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Traditional learning models are dead. Here's a framework for a powerful way to learn:

I graduated thinking I hated most subjects. What I actually hated was the learning model the education system forced upon me: Linear, compartmentalized learning and rote memorization.

This thread shares my (work-in-progress) framework for a better way: Networked Learning.

Let's start with the traditional model and why it's broken. There are two core features to focus on:
> Compartmentalized
> Forced

A quick examination of each:

Compartmentalized
> Traditional education creates containers in your mind. I imagine them like little houses. You have your history house, your English house, your science house, your math house, etc. Each house is closed off to the rest of the world.

> You have a history test on Monday, so you cram some new information about Genghis Khan into the designated history house. Now it's trapped there. You remember it for the test people to pat you on the back and say "great job!" but by the following Monday, you've forgotten it.

> Trapped knowledge is basically useless. It's insulated from the interactions that allow it to stick and compound over time.

> An analog: If you keep a child inside and forbid play with other kids in the neighborhood, it'd be very difficult for them to learn, develop, and grow.

Forced
> Traditional education tells us to learn one thing and be tested on it-before progressing to the next. We progress on set timelines--established by others--from one subject to the next.

> The model is forced, linear progression. There is no room for inspired consumption.

The obvious problem here: Everyone learns differently—at a unique pace and with unique interests. The current model embraces those who can fall into line and make it work while rejecting those who cannot. It leaves too many people behind.

Ok so we've established a few core problems of the existing, traditional learning models. I'd like to propose a better way--let's call it "Networked Learning" for now. Let me preface this by saying my thinking is very much work-in-progress—open to feedback!

Here's how I see it:
> The ultimate meta-goal of learning is for knowledge to compound over time. We want to learn in such a way that new knowledge builds on top of existing foundations in an accelerating, non-linear manner. For this to work, we need our knowledge to exist in an exposed environment.
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> Fortunately, this is the way we are wired--children do this naturally. They are curious, experiencing every new event, person, or object with wonder. They actively place each new learning into the context of existing knowledge. They create and adjust their "maps" accordingly.
>
> The key: there are a lot of "collisions" of knowledge in the child's brain. There are no compartments forced upon them yet. There's no insulation of some knowledge from the rest of it. Knowledge roams free in the child's brain--it interacts, reacts, and sparks growth.
>
> This is the better way--a return to the natural manner in which we encounter the world. We wrestle with ideas and let cross-pollination happen. We abstract complexity in a unique fashion. Knowledge never sits in a closed, dark room--it sits in the light, ready to interact and compound.
>
> This is great in theory-but how can you put it into practice (for yourself or your children)?

A few ideas I had to get started:
> Explore vs. Tour
> Analogize Constantly
> Paired Learning
> Read Broadly & Quit More
> Slow Down Learning

Notes on each…

Explore vs. Tour

When you're learning, always remember that you're an explorer, not a tourist. Don't go on a tour of a new location, following the preset routes established by others. Walk the streets, roam, talk to people. You'll learn much more about the city that way.

Analogize Constantly

Always take newly-learned information and place it within the context of your existing maps. Make direct or indirect comparisons and connections between the new and existing information. It will help it stick and grow.

Here's an example of this in action: I did a bunch of research on Morris Chang and Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company for a piece. It struck me that TSMC's novel pure-play chip manufacturer model had enabled independent chip designers to start their own companies. I searched for an analog. Then, it hit me: this looked very similar to what @tobi @harleyf and @Shopify had done in creating infrastructure that enabled independent players to sell online. I had created context for the new learning within my broader mental map—it would stick.

Paired Learning

Identify logical "learning pairs" that may accelerate the compounding of new knowledge. Examples:

> Shakespeare + English History
> Sci-Fi + Tech Investing

If you consume simultaneously across logical pairs, you can engineer connections and compounding.

Read Broadly & Quit More

Reading beyond the confines of what is "useful" is one of the best decisions you can make. I've learned more about investing from reading SciFi than I have from most investing books.

Read more, but also quit more. If it doesn't grab you, drop it.

Slow Down Learning

      Learning is definitely not a race. The number of books read became a weird sort of vanity metric or "flex" for adults and children alike. It's not impressive to read 52 books a year if you absorb nothing from them.

      Slow down, let new ideas marinate.

There's a lot remaining to unpack. I'm just starting to scratch the surface of my own thinking, but I'll keep working at it.

My hope is that this sparks a dialogue around new learning models and shines a light on the innovators who are building a better future for our children.