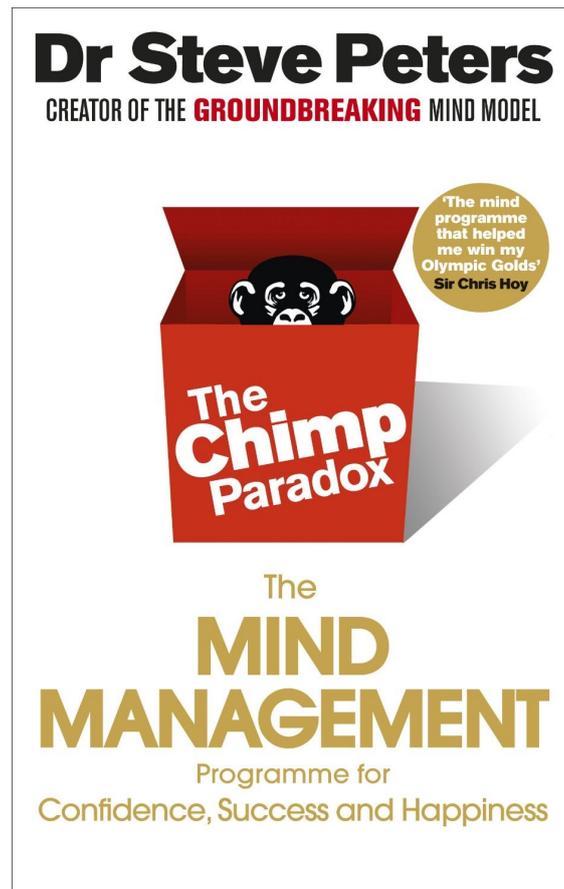




The Chimp Paradox

The Mind Management Programme for Confidence, Success and Happiness

by Dr. Steve Peters



THE BOOK IN A NUTSHELL

Metaphorically we have three 'operating systems' inside of us: The Chimp (i.e. the uncontrolled, emotional child within us), The 'Human' (i.e. the rational adult) and the Computer (i.e. the unconscious part that runs most of our activities).

To live happier and more successful lives, we need to better manage our Chimp. We do this by 1) nurturing and negotiating with the Chimp and 2) recognising the Gremlins (i.e. our limiting beliefs) and then replacing them with more empowering beliefs.

Paul Arnold Consulting
PLANNING - FACILITATION - TRAINING
27 Kingsfield Avenue, Harrow, Mddx HA2 6AQ
07768 775988 paul_arnold@me.com



THE BOOK

The first section is about the principles of the three parts of us (Human, Chimp and Computer). The second half explores the application of these principles to activities such as managing stress, relationships and being successful.

The author uses a metaphor of the solar system, with moons and planets. For simplicity I have left this out.

PART 1 THE INNER MIND EXPLORED

The psychological mind

The Human brain is made up of seven brains working together (Parietal, Frontal, Limbic, Occipital, Temporal, Brain stem and Cerebellum). This book focuses on just three - Parietal (The Computer), Frontal (Human), and the Limbic (Chimp). Although they try to work together they can clash (and often the Chimp will win).

The Chimp

The Chimp is the emotional machine inside of us. Emotions heavily control our decision-making (sometimes for the worse). Having a Chimp is like having a dog (or a child). You are not directly in total control of its behaviour but you are responsible for its behaviour. As such it is therefore necessary to learn how to manage your Chimp. If not, then the Chimp will run your life (and this can often lead to some poor quality of life decisions and behaviours).

The Chimp operates very differently from the Human inside.

The Chimp processes information primarily through feelings and impressions (and is irrational in its decision-making, being more driven by emotions than logic). The Chimp quickly assesses a situation, rapidly reaching (sometimes false) judgements and conclusions. Chimp tends to be more adamant that it is right and so less able to be swayed from its belief. Once it's made up its mind it searches the data to support its point of view and rejects conflicting information. The Chimp tends to be quite black or white in its opinions (so can be quite harsh and unforgiving). It is also quite blinkered in its options of response (usually jumping to some previously run default model of behaviour). The Chimp over-exaggerates things and uses highly inflated, catastrophic language. The Chimp reacts impetuously, with little regard to the longer term consequences of its actions.

The Chimp is sensitive, neurotic and paranoid. The Chimp loves external praise to validate its self esteem. Conversely it feels easily judged and hates criticism. The Chimp senses danger everywhere and so will try to protect itself. It will often protect itself by shifting responsibility and apportioning blame elsewhere. Thus the Chimp can often mis-interpret an innocent comment as being critical, leading the Chimp to 'bite back'. Likewise, the Chimp is



critical, intolerant, impatient and unforgiving in its judgements of others (leading to some quite harsh feedback).

The Chimp has powerful drives (such as sex, dominance, food, security, territory etc). The two key drivers are its need to survive and procreate (a person run by its Chimp often finds it difficult to remain monogamous). Ultimately, the Chimp is selfish and will use the troop to help support its own needs (it sees life as a constant battle of Win-Lose). The Chimp demands immediate gratification and gets angry and frustrated if thwarted.

Chimps still believe they live in the jungle and so sees (un)real threats in everyday situations. It is driven by instinct and primal desires and fears. These instincts are almost from birth so it reacts to a perceived stimulus /threat in a pre-set way (Flight/Fight/Freeze). There is typically over-reaction to an event as the Chimp always sees the worst possible outcome.

We have to accept that the Chimp in us will not change. When a Chimp does decide to act it's difficult to control. 'Self control' will not work because the emotional Chimp is significantly stronger than the Human (a real chimp has 5x the strength of a real Human being). You have to learn to manage it like an emotional child. You must never forget that you always have a choice in how to behave. If the Human inside chooses to ignore the Chimp's 'offer' on how to react, then the Human needs to negotiate, manage and support its frustrated Chimp. You need to find a way of addressing Chimps fundamental needs in a more 'socially healthy' way.

The Chimp can be managed in three ways:

Exercise: You need to help the Chimp release the emotion it is struggling to deal with. You need to find a safe way for the Chimp to healthily channel its pent up emotion rather than to be expressed through some inappropriate behaviour (be it self destruction such as substance abuse or attacking other people). It can take as little as 10 minutes to release it. Likewise, if someone is 'ranting' at you realise it's just their Chimp letting off steam (so don't let your Chimp get hooked by his Chimp).

Box: Having exorcised the emotion, the Chimp will be tired and more open to accept a more considered, calmer conversation. If the Chimp re-fires up it just means it has not fully vented all its emotion yet. It may need a few 'takes' before the Chimp can be put back into its box.

Banana: The third way is to feed it bananas. There are two types: rewards (both physical and emotional) and distractions.

The Human inside

The Human is the antithesis of the Chimp (hence why they so often clash). The Human inside is evidence-based, rational in its 'fact finding' leading to well considered decisions. The Human draws widely in assessing the situation (thus is better able to put events into



wider context). It can also handle ambiguity and accept the 'greyness' of most issues. The Human accepts that there are many influences on an event and as such are more prepared to reassess its perception of an issues if new information comes about (and hence be open to suggestions and personal improvements).

The Human makes slower, more considered decisions by gathering the facts (and so can be positively influenced by new information). The trouble is, by the time the Human has assessed the situation, the Chimp has already reacted (evidence suggests the Chimp reacts five times faster than the Human).

The Human inside of us masters self-control and discipline which the Chimp lacks. The Human also thinks forward through the consequences of its behaviours before making a final decision on its choice of action.

The Human is less judgemental and accusatory. It takes a balanced approach and realises we are all a mix of good and bad points (and thus we should all be equally valued). This often leads the Human to be more gracious and forgiving.

Our Human is social and wants to be part of a group that lives in peace and harmony (thus it is open to negotiate for the greater good of all). It likes order and follows the 'laws of society', relying upon ethics and values such as honesty, compassion, equality, conscience and self control. Sadly the Human can also get frustrated as there are many Chimps in the world who ignore such societal norms.

The Human wants to live in a world where it can flourish. It wants a driving purpose in its life to provide fulfilment, backed up with social and intellectual challenges in order to grow and develop.

The Computer

This is the part of the brain that stores information that both the Chimp and Human use as reference points to know how to respond.

This Computer runs about four times faster than the Chimp and hence 20 times faster than the Human.

The Stone of Life, Goblins and Gremlins – The Computer is essentially an empty drive when born. Over the years we start to write our programme on how to survive and thrive. Many of these become the core beliefs and values that shape our personality, behaviour and life. These are called our Stone of Life. Sadly some of the beliefs and strategies imported at an early age (often below the age of eight) may prove to be false or inappropriate later in our lives. Furthermore, potentially one-off events gets imprinted as global truths to apply to all situations. Just because one person let you down, was abusive, or abandoned you, does not mean everyone will.



The Gremlins are those beliefs that are unhelpful but *can* be removed whilst the Goblins are ones that *cannot* be removed. Gremlins and Goblins run on autopilot so we are often not aware how much they shape our daily behaviour.

Some common Gremlins:

Unhelpful and unrealistic expectations - These set you up to fail (and so trigger negative emotions of frustration, lack of self worth etc). We tend to also set too many traps such as the 'If..then' game. It goes like this: '*If I....(do X or have Y) then...*' (*I will be happy, successful, you will love me etc*). This game sets unnecessary conditions on our self worth and happiness.

'Should's' and 'Musts' - These imply an order (and Chimps hate being told what to do). They become a burden. Remember you *always* have a choice. Merely shifting the '*should/must*' to '*could*' empowers you to make a freer choice (and removes guilt and a feeling of failure).

'Be perfect' - Many people have a misguided belief that you need to be perfect in everything you do. It is impossible to live up to this and sets you up to fail (and hence weaken your self esteem, self value and confidence). We are all fallible and make mistakes all the time. Getting things wrong is human. So instead of beating yourself up or hiding behind excuses and blame, learn to laugh at yourself.

Other Gremlin driven behaviours include over-reacting to situations, eating even when not hungry and not making decisions.

Start to notice some of these limiting beliefs and challenge their veracity. Likewise, you need to put into the Computer more empowering beliefs. Some of these could include: 1) *Life is not fair* 2) *Goal posts move* 3) *There are no guarantees* 4) *You do not have total control over all aspect of your life* and 5) *Nothing lasts forever*. By inputting these, then your are less surprised, less upset and more flexible in your response.

How to manage your Computer

If the Chimp senses any danger, it quickly assesses the level of risk and either reacts immediately if a major threat or if a lower threat then will look inside the Computer for advice (the speed of such reactions is less than 0.02 second). The trouble is the Human inside is often too slow to respond. Thus the quickest way is through the Computer.

We need to identify the Gremlins and replace them with more empowering autopilots to influence the Chimp's perception of an event and hence how it chooses to react. The trouble is you can't just expunge a Gremlin. You need to replace it with another belief. A Gremlin normally leaves a trail of negative emotion. So when you feel bad about something track it back to the belief state of the Gremlin (often Gremlins dance together, so you need to carefully unpick them).



When you have identified the area, ask yourself two questions:

- 1) What do you believe doing/thinking X will imply about you (Identity)?
- 2) What are the consequences of not doing X?

These questions start to unsettle the current belief, allowing you to input a more useful truth.

Like building muscle memory, you need to keep reinforcing it. The more often you can implant (and then act upon) the new installed belief, the greater chance it will become the new default setting.

CRITIQUE

The Chimp/Human analogy helps us understand why we do what we do. It is of course a model and not reality. It is fundamentally flawed as we are one holistic being. As such we should not try to demonise parts of us and suggest 'Chimp' is bad and Human is 'good'. The Chimp is not a separate being from us - it is us and we need to accept all of us.

In reality, there is little in this book that is new. It's another take on the Triune brain, System1 vs System 2 thinking and draws heavily on Emotional intelligence and Transactional Analysis.

This book tries to be the magic elixir to life. The underlying principles I find useful but then its constant application to almost everything else becomes tiresome, worthy and frankly a bit incredible.

There is a saying that it's easier to plan than to do, and for me his key strategies for managing your Chimp fall into this truism. Loading new beliefs is much easier said than done as it calming and convincing your irrational, emotional Chimp - we know with children that providing a rational explanation why they can't have an ice-cream rarely works!

Furthermore there is a presumption that these areas are quick to fix. Psychotherapists have many long term patients who are still trying to manage their Chimps!

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BE ENHANCED BY USING AN
EXPERIENCED FACILITATOR ?



IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR AN ENJOYABLE, YET
EFFECTIVE AWAY-DAY (BE IT BRAINSTORMING,
VISION & VALUES, STRATEGIC BRAND BUILDING
OR TEAMBUILDING) MAYBE I CAN HELP?