



## Scatterbrain: How the Mind's Mistakes Make Humans Creative, Innovative, and Successful

**Henning Beck**

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One might assume that training brains towards perfection is a worthy goal, but German neuroscientist Henning Beck's *Scatterbrain* promotes a different perspective. The book refutes received opinions about the brain's apparent inefficiencies, arguing that "these supposed weaknesses and imperfections are what make your brain so adaptable, dynamic, and creative."

Beck takes what look like intractable problems and finds the upside. Addressing forgetfulness, he asserts that unremembered information is not lost forever, just held in storage to be combined with other data and retrieved later. Regarding perspective around the passage of time, the book notes that intense or unusual experiences stand out in the memory, while routine ones are compressed.

As shown here, the human brain is always busy categorizing information, putting it into context, and making connections across time while filtering out what's unimportant in the short term. By taking occasional breaks and mixing up workloads, the book says, one can avoid distractions and become open to synthesizing information in new ways.

Chapters on mathematics, motivation, decision making, and creativity versus intelligence engage with a number of fields. Controversial subjects, including false memories and prejudice, come up for discussion, too. This is no dry reporting of facts, but a lively text full of exclamations, rhetorical questions, and conversational language. The book's colloquial English is occasionally shaky, as when describing the brain's behavior as "really annoying and dumb."

Relatable case studies share space with tests that can be used to assess short-term memory and attention, and everyday mysteries, such as why the mind goes blank under stress or how daydreaming can be fruitful, are also addressed. *Scatterbrain* is a fascinating work of popular neuroscience.

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