



FIONA HOBAN

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Tick stress off your list

When I rule the world it will be incumbent upon all citizens, from a very early age, to be proficient at writing things down in an effective manner.

How many times have you given your order to a waitress who simply nods and says: "Sure, no problem," and deep down you know that while she might remember you ordered the steak, she will not remember that you asked for the sauce on the side. Why? Because she didn't write it down. "Can I please have a glass of water with that?" "Sure." "But, please, no ice." She doesn't write this down either and sure enough when your glass of water arrives (assuming she remembers it), it's filled with ice. Grrrrr.

And what about when Joe Bloggs looks you in the eye and says: "I'll get that to you by Friday." He may put an X on his hand, or scribble something on a slip of paper, a cigarette packet or shopping receipt. I always think to myself: "Not a hope, never gonna happen."

However, I know how to deal with these people. Oh yes, indeed I do. I write down what they themselves will not. I take out my diary and make a note on Thursday's page: "Remind Joe Bloggs that he needs to get that to me by tomorrow."

You might have guessed that I am a writer-fan of things. It is one of the most effective stress-reducing tools I know. When you don't occupy your mind with having to remember every little thing, you become less stressed and it becomes easier to think clearly. It frees up head space.

This, in my opinion, is one of the most important reasons to write things down. Feeling calmer and more relaxed does not only improve your health, but also makes life easier and more smooth and effective.



Do yourself a favour, invest in a proper diary or notebook – one that has enough space to take numerous notes and reminders.



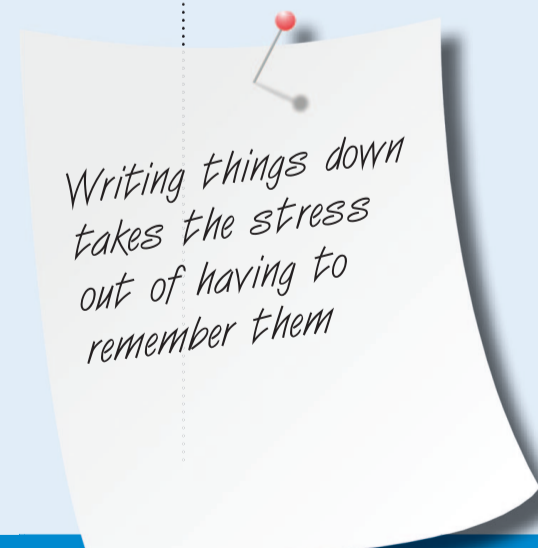
Most people fail to write things down because they believe they will be able to remember all of the important things they must during the course of the day. This, however, is a false idea.

We find it difficult to remember all of the things we must because we are so busy. Generally, the phone rings, people interrupt and you're trying to handle six tasks at once. We try to move from task to task. New thoughts pop into our minds all of the time. We are incessantly interrupted before we can complete a task.

When we do write things down, we do this on small scraps of paper that will eventually become lost. Writing things down in the correct manner can put an end to all of this insanity.

So, do yourself a favour, invest in a proper diary or notebook – one that has enough space to take numerous notes and reminders. Keep it with you at all times and get into the habit of writing things down, no matter how trivial.

Not only will you become more effective in your day-to-day life, you will also lower your stress levels. And as a bonus you will enjoy that wonderful sense of satisfaction gained from ticking things off your to-do list.



RECOVERY INTERNATIONAL SLOGANS

This is a list of some of the basic Recovery International tools (slogans). They are quoted or adapted from Dr Low's books *Mental Health Through Will Training* and *Manage Your Fears, Manage Your Anger*.

- People do things that annoy us, not necessarily to annoy us.
- Feelings are not facts.
- Fear is a belief; beliefs can be changed.
- If you can't change a situation, you can change your attitude towards it.
- Be self-led, not symptom-led.
- Nervous symptoms and sensations are distressing but not dangerous.
- Calm begets calm; temper begets temper.
- Helplessness is not hopelessness.
- Do things in part acts.
- Endorse (praise) yourself for the effort, not only for the performance.
- Decide, plan and act.
- Muscles can be commanded to do what one fears to do.

The Recovery Method of Will Training for improved mental health and for control of nervous symptoms consists of:

1. Reading and studying *Mental Health Through Will Training* and other literature.
2. Regular attendance at Recovery Meetings.
3. Practising Recovery principles in one's everyday life situations.

You can contact the organisation by post at Bridge House, Cherry Orchard Hospital, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10, call them on 01-626-0775 or send an email to info@recovery-inc-ireland.ie

At present, 15 Recovery meetings are held in Co Dublin and one each in Ballyjamesduff, Bray, Cork City, Enniskillen, Letterkenny, Longford, Navan, Newbridge, Newry and Omagh.

Note: Each member is at all times advised and expected to follow the authority of his/her own doctor

dangerous.' These sayings sink deep into the subconscious over time and you say them to yourself when things are difficult. You learn a different attitude to everything with Recovery. It's like your inner self that no one knows about is actually transformed."

Paddy stresses that you have to give your recovery time, however.

"The thing is to keep going to the meetings," he says. "It's a very structured method but it does work. A lot of people like myself love to keep talking about themselves, about symptoms and feelings and so on, but in Recovery that's not looked upon as being a good idea because you are actually feeding yourself with drama.

"With Recovery meetings you're given a method to use when negative thoughts come into your head and that turns your life around. For me, it has made everything change for the better."

JACQUELINE *

Jacqueline, from Clontarf, has been attending Recovery International meetings for six years and now values her mental health, she says.

"I have it because I practised Dr Abraham Low's method to get it," she says. "This includes self-spotting [insights into your own behaviour] and listening to how other people used the methods to cope with situations. I now have more hope and motivation than I could ever have imagined."

Jacqueline first suffered from depression after her marriage broke down.

"I had days of staying at home and thinking inner dark thoughts," she says. "I was also bullied at work so I had very low self-worth and

self-esteem. I had those feelings of fear and inadequacy for years. I was also exhausted, depressed, anxious – there was no spontaneity in me at all.

"I also hated being in crowds and often I stayed in bed and moved only when I absolutely had to. Some days the effort of trying to decide what to eat or making school lunches for my daughters was so overwhelming. I was on anti-depressants and I felt like I was living in a fog. I remember telling a counsellor that I was having a breakdown. This understanding person told me about a self-help organisation called Recovery International in my local area.

"I went along to my first Recovery group meeting in Clontarf and was immediately taken with the support and understanding I found there. Meetings are a place where peace and calm are fostered. Reading Abraham Low's book *Mental Health Through Will Training* is the fundamental resource of Recovery International. Gradually my fears changed from hopeless to hopeful."

Jacqueline has now completed a third-level degree and postgraduate course and is the assistant leader of the Clontarf Recovery Group.

"I am more confident and less fearful," she says, "and I have much greater self-esteem. Most importantly, my daughters are my life's greatest achievements.

"It takes time to learn the method but Recovery International has taught me to do one thing at a time – it's called breaking everyday life into part acts. Recovery is hard work but my quality of life is improving every day." **CL**

* Names known to editor.



GET IN TOUCH

Fiona Hoban works as a counsellor in Westport, Co Mayo and also lectures with the National Counselling and Psychotherapy Institute of Ireland (NCPII). She delivers wellbeing and motivational talks at various conferences and workshops throughout Ireland. For more details go to www.fionahoban.ie. If you would like to get Fiona's advice or insight on a particular subject please email info@fionahoban.ie or write to Fiona Hoban, Irish Country Living, Irish Farm Centre, Bluebell, Dublin 12.