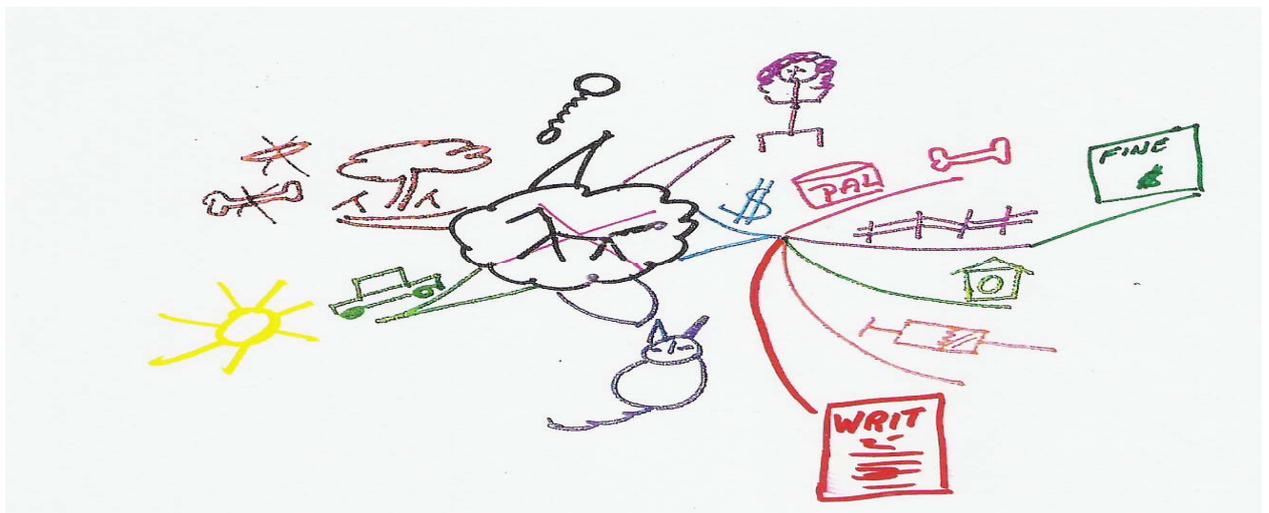


Mind mapping – Now, I’d like to see that!!!!!!

Several years ago, a colleague was attending one of my workshops to provide feedback on my performance and using a mind map to summarise his evaluation. Sitting next to him was an engineer who cornered me at one of the breaks and stated that the guy next to her was drawing these “wankie diagrams” and “to make matter worse he is an engineer”!!!!!!

I have used mind maps for over 10 years and find the practice very beneficial. On one occasion I used it to explore with our elder son, when he was 5 years old, why we shouldn’t get a dog as a pet. It kept him quiet for around one month!!!!!! Now that must be powerful!!!!!!

Mind mapping or radiant thinking is the visual language of our thoughts. Artistic skill is not important - basic doodling, symbol-making and outlining skills are all that is required and this is demonstrated by the following mind map I used to convince our son that getting a dog was not a good idea!



NB So much for artistic talent - notice the stick drawing of a dog with a red line through it in the centre as the starting point, ie no dog!!!!

The mind map vividly illustrated the reasons presented to convince our son. The first main reason is that the dog will cost money (\$). Furthermore, this reason is enlarged on by several factors, such as feeding the dog (PAL & bone); we’d need build a fence around our garden (fence) and if the dog gets out the local Council will fine us (fine); we’d need to build a dog kennel (kennel); the dog will need to visit the vet (needle) and if he attacks someone we could end up in court (writ). Other reasons: we have a cat and usually dogs and cats are not friends (cat); we regularly go on holidays and most places we stay at do not allow pets (car and sun); dogs can make a mess (around tree, burying bones and manure et al); after the novelty wears off, I know who will be taking the dog for a walk (lead); his mother (stick figure) does not like dogs. Afterwards we came to a compromise – once the cat dies, we will get a dog. So he started

investigating ways to kill the cat!!!! Only joking and I do like dogs!!!! Furthermore, his mother does not look like the stick figure in the mind map!!!!

The mind mapping technique can be used in creative thinking, speech preparation, note-taking, strategic planning, decision-making, problem-solving, as memory and review devices, as a communication tool and for training at all levels. Mind mapping has been successfully used from personal problem-solving to Boeing designing an aircraft.

The traditional approach to thinking is best illustrated by note-taking which is linear, usually mono-colour, and with very limited use of symbols like letters, words and numbers. The disadvantages of note-taking are that it obscures key words, is not easy to remember, wastes time, fails to stimulate the mind's creativity and works against the natural processing style of the brain. By contrast, mind mapping uses an additional set of mental tools that are especially powerful for improving memory and creative thinking, such as image, colour, focus, dimension, space, linkages, connections and association or linking. Thus mind maps are often colourful, dramatic, and highly visual in format. In fact, some I have seen are veritable works of art.

As stated by Tony and Barry Buzan in their book (The Mind Map Book) published by BBC, the guidelines for effective mind mapping include using emphasis and association, being clear, developing a personal style and consideration of layout. Expanding on each guideline:

Use emphasis

Always use a central image (focuses eye and brain so that the image triggers association and memory)

Use images throughout your mind map (remember artistic talent is not important)

Use 3 or more colours per central image (colour stimulates memory and creativity)

Use dimensions (3D) in images and around words (stands out and helps memory and communications)

Use variations of size of printing, line and image (this indicates relative importance)

Use organised and appropriate spacing (for clarity and to help with order and structure)

Use Association (important for creativity and memory)

Use arrows when you want to make connections within and across the branch pattern

Use colours

Use codes (helps with connections and saves time)

Be Clear

Use only one word per line

Print all words

Print key words on lines

Make line length equal to word length

Make major branches connect to central image

Connect lines to other lines

Make the central line thicker

Make your boundaries embrace your branch outline

Make and keep images as clear as possible

Keep your paper placed horizontally in front of you

Keep your printing as upright as possible

Develop a Personal Style

Develop clarity of layout

Establish a hierarchy of ideas

Use numerical ordering

Additional Hints for Mind Maps

Break mental blocks

- add blank lines
- ask questions
- add images
- look for associations

Reinforce

- review your mind maps
- do quick mind map checks

Even though there are computer programs that will help you develop mind maps, I still prefer the hand drawn version as it is more personal.

Have a go and give yourself the time to develop you own individual style. Many people are nervous about their artistic talent, but, take it from someone who has little ability in this area, it is not a handicap.

Below is a mind map developed by Tony Buzan that summarises on one page a 260 page book written by John Naisbitt called "Megatrends". The mind map shows a drawing of the book's author in the middle and headings of each chapter branching out from the middle, with the main points of each chapter branching out from there, etc.

Mind maps can be used for any topic. Best of luck and have some fun!!!!

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