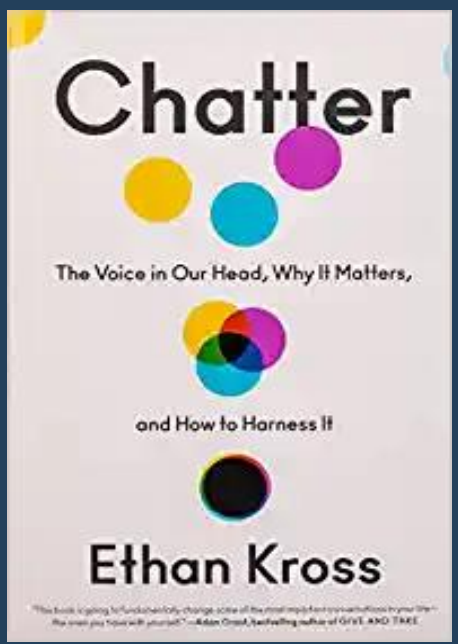
Chatter



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Have you ever felt sabotaged by your own thoughts? Did you panic before a importante test, or were you overly concerned about a situation that turned out to be easily resolved? Then, the summary of the book "Chatter", by Ethan Kross, is indispensable for you!

Ethan enlightens us about how and why the "voice in our head" exists - and don't think you're crazy to hear them - and teaches us to deal with these thoughts in easier ways than you might think!

Therefore, the main objective of the book is to make us understand the mattering of the existence of this inner voice, and that we are able not to silence it, but to transform it, so that we can extract the benefits it can offer us.

Main ideas of the book

- Inner conversations are normal and healthier, the important thing is to keep them under your control;
- We see ourselves by different perspectives we see other people;
- The way we see our impediments make our brain react in different ways;
- Sometimes, all we need to do is look at the thing from another angle;
- It is important to filter the people which we share our thoughts, mostly those that disturb us;
- The environment where we live have a big impact in how our thoughts works;
- Your mind is capable of healing while you believe that it is possible.

To whom is this book indicated?

This book is dedicated to people with difficulties with understanding the voice present in your own mind (and that, many times, who feel sabotaged by them), and would like to learn how to control them. Also it is indicated to curious people about the human mind and what sets it apart from the other living beings.

Overview of the book

Why do we talk to ourselves?

Certainly you have already relived in your mind the best answers to use in a discussion that is already over, or repeated mentally a information just to don't forget it or simply gave some instructions to yourself while doing a complicated task. All of this was your inner voice working.

Is there a right way to talk to ourselves?

Have you ever asked yourself about the reason why some people are able to focus on themselves and understand their feelings, while others collapse with the same try? Or how some of them look like they have everything under control the whole time, even in stressful situations, while others easily panic?
Ethan Kross defends in his book, based on much scientific researches, that the conversations we have with ourselves, or with our "inner voice" have a big influence in our feelings and in how we react to different situations. Then, yes! There is a right way to talk to ourselves.

What is introspection and why is it important?

According to the author, introspection is about paying attention in an active way to our own thoughts and feelings. This ability is very important because it enables us to imagine, remember, reflect, and next, use it to solve our problems, innovate and create.
Ethan and many other scientists consider the human capability of introspection like the center of the evolutionary advances which distinguishes the human being to other species, besides providing us the power of resilience.

What happens when talking to ourselves backfires?

Are we time travelers?

Despite the famous maxim "carpe diem" (something like "enjoy the day"), people are often immersed in the pains and regrets of the past or in fears and anxieties about the future, which damages the ability of connecting and concentrating with yourself and with others in the current moment.
The author brings the concept of "default state" as the tendency to relive past events, imagine possible scenarios and carry out other internal reflections, and states that we spend from a third to half the time traveling between past and future times, even when we try to focus on the present.

Is Chatter our enemy?

Ethan Kross affirms that using the mind to process our thoughts and feelings in wrong ways can lead to interferences in the abilities of decision making, affect job and studies performance, and a lot of other important tasks, in addition to negatively impacting our personal relationships.
Chatter, the name of the book, consists of negative thoughts and feelings acting in a cyclic way, transforming our capability of introspection into something harmful and dangerous.
When we make a bad decision, often we think about it for too much time, in how we could have done things differently, or how it was so obvious that it wasn't the right choice. We keep thinking and thinking until being overloaded and not even being able to focus on a solution.
Chatter appears, mainly in moments when we don't need them, bringing us distress, worries, fears, regrets, and making us don't be able to do the most important thing in stressful moments: think logically.
To learn how to control our mind to behave in a proper way, Ethan presents the "toolbox", affirming that the instruments needed to reduce Chatter and benefit us with our inner voz aren't things which we need to look for around.

The Toolbox

Our inner voice can be our best adviser or our worst critic, it all depends on how we handle it.
The author classifies the tools into three categories:

1. Tools you can implement on your own;
2. Tools that involve other people;
    - Tools for providing Chatter support;
    - Tools for receiving Chatter support;
3. Tools that involve the environment.

Tools You Can Implement on Your Own

According to the author, these are tools that can be used without an extern help, and that, including, can be applied just talking with the voice in your head, without even pronounce a word out loud (although Ethan affirm that talking to himself is something healthy and natural, if you like it).

Perspective Change

Have you ever counseled people important to you about certain situations and, when you found yourself in a similar condition, felt lost about what decision to make?
This is because, according to various psychological and behavioral research mentioned by Ethan Kross, our minds react in different ways depending on how we observe a situation.
When counseling a friend, for example, we tend to be impartial, thinking more logically and focusing on problem solving, while when we get into a spiral of inner reflection, we often get lost in our own unwanted feelings and thoughts.
To solve this, the author suggests some instruments present in our own mental toolbox.
It is possible to broaden the perspective of thoughts by changing the way you talk to yourself or about yourself: change the pronoun "I" to "you". You may think this attitude is arrogant, but scientifically, when we do this, our brain automatically changes the point of view of thoughts, being more critical.

What would Batman do?

It may seem like a strange question, but it is often used to explain the "Batman effect", which is nothing more than a distancing strategy used with children, who are asked to imagine their favorite character in the same situation, so that they can face it with more courage and tranquility.
In the adult world, we can use the same strategy in a slightly different way (or, who knows, keep inspiring us on Batman).
So another way to view situations more analytically is to imagine that you are advising someone special, or to recall difficult situations that you or people you admire have successfully faced. This tells your mind that everyone goes through difficult times and that they are fleeting.

Reframe your experience as a challenge

Another important question that Ethan Kross treats is the way we visualize and handle situations: if you interpret a situation as a threat - and something you are not able to handle or resolve, your mind and body will respond in an equivalent way.
On the other hand, if you consider the situation as a challenge - something that you can face and that will bring you learning - you will have a more pleasant response from yourself.
Biologically, our bodies react in different ways to danger and excitement which has a great influence on our behavior. It's up to you to define what the experiences you're going through are about: challenge or threat?

Tools That Involve Other People

When it comes to interpersonal relationships, we know that we sometimes go to the wrong people or are not the right people to offer certain advice.
Then, Ethan suggests some ways to more effectively give and take support.

Tools for Providing Chatter Support

The author says that the most efficient way to provide support to someone else is to give them constructive advice, which consists in offering emotional support (compassion, respect and empathy demonstrating), and, at same time, rational support (showing the logical ways to solve the problem).
Another strategy to provide support is something which Ethan calls “invisible support”, defined as the support we give to someone without necessarily talking about it. .
Invisible support can be made by doing some tasks which remove some obstacles about the situation of the helped person, or that provides a more comfortable environment to them, such as cooking lunch while your spouse finishes an important task or reducing noises while your brother is studying, for example.

Tools for Receiving Chatter Support

Ethan Kross highlights the importance of filtering the people we share our thoughts with, saying that, when shared with wrong people, it can just harm us. Because of that, approaches the need of looking at the atitudes from people that advise us, and how we felt after this.
Receiving support from people who only question us about our problems, instigating our bad feelings and don’t offer suggestions to resolve, only makes us talk more about the problema and overload our thoughts with more bad feelings.
In this way, just as you became a good coach offering support to emotional and cognitive needs, it is important to look for people able to give the same to you.
Furthermore, physical contact, when respectful, is also an invisible support that, biologically and psychologically, makes us feel more comfortable and supported. Therefore, do not hesitate to offer and request hugs in difficult times.

Tools That Involve the Environment

Many researches have comproved that the environment we live in is able to influence our thoughts and feelings in a shocking way. Because of that, the author uses this information to influence our inner voice in a beneficial way.
Ethan says that an organized environment, being at work or at home, notifies our brain that everything is under control, that there is order and, because of that, there is no need to worry or have so much stress.
Besides the order keeping, the exposure to green areas (since huge forests till postcards or a cactus in your window), it is also capable of relaxing our brain, increasing our concentration and decreasing anxiety. Have you ever felt invigorated after a walk in the park? That’s the explanation!
Lastly, the author talks about inspiring experiences (a jump with a parachute or just to observe a baby giving its first steps, for example), affirming that experiencing them makes us feel like we are part of something bigger than everything, restricting the action of our Chatter. It is, literally, when something gets you “speechless”!

What do other authors say about it?

Napoleon Hill,author of the book "**Success Through a Positive Mental Attitude**", discusses a method (named by the book title) able to be applied to achieve and improve our mental and physical health, happiness, wealth and all other objectives we wish. He defends that all of this can be done by changing the way we think.

In the book "**The Inner Game of Tennis**", by W. Timothy Gallwey, we learn how to acquire our self confidence and improve our focus with a technique called "relaxed concentration", able to explore our unlimited potential and, until then, unknown.

Finally, in the book "**Calm the F*ck Down**", Sarah Knight approaches how we can deal, in a relaxed way, with moments when we get out of control, and in the end, we extract something positive from these situations.

Okay, but how can I apply this in my life?

The whole book brings us explanations about how the instruments of the toolbox works and how it is possible to apply them with us and with our loved ones.

Then, you can follow the recommendations and teachings that Ethan Kross offers and be patient with yourself and with people around you during the process of changing the standards of thinking, that's because the inner transformations can happen in a gradual way, but even so significatively.

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