

• To my surprise, doodling during class greatly increased my ability to absorb information.

• I started using short-form notation, or bullets. I would absorb the lesson, then write out what seemed to be most important.



• I had it within me to solve my own problems. It gave me hope.

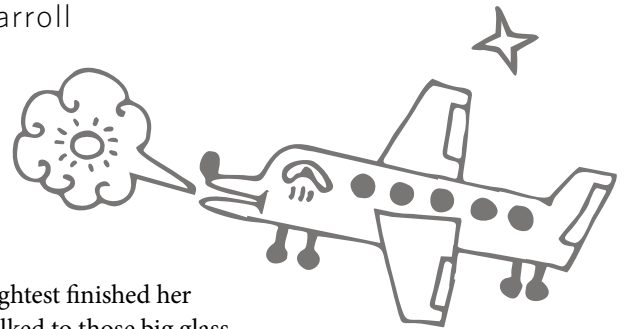
• It was and is a journey of self-learning, which allowed me to clarify and play to my strengths and weakness.



Overcoming the Immunity to Intelligence

(or... How I Created the BuJo)

by Ryder Carroll



THE DAY OF THE BIG TEST was brisk but bright, charged with that hopeful electricity of spring. It was one of those invigorating days where it feels unnatural to be cooped up inside. Our teachers must have felt the same way, because they had an idea...

The classroom housed three classes that usually operated somewhat independently of each other. Today, however, the teachers made an announcement that all classes were going to take a math test together. The terms were that you could go play as soon as you finished the test. This was new, different, and exciting!

It was one of the few tests that we kids eagerly grabbed from the teacher's hands as they walked around the room passing them out. The room grew silent save for the frantic scratching and tapping of pencils on paper. A little while later, our best

and brightest finished her test, walked to those big glass doors and broke the seal to the sunlit playground outside. I still recall the smell of the grass in the wind rushing in.

Slowly but surely, the students began to trickle out until finally one of the twins passed my desk on his way out. Bad sign. Eric and Eddie were twins similar in both appearance and cruelty. They were the hair-pulling, ball-punching, booger-flinging, tantrum-throwing duo. Their only apparent gift was the alarming depths to which they could plunge their fingers up their noses. So when Eric—or was it Eddie?—walked by me with a wicked smile on his face, I got worried. How was he done? I wasn't even close!

Finally, the entire class was out enjoying the glorious day, save two: a frustrated teacher and yours truly. She walked over and asked how I was doing. I told her I just didn't know the answers. She looked at me seriously, and then a sly spread across her face.

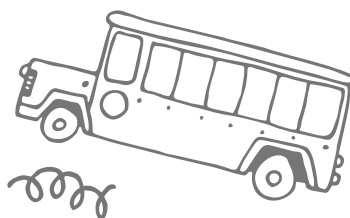
"I've got just the thing," she said, walking over



The only person who can truly unlock that potential is you. It's your responsibility to show up and put in the work.



“Oh, well maybe I just used the wrong spell. Let’s try this again.”



The breakthrough back then wasn't that I had discovered how to take better notes. It was that I had succeeded where

my teachers and doctors had not. It allowed me to understand that I could be more than a victim of my condition. I had it within me to solve my own problems. It in no way made me a wonderful student, but it provided me with the much-needed sense of agency. It gave me hope.

For years I kept testing out new tricks and approaches to stay organized. Most of them failed, but when something worked, it really worked. It was and is a journey of self-learning, which allowed me to clarify and play to my strengths and weakness. It eventually resulted in me creating what I decades later called the Bullet Journal® method.

The Bullet Journal® method is a mindfulness practice disguised as a productivity system. The productivity system is designed to help you organize information. The mindfulness practice, though, encourages iterative problem solving through reflection. It allows you to keep track of what worked, what didn't, and gives you the freedom to design your own tools. It's become a global phenomenon that has allowed me, the last in my class, the kid immune to intelli-



gence, stand on a stage at Yale to give a TEDx talk.

No matter what your situation or challenge may be, you always have power to take action. You have the choice, you can be the victim of your condition, or you can see your challenge as an opportunity. The opportunity here is to better understand yourself, your strengths, and your weaknesses. This will allow you start testing the tools and habits that will allow you to grow. Though you will undoubtedly fail often along the way, as I did, you will also prevail. You already have everything you will ever need, but a lot of that is untapped potential. The only person who can truly unlock that potential is you. It's your responsibility to show up and put in the work. With time, you can and will learn what works for you. Yes, it's hard work, but despite how you may feel, you're worth it. 🍦

*A digital product designer living in Brooklyn, New York, **Ryder Carroll** is the inventor of the Bullet Journal (BuJo). He has worked with companies like Adidas, American Express, Cisco, IBM, Macy's, and HP. He's been featured by the New York Times, LA Times, Fast Company, Bloomberg, Lifehacker, and Mashable. He recently gave a TEDx talk on intentionality. Learn more about bullet journaling at www.bulletjournal.com.*

A close-up photograph of a young girl with dark hair and large, expressive eyes, blowing a large, translucent bubble. The text 'SHE got her mother's LOOKS and my bad grades.' is overlaid on the image. In the bottom left corner, there is a circular logo with the text '100K BRAINS TRAINED and counting' and a graphic of a crowd of people.

SHE
got her mother's
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100K
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TRAINED
and counting

Did You Know?

Students who struggle with attention issues often struggle with memory and processing speed — the skill that determines how quickly the brain processes information. If you or someone you love struggles to pay attention, finding the root cause of the struggle is key.

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