs of the fourth wave include the rise of psychology, emotional intelligence, and authenticity in business. Understanding the nature of THOUGHT is deemed fundamental to this new era, where clarity of thought and understanding are paramount.

The emergence of the "experience economy" is discussed, highlighting the role of clarity in enhancing individual experiences. Smart suggests that businesses and individuals prioritising clarity will thrive in this evolving landscape.

Concerns about individuality and personality are addressed, with reassurance that increased clarity and well-being do not diminish individuality but lead to greater courage and wisdom.

Smart emphasises the profound shift from an outside-in misunderstanding of reality to the inside-out understanding. He draws parallels between personal transformation and the metamorphosis of a caterpillar into a butterfly, highlighting the importance of increasing clarity of understanding for personal growth and compassionate perspectives.

The idea of living in unique, thought-generated experiential realities is explored, with the potential for positive change through deeper insights. Smart introduces the network effect, envisioning a world where everyone operates from a place of clarity and wisdom.

In our final book, *The Art Of Thinking Clearly* by Rolf Dobelli, who is a writer and entrepreneur with a PhD in philosophy, as well as the founder of Zurich.Minds, a community of high-profile thinkers. Here he is speaking at the DLD Conference.

ROLF DOBELLI: Take a million apes, a million monkeys, and let them predict the stock market. Will the Dow Jones rise or fall next week? They have two buttons. If they press on the left side of the button, they have the opinion that the stock market is going to sink. If they press on the right side of the button, they think the stock market is going to rise. After a week, you check what the Dow Jones was doing, and roughly half of the monkeys will have been right, and half of the monkeys will have been wrong. So you sent the ones home that were wrong. You continue with the ones that were right. Again, you ask them the remaining ones, will the Dow Jones rise or fall next week? Again, they will vote with their buttons, and half of those will be right. Half of those will be wrong. You sent the ones home, that was wrong. You continue with the ones that were right, and you do this for week 3456 and so on. And after about 20 weeks, you will have one monkey that was consistently right the whole time. He predicted the Dow Jones without fail. And this, of course, is the success monkey. If he had, that's a better performance than any Wall street trader has. And if he had played with real money, he would be a billionaire right now. And you know what's going to happen to this success monkey? The media is going to swoop in. They will analyse his every move. They will check, when does he get up? How much sleep does he need? How does he take showers? Does he eat one banana or three bananas? In the morning, they will look at his parents. What kind of education did he have? What kind of friends does he have? They will interview his friends, his parents, and write about this. And, of course, nothing that's written is a lie. Everything is there. He had that performance. It was a stellar performance on the stock market. And he has these little quirks that he has. And after a year, you go to a bookstore, and you walk in there and you see a shelf full of books dedicated to the monkey's success. You'll have titles like the seven habits of highly effective monkeys, or from good monkey to great monkey. And that's the outcome bias. That's actually a fallacy we fall into, and that's called the outcome bias. We look at the outcome, but we don't see the process by which this outcome came about. And that's a mistake we often fall into when we look at the world.

(Back to host)

Human beings often exhibit a common bias known as overconfidence, where we tend to overestimate our abilities and attributes in various aspects of life. This phenomenon is widespread and affects most people, even those who believe they have a realistic understanding of their capabilities. Research indicates that individuals tend to view themselves through rose-tinted glasses.

Examples of overconfidence include surveys revealing that a significant majority of people believe they are above-average lovers, above-average drivers, or exceptionally skilled in their professions, despite statistical probabilities suggesting otherwise. Moreover, individuals often attribute their successes to their own abilities while attributing failures to external factors, a tendency known as the self-serving bias.

To counter this bias, it is advisable to seek candid feedback from honest friends or colleagues to gain a more accurate perspective on one's strengths and weaknesses. Recognizing our natural inclination to overestimate ourselves can lead to better self-awareness and more realistic self-assessment.

In life, our control and predictability are often less than we believe. This is exemplified by the phenomenon of the illusion of control, where people think they can influence outcomes that are actually beyond their control. For instance, at a casino, gamblers may throw dice harder or gentler based on their desired outcome, even though it has no real impact.

The illusion of control provides hope and resilience in the face of life's challenges. In an experiment, participants endured more pain when they had a placebo "panic" button, believing they had control, even though it had no function. This concept extends to everyday life, where "placebo buttons" exist, such as crosswalk buttons and elevator door buttons that often don't affect the situation.

Additionally, people tend to be overly confident in their predictive abilities. A ten-year study found that so-called experts' predictions were only slightly better than random guesses. Thus, it's essential to be critical of predictions and focus on influencing the few things that truly matter and are within our control.

Social proof is a psychological phenomenon that drives us to conform to the behaviour of a group to avoid exclusion. This instinct has deep evolutionary roots; our ancestors relied on copying group behaviour for survival. For instance, if your hunter-gatherer friends suddenly started running, following them without questioning ensured you didn't become a predator's meal. This herd instinct remains in us today.

Social proof extends beyond actions; it influences our beliefs. The more people adopt an idea, the more credible it seems. This phenomenon, known as groupthink, explains how individuals may change their opinions to maintain group cohesion, even if they have reservations.

A real-world example of this is the downfall of Swissair, where a consensus-driven mindset ignored rational concerns, ultimately leading to their financial demise. Social proof impacts various aspects of our lives, from fashion trends to stock market behaviour, highlighting the power of conformity in our decision-making processes.

Confirmation bias is a common cognitive bias where we interpret new information to align with our existing beliefs and self-image. Many people consider themselves good judges of character, but this confidence often stems from this bias. This tendency is so pervasive that it's often called "the mother of all misconceptions."

For instance, when we seek information online or from news sources, we tend to favour those that align with our values, creating echo chambers of like-minded individuals. Confirmation bias

also influences how we perceive external feedback, accepting information that matches our self-image and filtering out contradictory input.

An example of this bias is demonstrated through the Forer effect, where psychologist Bertram Forer crafted fake personalised personality readings from astrology columns, and individuals rated them as highly accurate. This study revealed our inclination to interpret information to fit our self-image.

To counter confirmation bias, it's crucial to actively seek contrary opinions and evidence, promoting more balanced and informed convictions.

Our perception of value is often influenced by comparisons and scarcity. People tend to assess the worth of something based on its availability and by comparing it to other options. For example, going to a club with an extremely attractive friend can make you appear less attractive by comparison.

This tendency to rely on comparisons is illustrated by the contrast-effect, where the perception of something can be greatly influenced by what came before. For instance, placing one hand in ice water and then both hands in lukewarm water makes the lukewarm water feel extremely hot by contrast. This principle also explains why discounts are effective – we perceive a reduced price as a better value, even if the original price doesn't matter.

Additionally, scarcity can affect our judgement. In an experiment with cookies, those who received only two cookies rated them more highly than those who got a whole box. Businesses leverage this by creating a sense of scarcity to boost sales.

To make better choices, it's recommended to assess the value of something based solely on its costs and benefits, bypassing the influence of comparisons and scarcity.

Our tendency to remember compelling stories over mundane details is explored in this text. It highlights how we often struggle to recall a simple shopping list but easily remember intricate plotlines from movies. This phenomenon arises from our need for information to form meaningful stories that make sense to us. In the media, relevant facts are often overshadowed by entertaining narratives.

For instance, when a car drives over a collapsing bridge, more attention is given to the driver than the bridge's construction details. We are also drawn to exotic and exciting stories, even if they are less probable than mundane explanations. This preference for enticing descriptions can lead us to overlook more likely explanations. In fields like medicine, this thinking error can have serious consequences, prompting the motto "When you hear hoofbeats, don't expect a zebra" to remind doctors to investigate the most likely causes first.

Our attention is incredibly selective and limited. We often miss things happening outside our narrow focus. A Harvard study demonstrated this by having subjects count basketball passes in

a video while completely ignoring a person in a gorilla suit walking in, pounding their chest, and leaving. This phenomenon explains why using cellphones while driving is dangerous, as our attention becomes overstretched, making our reaction times slow, similar to being under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

External factors also influence what we focus on. In a sequence of information, we tend to pay more attention to what comes first or last, neglecting the middle. This is known as the primacy effect. For instance, people tend to prefer Allan over Ben in an elevator, even though their descriptions are identical, because first impressions shape our overall assessments.

On the other hand, if impressions were formed in the past, the recency effect takes over, making us remember more recent information better than initial impressions or what's in the middle. For example, we recall the final point of a speech we heard weeks ago better than the beginning or the middle content.

In a world filled with endless choices, making decisions can be overwhelming and exhausting. The abundance of options often leads to decision paralysis, where people struggle to make a choice and may even opt to give up altogether. An experiment in a supermarket demonstrated this paradox of choice, with significantly more jelly being sold when there were fewer options available.

Additionally, excessive decision-making can result in decision fatigue, as demonstrated by a study where individuals had to deliberate between items and then endure an ice-cold water test. Those who engaged in intensive decision-making had less willpower and endured the cold water for a shorter time.

To overcome these challenges, it's essential to recognize that there may not always be a "perfect decision." Instead, embracing a "good" choice rather than constantly seeking the "best" one can alleviate the stress of decision-making and prevent decision fatigue.

The "halo effect" is a psychological phenomenon where a single quality, like beauty, social status, or age, influences our overall judgement of a person. Studies show that attractiveness has a disproportionate impact on how we perceive others, leading us to view good-looking individuals as more pleasant, honest, and intelligent. This effect is widely observed in schools and workplaces, where attractive people tend to have easier professional lives and even receive better grades from teachers unconsciously.

While the halo effect can benefit advertisers, it can also lead to stereotyping when we overly focus on characteristics like nationality, gender, or race. We often use easily identifiable details to form opinions, which can be misleading. For instance, if a new CEO is an attractive female, we might wrongly assume that her looks, rather than her qualifications, played a significant role in her appointment.

Additionally, the "liking bias" makes us more inclined to favour people who are similar to us and who show us affection. Salespeople often use flattery and mirroring techniques to make customers feel liked and comfortable, increasing the likelihood of making a sale.

Our decisions are often more influenced by emotions than rationality. To illustrate this, consider your stance on genetically modified food. A purely rational decision would involve meticulously weighing the pros and cons, multiplying their importance by the probability of occurrence, and comparing the results. However, most people lack the time and energy for such meticulous assessments, relying instead on mental shortcuts guided by emotions.

For instance, when we hear "genetically modified," it triggers emotional reactions that skew our perception of risks and benefits. If our initial judgement is negative, we tend to overestimate risks (e.g., environmental hazards) and underestimate benefits (e.g., pest resistance). Our decisions are thus limited to what comes to mind first, making us puppets to our feelings and hinder rational decision-making, especially in areas that prioritise rationality.

Even financial markets aren't immune to emotional influence. Research shows that daily stock market performance can be swayed by morning sunshine, suggesting that positive emotions triggered by sunlight impact billions of dollars' worth of trades.

To sum up:

"Clarity" by Smart offers a fresh perspective on life, leadership, happiness, and mental health. It advocates for a shift in understanding, emphasising the inside-out nature of our experiences and the transformative power of clarity. The book encourages readers to align with their true nature, embrace new realisations, and contribute to personal and collective evolution.

Dobelli says in "The Art of Thinking Clearly" that human behaviour often involves biases and tendencies that affect our decision-making. We tend to overestimate our abilities, seek information confirming our beliefs, prefer the exotic and attractive, focus on a limited selection of things, and let emotions and social influence guide our decisions. To counteract these biases, seek honest feedback from others about your strengths and weaknesses. Additionally, be wary of "limited time only" offers, as they exploit the fear of missing out, and remember that most things are accessible online, helping you evaluate the product's actual benefits.

It's easy to see how external factors can get in the way of keeping your mind clear when you want to achieve something, so I hope these help.

What do you think? Let us know. Please join in on the conversation by following @howtobe247 on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook, and subscribe to the podcast, which can be found via www.howtobe247.com. Check out all our exclusive unseen bonus material from every single interview, all for a price of a coffee on both Spotify and Patreon under the name Behind the Scenes: Exclusives From the How To Be Books Podcast. All the latest ones are on Spotify while

more than 30 exclusives are on Patreon. We've also launched a shop on Patreon where you can buy one off exclusives. Sign up to be part of the movement.

Please do leave a review if you found this helpful and you want to be featured!

Remember to check out the website! We have listed the top nonfiction books for 2024, as well put out our predictions for the year in publishing. We also spoke to a bunch of financial expert authors who shared their wisdom with us and how to tackle this year amid a cost of living crisis.

As we're off now, please remember to keep following our socials and website for further news and sign up for our newsletter so you know when we're planning to return. It's been an honour being with you this season, so thanks for staying with us.

Before we go here is Mahati Singh, a Tech Recruiter, Career Mentor, Content Creator and Entrepreneur founder of CodiesAlert. She told me that juggling multiple things together can make her performance go down, and brain fog becomes inevitable. So here is what has helped her. Don't forget to listen to our sponsor in the end. See you next season!

MAHI SINGH: Something that has really helped me in performing better at all my tasks is instant walk or on the spot, jumping. So this has really helped me, especially when I know there's an important presentation coming up or there's an important meeting, or there's a task that needs to be done with a lot of focus. I have always taken a quick walk. If not, I just jump on the spot for a few seconds. That has just helped me calm my anxiety. And in case I have any mental fog or brain fog, that has just really helped. And once I do some on spot walking or jumping, I just take a few deep breaths and then I'm all set. I think I'm able to focus for the next few hours without any distractions, without anything. And my performance has been better. And this is something I've been following since the last one year and the results have been amazing.

(Back to host)

Before we go, please check out Zencastr. We do all our interviews with it and it's for free! If you have thought about podcasting before and realised that you need a lot of different tools and services, those days are over. With Zencastr's all-in-one podcasting platform, you can create your podcast all in one place and distribute to Spotify, Apple, and other major destinations.

Go to zencastr.com/pricing and use my code "HowToBeBooks" and you'll get 30 percent off your first month of any Zencastr paid plan.

I want you to have the same easy experiences I do for all my podcasting and content needs. It's time to share your story!