

Appendix 1

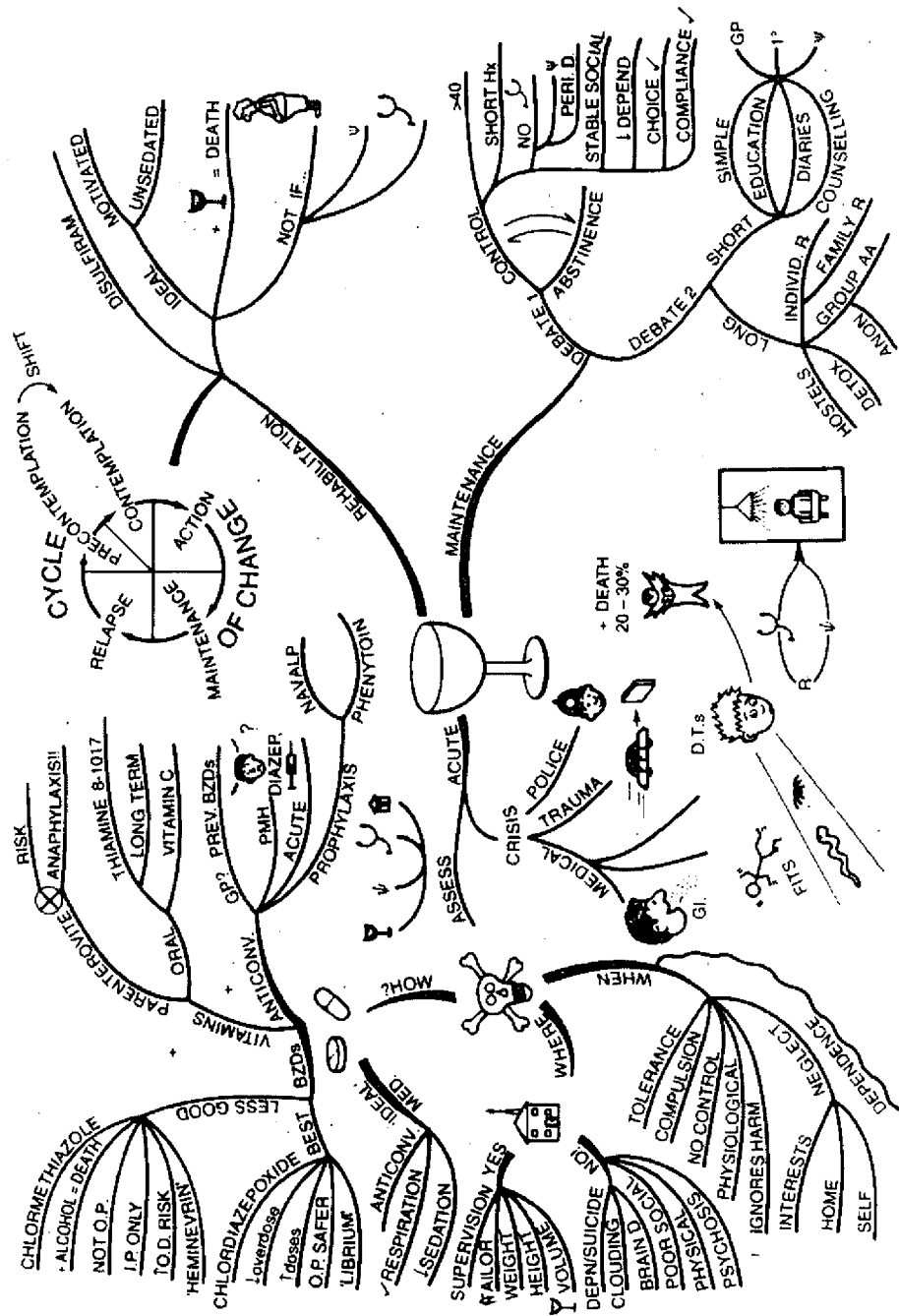
What are Mind Maps® and how can they help with the exam?

Kevin Appleton

You will already be aware of your strengths and weaknesses when it comes to learning for exams. You will probably use techniques which you have (successfully) used over the years. Successful techniques allow you to structure, organise and integrate new information with the information that you already know in order to make learning meaningful. This is important because, particularly with the Part II exam, it is a practical impossibility to read through everything again in the few days before the exam. It is important to focus on key facts, so that these may be concentrated on in order to reduce the amount of reading you have to do when the work is revised.

Common and effective techniques for helping you reduce the quantity of information you have to learn include writing short summary notes or using highlighter pens to focus in on key facts. Another less common approach is Mind Mapping. This is not an approach that everyone will find intuitively appealing; however some people find this approach to be a very helpful way of organising and learning information.

Mind Maps® are colourful, branching pictures or diagrams that



Mind Map® 1. Alcohol assessment, complications and treatment.

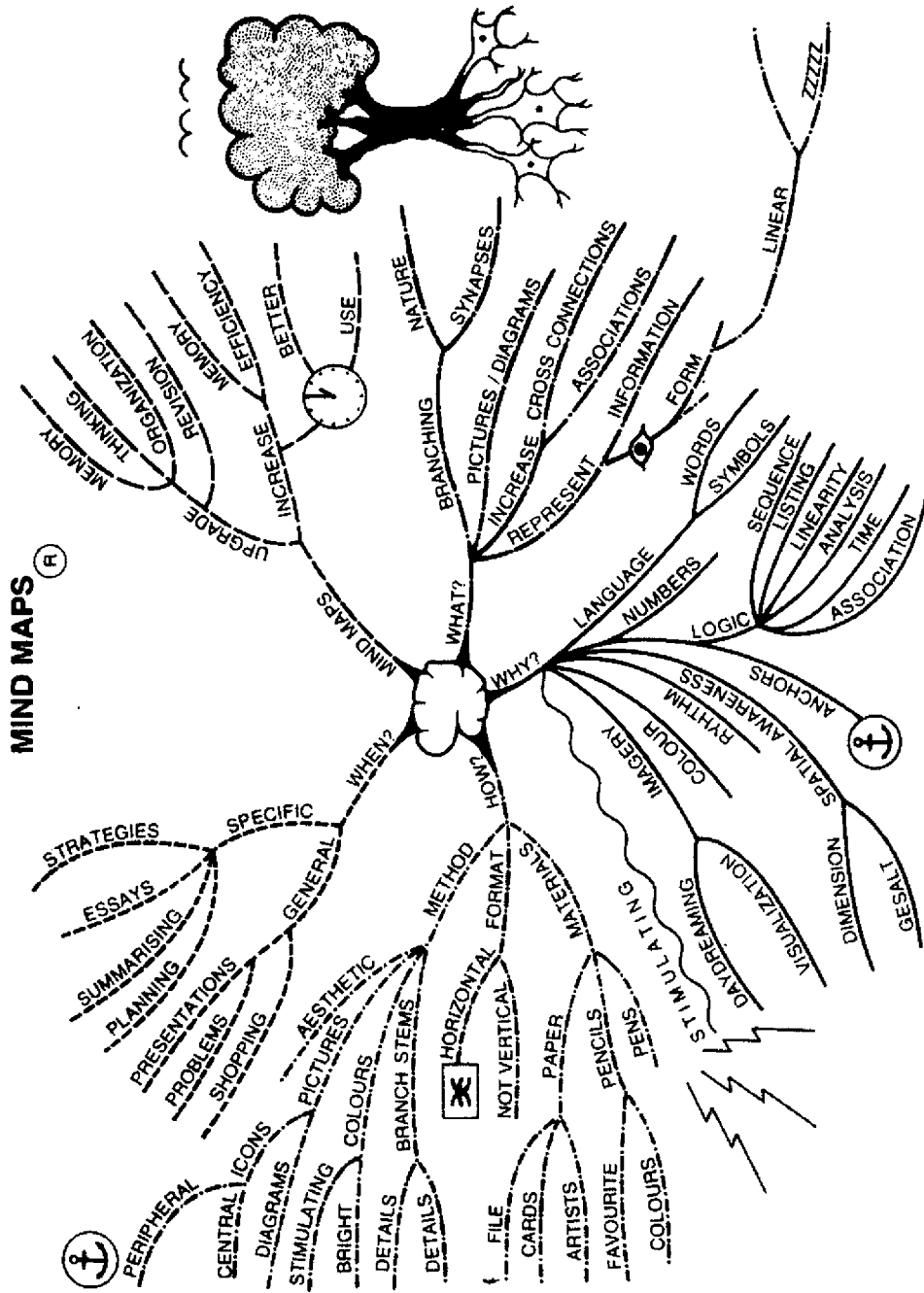
can help your memory, thinking and organisation of ideas and information. They can make study more efficient by condensing more facts onto a single sheet so that very large amounts of information may be revised very quickly. In Mind Map® 1 the assessment and treatment of alcohol addiction is covered, together with the ways that alcohol problems can lead to presentation to the medical services. To maximise the effectiveness of Mind Maps® it is necessary to produce your own so that each subheading of the Mind Map will trigger off associated pieces of information in your own memory. If you had Mind Map® 1 in front of you during either an essay, SAQ, PMP or clinical viva, you would be able to answer most questions on this topic.

Mind Maps® work by increasing the cross-connections and associations of stored information in memory. They use images or key words to anchor information and to trigger associations. It is possible to hold entire Mind Maps® in visual memory by this method – and they are fun to use, making learning more enjoyable and revision less tedious. By using different modes of memory storage (e.g. factual, visual and colour), they increase the modalities and ways in which information can be remembered, whereas linear text uses only one such modality.

HOW TO CREATE YOUR OWN MIND MAPS®

It is better to draw Mind Maps® across the horizontal axis of the page, as the structure spreads out better this way. Start with a central image or icon. Recalling this from visual memory will trigger your recall of the whole map. Next, arrange main headings or key words around this from the centre of the page. Subheadings, lists and further details can then be added to each branch.

One heading or icon (e.g. head injury, as in Mind Map® 1) will come to represent, in your own mind, many other additional responses (subdural, penetrating, etc.). These act as anchors for surrounding text and help you to recall this additional information efficiently. Well-organised information should result in an aesthetically pleasing map, whereas poorly organised information will



Mind Map®2. Mind Maps® summarised.

look a mess and will be less well recalled. To structure the content clearly on paper means that it must also be structured clearly in your mind, so that drawing out the diagram is itself an effective means of revision. This is illustrated by Mind Map® 2, which summarises the use and production of Mind Maps®. You will see that the key elements of the linear text you are now reading are clearly and concisely summarised on one sheet of paper. This is both information rich, and very quickly read. If this is the case for this section of the book, could it also be the case for your exam revision?

Because Mind Maps® can be used to summarise large amounts of information into a manageable form, the information can be reviewed very quickly just before the exam, maximising the recency effect. In the 48 hours before the written paper I was able to review the entire syllabus, which I had summarised into Mind Maps®.

A full account of the use of Mind Maps® is given in *The Mind Map Book*.^{1,2}

REFERENCES

- ¹ T. Buzan and B. Buzan, *The Mind Map Book*, BBC Books, London, 1993.
 - ² The Buzan Centre Ltd, 37 Waterloo Rd, Bournemouth, BH19 1BD. Tel. 01202 533593 Fax 01202 534512
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