Mind Your Mindset

In *Mind Your Mindset: The Science That Shows Success Starts with Your Thinking, authors Michael Hyatt and Megan Hyatt Miller*, present compelling research to call out the benefit AND the limitations of how our brains function. In their words: *Our brains make faulty connections based on prior experience or something we picked up from others along the way. And those faulty connections show up as unhelpful stories and strategies that prevent us from experiencing the results we want.* From there, they offer insights and pathways for how to create narratives that will move us closer to the solutions we seek for the vicissitudes of life.

Check out these **Book Notes** of this well-researched and highly accessible book to see what it has to offer to you and your leadership.

Chuck Olson
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Title: Mind Your Mindset: The Science That Shows Success Starts with Your Thinking

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Book Description:
Do you trust the voice in your head?

Our brains are remarkable. They subconsciously translate the events around us into meaningful storylines that inform what we think and how we live. The problem is, the stories our minds feed us as facts aren't always true.

Worse, these stories turn into false beliefs about others, the world, and ourselves that keep us from our true potential.

These limiting beliefs confront us all. But what if you could harness your brain's operating system to tell a new story? Not just any story. A true story that empowers you to overcome limitations and surpass your goals.

Drawing upon the latest insights in performance psychology, neuroscience, and cognitive science, as well as case studies from their own clients, New York Times bestselling author Michael Hyatt and Megan Hyatt Miller outline a framework anyone can follow to test their own assumptions and start living better, truer stories that shape superior outcomes in business and life.

Book Quotes:
During healthy, normal development, a child learns to successfully live and adapt in the dynamic world of interpersonal relationships and environmental change. All that learning is wired in the brain through countless neural pathways and patterns, which constitute the child's repertoire of skills and abilities…But experiences can be both formative and deformative. Trauma disrupts helpful neural patterns and creates unhelpful ones. Those disruptions produce counterproductive coping strategies and behaviors. LOCATION: 221-224

What I realized in that learning process is that all sorts of challenges people face—in fact, nearly all of them—are essentially (1) based in the brain and (2) evident in the stories we tell ourselves about reality. LOCATION: 235

Our brains make faulty connections based on prior experience or something we picked up from others along the way. And those faulty connections show up as unhelpful stories and strategies that prevent us from experiencing the results we want. LOCATION: 242

Neurofeedback relies on the remarkable ability of the brain to "rewire" itself—what's called neuroplasticity—to develop new and more helpful neural patterns. If trauma junks things up, neurofeedback sorts it out and puts the brain in better shape. LOCATION: 284

Our brain contains a massive network of nerve cells (neurons) connecting and communicating across synapses. Those neural connections both are how we think and shape how we think. Those connections produce memories of the past and predictions of the future; we can think of these memories and predictions as stories. Those stories inform how we see the world and act within it, including how we pursue our goals. LOCATION: 298

In other words, neurons make narratives—and our narratives determine how successful we are in achieving our goals. Storytelling is a function of how our brains conceive and represent reality, and our results depend to a large degree on how good our storytelling is. LOCATION: 302

We are wired both to tell stories and to perform the stories we tell. But that wiring is also where we most often go wrong. How? By accepting and acting on unhelpful stories. The hard part is that this is usually not obvious to us when it would be most helpful to know it's happening. LOCATION: 310

Improving strategy and execution can take you only so far. Once you've optimized your strategy and improved your execution of that strategy, you may still be left with a gap…That's where we get stuck: trying to solve problems in our health, relationships, or workplace by doing things that no longer work, but doing them with more energy and attention—as if oomph and drive is all we're missing…We need to take a step back. Rather than thinking about what we're doing, we need to think about our thinking. We are missing something beyond oomph and drive; we're missing the story we're telling ourselves about the problem itself. LOCATION: 324

Problem Story Strategy LOCATION: 326

Our story about the problem will always determine our strategy and, with it, our results…Then we will be able to expose where our stories are coming from and when they're not serving us well, which provides the chance to tell a different, more empowering narrative. LOCATION: 327-334

If our stories determine our experience of reality, we can improve our reality by improving our stories. And that creates a positive feedback loop that "rewires" our brain, making us stronger, more resilient, and more capable of addressing the choices, changes, and chances of life. LOCATION: 345

The answer to getting unstuck or jumping to the next level is the same: it comes down to the story you're telling yourself about your current reality—and that story is based in your brain. LOCATION: 351

Much of our unhelpful thinking has already been done for us. Our brains are masters at labeling problems, which they do mostly in the vast background of our subconscious minds. As a result, we take most of our thoughts for granted. Our brain presents them to us as settled facts, and we never think more deeply about them—even when we really need to. LOCATION: 367

As psychologist Timothy Wilson says, “We are all observers of our own behavior and draw conclusions about ourselves by watching what we do,” and that includes the stories we tell and enact. So when our stories are leaving us in a rut, we need to rethink our thinking. How? We adopt a different vantage point, examine the stories our brain is telling, and imagine better, more empowering narratives. In this book, we propose a simple three-step method to accomplish this:

- First, identify your problem and your story about it. Improvement begins with awareness.

- Second, interrogate the story. Neurons make narratives, but as we’ve seen they can make faulty stories. We need to separate what’s factual from what’s merely opinion, inference, conjecture, and the like.

- Third, imagine something that works better. Once we’ve exposed our faulty stories, we can use our brain’s natural ability to rewire itself to find new paths and solutions. LOCATION: 375-395

Human beings have an elemental need to establish meaning, to understand and explain why things are the way they are, why we do the things we do, and why other people do the things they do. LOCATION: 490

Concepts are the primary handles we use to get a grip on the world. We form concepts when the synapses in our brain—that is, the connections between our brain cells—link neurons in specific patterns. LOCATION: 512

Our brains tell stories to help us understand what’s happening around us and how to respond. In the simplest terms, our brains identify the cause-and-effect relationship between two or more things. LOCATION: 545

When we ask why something happened or why things are the way they are, we’re acting on a biologically driven, neurologically wired need to understand what’s happening around us. Otherwise, our experiences would seem random, leaving us with no way of knowing how to navigate through life. That’s the Narrator. Its job is to interpret all the raw data of experience and offer it back to us in a way that connects the dots. It provides the explanatory glue that holds it all together. And it’s got a mind of its own. LOCATION: 582

The unconscious is constantly preloading your conscious mind with thoughts and emotions. We don’t know how we thought of them. They’re just there. LOCATION: 610

The Narrator tells us what to do when we’re bored, distracted, elated, angry, sad, frustrated, whatever. LOCATION: 618

Whatever results we’re shooting for in life, the Narrator is present—usually helping but sometimes hurting. The Narrator doesn’t always get it right. Sometimes it’s working against us. LOCATION: 621

The Narrator’s job is to gather all the spotty data we pick up with our senses or learn from other people and stitch it all into some sort of meaningful storyline, something that makes sense of what we know and helps us deal with what we don’t know. LOCATION: 627

The Narrator is a master at labeling problems and recommending solutions. But we shouldn’t always take its interpretations for granted. Especially when they interfere with achieving our goals. LOCATION: 636

Our assumptions and purposes drive our stories, which determines our performance. We’ll cover purposes in the next chapter. For now, let’s dig into assumptions. Where do they come from? It boils down to a simple formulation: assumptions are everything you’ve earned by direct experience or learned through the input of others. LOCATION: 668

All our stories are rooted in experience and stored in our memory. When we recall those memories, it can feel

as though we're reliving them. LOCATION: 678

The hippocampus facilitates two kinds of memory: episodic and semantic. Episodic memory records our memory of events that involved us. It enables us to move through our mental space, not only recalling prior experiences, but also imagining future scenarios, something we'll cover in greater detail in the next chapter…Semantic memory is all about facts, data, objects, and events that don't involve us but which we find significant enough to retain. It's knowing the facts to pass chemistry, the voting record of your congressperson, what the blinking signals on a car mean, or that i comes before e except after c. LOCATION: 696-699

Information that begins as subjective (our experience) can take on the air of objective truth (reality itself). LOCATION: 707

A popular line attributed to motivational speaker Jim Rohn states that you're the average of the five people you spend the most time with. That rings true but doesn't go nearly far enough. In reality, your thoughts, beliefs, behaviors, and even well-being are influenced by a vast network of friends, family, and acquaintances. LOCATION: 740

Our stories are generally consistent with our experience and with the world as we have known it up to now. They make sense to us. They seem true and reliable—right up until we realize they're not. LOCATION: 763

The stories we tell about reality resemble reality, but they are not reality. They are the Narrator's attempt to represent reality to us. Another way of saying this is that stories are not facts by themselves. They are facts plus our interpretations and causal links. LOCATION: 894

Most of the time, our brains do a decent job of representing reality. The brain is capable of painting a pretty solid picture of a tree, for example, or a car, or a person. But as the situation gets more complex, the brain relies more and more heavily on guesswork. That is to say, our brain fills in gaps of what the senses don't pick up directly. LOCATION: 901

Based on everything we've earned and learned, we make decisions about what to do next. And we think we understand what's happening in our own thoughts or the world around us because our brain has provided a plausible storyline—a prediction. But once in a while, our brain gets the prediction wrong. That usually happens when something about the circumstances has changed. LOCATION: 907

What you see, or think you see, or know, or think you know, is not always accurate. And this is where our stories can break down. Our perceptions are imperfect, which is why eyewitnesses will often present different accounts of the same incident. LOCATION: 925

When it comes to mundane experiences like locating your car keys or crossing the street, your brain represents reality quite well. When trying to interpret more complex situations, the brain can come up with an interpretation of the facts that is disastrously wrong. Consider what happens when we try to guess what others are thinking. LOCATION: 931

However, our thoughts about other people's thoughts are always guesses. In more complex situations, they are guesses layered upon guesses. We're guessing what other people think based on what we think they think about what still others are thinking, and so on. With all that speculation, there's a reasonable chance of getting the story wrong. LOCATION: 956

The Narrator can be a helpful guide, but it's not always right. LOCATION: 1020

The Narrator, while usually well intentioned, is not omniscient. It's limited. And sometimes those limitations leave us stranded by the wayside of life or frustrated we can't go further, faster. LOCATION: 1070

"We utter about one metaphor for every ten to twenty-five words, or about six metaphors a minute," says author James Geary, reporting on several studies of language use. Metaphors are shortcuts, and our brains love shortcuts. Without this shorthand way of making connections between concepts, we'd probably spend several hours a day explaining reality to ourselves and others. LOCATION: 1169

We need metaphors and the stories they provide. In fact, metaphors can help you understand problems differently and help you creatively come to new conclusions. But they can also ensure that you misunderstand the situation at hand. LOCATION: 1173

Our unconscious mind is always running, always connecting dots, finding patterns, and helping us answer the what's-next question. LOCATION: 1349

Since our conscious awareness lags behind this unceasing activity of the unconscious mind, we often know things before we can articulate or explain them. We know something is wrong, for instance, when everyone's eyes are looking the wrong direction; it's best to hit the brakes. LOCATION: 1350

Intuition is knowledge you can't quite explain. It is an inclination to trust or distrust a particular story in the absence of demonstrable proof. It's a kind of knowing generated by your brain, just like reasoning, though it's automatic instead of analytic. LOCATION: 1354

To make use of your whole brain, you need to trust your intuition. And to use it wisely, you must understand how it operates so you can easily determine when it's steering you right and when it may be off base. LOCATION: 1392

Intuition and reason are two forms of knowing. Either one can arrive at the right answer. But the best situation is when both are in agreement. LOCATION: 1470

Remember, our stories are formed of what we've earned by direct (but limited) experience or learned indirectly from the (similarly limited) experience of others. Some of that is tested and true. A lot of it's not. But, either way, how we understand and act on those stories is open to interpretation and the needs of the moment or situation. LOCATION: 1605

We simply don't know everything. Despite our best intentions, our stories about the world are often wrong, or at least incomplete. LOCATION: 1633

Likewise, if you want to imagine a new story, you must find a way to break free from your existing thought patterns. Remember the basics of how your brain operates. It contains a massive network of nerve cells (neurons) connecting and communicating across synapses. Those neural connections are both the means by which you think and the shaper of what you think. So if you want to think different thoughts, find a way to get your brain off its familiar pathways to form new neural connections. Once you get off the interstate and take a few back roads, you discover things you'd never see or experience on the main road. Your brain works in much the same way. Force it to think along a different pathway, and it will present you with new thoughts and ideas, which you can use to write a better story with a better outcome. LOCATION: 1755

So the first advice we give in coaching is to practice self-awareness. Like we talked about in chapter 5, one starting point for interrogating your story is to notice your words and your emotions. Take note of how you respond verbally to situations, problems, or suggestions. If your responses include language that is dismissive, negative, or defensive, ask yourself why. Don't be self-critical. Simply follow your thoughts and see where they

lead. LOCATION: 1783

Once you've identified a story that is limiting, the easiest way to replace it is to swap it out for one that is more empowering. LOCATION: 1788

We guide clients and teams with possibility questions. Possibility questions emanate from an imaginative, solutions-oriented mindset. They are a way of developing what psychologist Martin Seligman labeled "learned optimism." LOCATION: 1820

A possibility question is any query that takes you beyond an analysis of the problem to a search for new solutions. While there is no finite list of possibility questions, here are some good examples. What does this make possible? What if I've got it backward? What would it take to accomplish x, y, or z? How can we reframe this? What else could I think? How do I want to show up in this situation? What is likely to happen in twelve months? Three years? How could we change that? Who knows more about this than I do? What would have to be true for that to happen? LOCATION: 1825

Possibility questions allow for exploration and discovery, which lie at the heart of imagination. Questions like these light up new neural pathways in the brain. LOCATION: 1831

To think creatively, we must be willing to ask the questions no one else is willing to ask, propose the ideas others are too timid to voice, or take the actions that frighten others into passivity. This doesn't mean that creative thinkers must be brash or arrogant or eccentric, only that they be brave enough to think new thoughts. That means pushing back on standard explanations, commonly accepted stories, or "commonsense" interpretations of facts. LOCATION: 1842

Imaginative thinking is a painstakingly slow process, and very frustrating. Sometimes it seems that the more we focus on a problem, the harder it is to find a solution. Yet when we take a walk, get a bite to eat, or go to sleep, we find that the elusive answers are right there waiting for us. LOCATION: 2190

We usually think of brainpower as our ability to do intense, focused thinking about an idea or problem. Yet your brain works at the subconscious level too. Because it takes advantage of the vast network of synapses not used for conscious thinking, subconscious thought often provides breakthrough solutions that elude the conscious mind. LOCATION: 2222

If your conscious thoughts are like a hare, quick and deliberate but easily tired, your subconscious thoughts are like a tortoise, slow and plodding but relentlessly effective. LOCATION: 2224

"When your mind is at rest, what it is really doing is bouncing thoughts back and forth," says neuroscientist Nancy Coover Andreasen. "Your association cortices are always running in the background, but when you are not focused on some task—for example, when you are doing something mindless, like driving—that's when your mind is most free to roam. That's why that is when you most actively create new ideas." In the language of computer science, these are the operations your brain runs in the background. LOCATION: 2268

Here's why that works so well. When you are actively thinking about a problem, your executive network calls up the relevant concepts to toy around with. When you switch to default mode, your brain continues that process. But get this: Those concepts, represented by neural dots in your brain, exist in different networks in your default mode! That means your brain is using different pathways to connect the same set of dots. LOCATION: 2276

Free from the single-track thinking of the executive network, the default mode looks for all sorts of solutions that might never occur to your conscious mind. That takes a bit of time, but it's almost certain to produce a

breakthrough if given enough time and space. LOCATION: 2285

To state the obvious, your brain and body are intimately connected. When your body is operating at an optimal level, your brain will too. LOCATION: 2331

Rest, play, and idleness are not unproductive activities in terms of problem-solving. They're vital practices for mental hygiene. They relieve stress, rest your mind, and allow it to operate in its deeper, slower default mode. LOCATION: 2341

We might think of certainty like having all the LEGO bricks in your world glued in place. Every structure, every relationship, every place would be unmoved and unmovable. That would bring with it some degree of reassurance. Institutions would never falter. Relationships would never devolve. Your world would never fall apart. Neither would it change. In a static world, there would be no new possible combinations, no possibility for improvement, no growth. The same would be true of you…Uncertainty is intimidating. It breaks up the bricks, destroying or at least calling into question existing structures. We wake each morning knowing that some corner of our world will be different than it was the day before. Unsettling as it may be, uncertainty is not the enemy, for it points not to chaos but to possibility. LOCATION: 2482-2487

Embrace the mindset of possibility. Accept the challenge of uncertainty. Resist the fear that would keep you passive. Commit yourself to a life of transformation and contribution. You will find yourself free to become a different person than you were yesterday, and to achieve things tomorrow that seem impossible today. There is no telling where that story may lead. LOCATION: 2529

Note: should you wish to find any quote in its original context, the Kindle "location" is provided after each entry.