



5 reliefs  
included

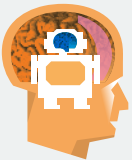
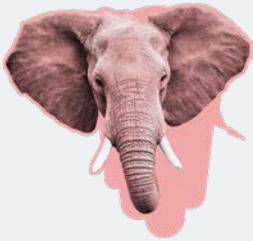
# Hassle management

# Contents

Preface	6
Introduction	9
Who can benefit from this book?	12

## Part 1. What is it?

1	The first thing to understand about hassle: 'We probably don't.'	18
2	How well do you know your brain – the core of what you think and do?	25
3	New ideas and solutions? Meet the Green Brain.	34
4	The Red Brain is there for your safety	44
5	Is there something like a choice between red and green?	52
6	From red to green on autopilot	63
7	The on/off switch – a simple autopilot that provides you with a choice	66
8	Hassle management is a game	72
9	Being interested: the magic of your brain	76



## Part 2. The next level

10	Managing your hassle creates room for something else than... hassle	80
11	As long as there are people, there will be hassle	86
12	So, why is it actually your hassle?	96
13	The programmed brain, and where the elephant in the room came from	102
14	The primal human in us still roams the African savannah	112
15	Social threats are our new mortal danger	119
16	Let's get started	127
17	The sneaky thing about hassle	134
18	Managing hassle in groups	136
19	A new (r)evolution	138
	Acknowledgements	142
	Check lists	146
	Epilogue	150
	Comments	152
	Recommended reading	154



# Preface

At four meters below sea level, the geography of the Netherlands has caused a lot of hassle for the Dutch. In the history of the country, many people drowned in the floods of 1404, 1421, and 1424, which was reason for authorities to manage things differently. They decided to create water districts that became responsible for regulating the levees in their area. Each district was represented by the farmers in the community who oversaw how the dykes and levees would be maintained. Each farmer was responsible for taking care of his part of the levee. It was of utmost importance for the community that each farmer prospered otherwise he would not be able to take care of his part of the levee, which would have disastrous consequences for the entire community.

Because of this initial form of government that originated in the Middle Ages, the Dutch are today one of the richest, safest, and most organized countries in the world. The Dutch also rank as one of the happiest in the world and their children also score as the happiest. Moreover, the Dutch also have one of the safest and most affordable food supplies in the world.

Yet there is a lot of hassle in the Netherlands. Now the Dutch are hassled about maintaining their prosperity, and sometimes even act as if their country is doomed. Apparently there are other issues associated with hassle than just solving problems. That's the reason why Frank Schurink was inspired to examine stress from a different perspective. The result of his investigation *Managing Hassle*, which he explains in a ground-breaking and comprehensive way how hassle works and how we can disengage hassle from our daily lives.

In this book you can read how our brains permanently produce hassle if we don't manage them, and how we can manage them. It sounds contradictory, but the concept is brilliant in its simplicity. As entrepreneur, business trainer, coach, and passionate innovator Frank figured out in the last decade how it works. In collaboration with the Erasmus University of Rotterdam, Frank Schurink has organized several neuro-marketing conferences where things finally came together.

In January 2013, Frank held his first workshop, and I immediately enrolled. Together we have held several open workshops in Amsterdam and Utrecht. I initially benefitted from his workshops only due to the fact that afterwards I had fewer misunderstandings and arguments with my wife. After my wife enrolled in the workshop, we had even less.

In short, this book and the Hassle Management workshop ensure less hassle in life and allows people to experience better relationships at home, work, and life in general. In a river delta country like the Netherlands, the water management has lead us to the conviction that our society as a whole will flourish even more with Hassle Management.

Gijs Weenink  
*Director of the Debate Academy*



# Introduction

Wouldn't it be a relief if you already knew that you wouldn't be bothered by things that irritate you? The colleague that is never on time with his work, or stuck in traffic and late for an appointment, the criticism from your partner.

Everyone suffers from hassle. But it's interesting that not everybody is effected by the same issue that causes hassle? We might get hassled in the morning by an inbox with a thousand messages that have to be answered while our colleague cheerfully goes about answering their emails with the enthusiasm of someone on vacation. For one person something can be a dreaded activity while for someone else it can be a challenge they actively seek and look forward to.

Things that we want have a different effect on our body and life than those that we don't want. We might even have situations that we actively pursue just because we'll get a kick out of it. Maybe we like doing our own book-keeping, maybe it's even our profession. Personally, I think it's just a lot of hassle.

Hassle we pursue has a completely different effect on our body than hassle that we experience as a problem. For example, unwanted hassle constricts the blood vessels and increases the risk of diseases such as heart failure, while desired hassle does not constrict the blood vessels.

Actually, there is nothing wrong with hassle. One person gets excited doing a job with a tight deadlines "Hey, this is going to be a fun challenge" while the other gets frustrated and thinks "that always happens to me". It's all about whether we're up for hassle or not.

And deciding on what we want, we can also choose to accept and embrace hassle. That's managing hassle in a nutshell; dealing with hassle so it doesn't bother you any more.

## **Pursuing hassle**

The human brain is evolutionarily programmed to be on the lookout for danger, which for centuries has been a necessity for human survival. However, in the modern world we no longer live in an environment with ever present life-threatening hazards such as hungry lions, epidemics, and wars. Now we are situated in an odd dilemma. We live in peace, but our brain pursues war. And if our brain starts looking for threats, it will surely find them. If not for real then in the form of hassle.

Do we allow our brain to go on autopilot and start looking for dangers? Are we going to allow ourselves to get hassled about things? Or do we consciously choose to say no? Managing hassle requires a conscious effort. Anyone can do it. And if you do, you will be generously rewarded in the end. You will not only rid yourself of frustration, which is often caused by hassle, but the learning and innovation capacity of your brain will expand enormously. You will have more space for our creativity, and can direct your energy and focus towards more positive and social developments. Avoid living on autopilot with your red brain focused on hassle. Choose for your green brain, the one that takes care of hassle and helps us make the most out of everything. This book helps make that happen.

## **Something for everyone**

The ideas presented in this book are based on the knowledge and experience I've acquired about the brain over the years. In recent decades, scientists are continuously discovering new facts about our brain, which is not only interesting for surgeons and psychologists, but also for you and me. In my workshops and with this book, I aim to apply this knowledge about the brain, in an area of life that benefits all of us: being smart with hassle. Scientific knowledge is nice to know, but applying it to your daily life is better. Not being hassled while you are stuck in traffic is already worth it.



## Structure of the book

You'll notice that the layout of this book makes it easy to find the information you need. Open it and start reading where ever and whatever appeals to you. It's kind of like a barrel of building blocks. You can randomly pick the blocks you want and start building where you want. There are eye-openers, moments of relief, illustrations, models, insights, and of course texts. I have chosen to structure this book so the reader won't become overwhelmed with scientific data and insights but rather show how it can be applied in a simple way. Enjoy the book and all the ideas that you come up with while reading it.

Frank Schurink  
*Rotterdam*

## Your feedback?

Dear reader,

This is our first translation of the book and not perfect yet. We are very interested in your experience and opinion.

### **What we would really like to know from you is:**

- a. What is missing for you, to make this book work better for the international market?
- b. We did not try to write in perfect English – UK, US or international – I rather liked the idea you can sense the book is not written by a native speaker. This to give you the feeling that we are having a personal conversation. Does that work for you?

Your feedback is much appreciated. Please send your comments to: [\*\*feedback@hasslemanagement.com\*\*](mailto:feedback@hasslemanagement.com)

Hassle as we know it ...

*‘\$\*@F^#!, can anyone*

*‘What do you mean, not ready!’*

*‘I said – e v e r y thing is*

*‘Its complicated.’*

*‘Why is everybody so, so,*

*‘If I don’t do it, nobody will.’*

*please tell me how this works?’*

*‘How much longer . . . ?’*

*‘Why me?’*

*completely fine!’*

*‘Well, here we go again!’*

*I don’t know – difficult?’*

*‘Pffffff’*

# 1 The first thing to understand about hassle: 'We probably don't.'

We all know about hassle in some form or shape. We talk about it. Many of us even 'love' talking about it at home, with friends, colleagues at work. We even dedicate entire meetings to it, in multiple sessions.

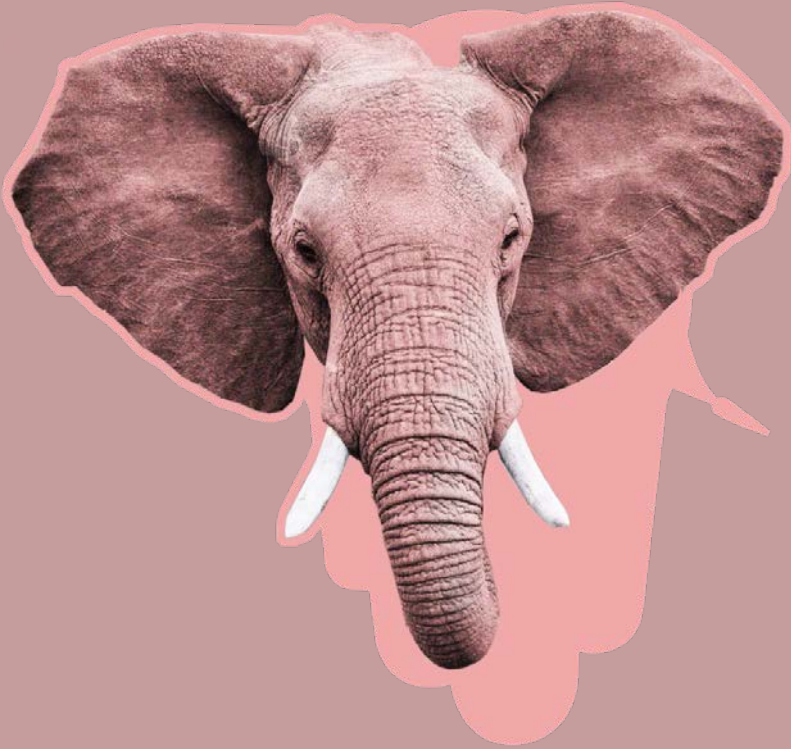
But now, try explaining what hassle exactly is. How do you know you're dealing with hassle? Is it enough that it feels like hassle or that you know for sure? Let me give you a clue. Whenever all the energy and time you spend on that specific topic is not changing very much, then you are most likely dealing with hassle, whatever hassle is.

Hassle is a curious day-to-day phenomenon. It plays a significant role in our lives without any of us really having a clear idea of what it is. Think of it like this: How much time in your life have you spend on dealing with all kinds of stupid or significant hassle? What does that add up to? Now, do you want look into what it actually is. If you're interested in finding that answer, then this book is in the right hands.

## What it's not

In order to figure out what hassle is, We first have to find out what it is not. To get straight to the point, hassle is not the circumstances you are dealing with. Although sometimes circumstances and situations such as full inboxes, financial debt, family, our upbringing, colleagues at work, government or even expectations are often perceived as the hassle in one's life. The circumstances are the reason why, which makes your hassle understandable. But they are not the hassle itself.

*Hassle is like this pink elephant. Imagine him standing in the middle of the room and blocking you. Then it is good to know it is only there because you give it attention. You can always turn the other direction and focus on something else, but the moment you consciously or unconsciously think about it, the elephant is back in the room. Hassle works like that. It is an attention seeker.*



Incomprehensible hassle

## Even a pink elephant can be tamed

A live elephant can be tamed because he exists in reality and we know it is possible. A pink elephant however seems not to be real. But it does exist, just like hassle in our own minds reality.

So why then do we have trouble taming our pink elephants? Simply because we don't want to admit they are there in the first place. Too much of a bother, too difficult to handle so it is better to ignore it. And whatever we ignore, we can't tame either. It's as simple as that.

"They treat me  
like I don't even exist".



## 2 How well do you know your brain – the core of what you think and do?

Of course it sounds like a question with an obvious answer. That makes it even more interesting within the context of Hassle Management. Our brain significantly influences what we do. There are even scientists that argue our brain determines everything we do. In a way that is correct, but it seems to imply that you can't determine what you think and do, as if we are operating on autopilot. That is not how it is. Although many of your thinking and doing is on automatic, you are certainly capable of steering it in the right direction. If you don't, then your brain takes over and determines what you do. But even then we are not completely helpless. After all, our brain is no stranger to us. On the contrary, it has stored our experiences, knowledge, and life lessons. Thus, even if we go through life on autopilot, it is still operating according to everything we programmed it with.

The problem is that for most of the time, we are not aware of what we program and store in our biological system (the brain), which we do not even fully understand how it operates. That sounds like a recipe for hassle, right?

In the vast universe of our brain, there is an operating system that can function in two separate ways. Everyone uses a different mental image to describe what's happening. Daniel Kahneman, Nobel laureate, calls it the 'fast and the slow brain', while others refer to it as 'high and low road'. For managing hassle, I call it the distinction between the red and the green brain. In both cases, the impulses from our brain determines what we do. But, how those impulses are generated and to what extent they affect us, can vary greatly.

# 3 New ideas and solutions? Meet the Green Brain.

Green is a color of something positive and good. It's a sign that we can continue and move forward like a green traffic light. It's not my intention to argue that the green brain is the good one, but that's often how people perceive it. When I talk about how the green brain operates most people get the notion that's the way the brain was meant to be operating.

A flexible brain is interested in new ideas. When it is a fitting idea, it is added to an already existing idea i.e. network of neurons. Something then really changes in the brains, something physical!

## What do I mean by the green brain?

The green brain is the conscious brain. The one that develops and makes new connections, and to a certain extent, can create new brain cells. Until we have reached physical maturity, this process takes place naturally, considering that's the biological way for the brain to develop. After we reach maturity, it is not always obvious for our brain to continue to develop itself. It needs a motivator, a 'you' to get inspired by.

However, the green brain is more than just an evolving brain. First of all, it is a flexible brain. The green brain is competent in developing new ideas – ideas that haven't been stored yet – and it is capable of adapting old ideas. This is not only about the ideas but also about the experiences, emotions, and behaviors associated with them. This way old, internal beliefs can acquire an entirely new meaning. The green brain can step out of your comfort zone.

In neurological science, this is known as the 'plasticity' of the brain. According to various neuroscience research, this plasticity is much greater than what science initially believed. One of the most convincing evidence comes from people who have become blind. The part of





The green or flexible and creative brain.

## 4 The Red Brain is there for your safety

The red brain manages the body's basic functions. It's the brain you wake up with in the morning and you can count on to do its work. You don't have to do anything for the red brain. It's always switched on. In the course of evolution, the red brain developed to ensure that human beings survive as long as possible in a world filled with threats and dangers. In other words, the red brain wants to keep you, itself alive.

The brain is an amazing thing. It is an enormous database where it stores your entire lifetime of experiences. The red brain acts according to all this information in your brain. It knows exactly which experiences you definitely don't want, and which ones you may or may not like. This way the red brain tries to keep you from getting into trouble.

### **A problem searches for a solution**

You might have noticed that life for a big part exists out of solving problems. It's our second nature that we are most of the time not even aware of. From the moment we are born, we are confronted with problems to solve on a daily basis. Our brain is completely geared for spotting problems and looking, on automatic pilot, for possible solutions to these problems. Even when you don't have a problem, your brain is still looking for one, because it is its nature. For example, you are with friends at a party. So it is time to celebrate and have fun, but somehow you are sensitive to what your friends like or not. Your brain knows what might spoil the evening. The solution is to keep yourself to what your brain knows about making it a great evening with these friends. This goes without saying.

Most of the time it works out fine. Your brain comes up with a fitting solution and the problem is solved. But what happens when your brain can't

The red brain is automatically activated without the need to think.

There is either an enormous flow of thoughts or completely nothing. It seems as we are completely left up to our own devices and as if we have no control. This is often called worrying or fretting.



The red brain is a stressed brain, even in the comfort zone.

# Relief 3

## You are not powerless

This might not sound like a relief, rather like the opposite. So why would this be a relief? Because you can do something about it yourself! If the hassle is yours, then you also can do something about it. A relief? Not for everyone, because it means you also are responsible for taking care of it, and not everybody is willing to do that.

The relief primarily indicates that you are not powerless. Hassle is often associated with something that happens to you, overpowering you. But however powerless you might feel, you are not. Maybe at first you don't see how to set a new direction, and there may be good reasons for that, but this doesn't mean you're powerless.

Hassle  
is only  
hassle  
when you  
make it  
hassle



# Comments on the book

"Bright, humorous and confrontational, accessibly written. The lay-out is pleasing to the eye. (...) Interesting for everyone who is dealing with hassle: teenagers, parents, politicians, and yes, for managers and executives too."

**Karin van Wylick**, NBD Biblion

"It looks great and is enjoyable to read (without the common clichés that we often find in "self-help books"). My Compliments!"

**A. Oorthuys** on [managementboek.nl](http://managementboek.nl)

"A very nice book. Frank explains complicated matters in understandable terms. (...) He effortlessly leads the reader into a relaxing story filled with amusing metaphors. Highly recommended."

**M. van den Mosselaar** on [managementboek.nl](http://managementboek.nl)

"Managing Hassle is a true relief. Embrace your hassle and find a solution. And hassle is a part of life, and will always be there. It's a journey through your brain, clearly written and with rich imagery. Perfect for those who are more visually-inclined. Now to train this Off switch!"

**AlexandraBR** on [bol.com](http://bol.com)

"In this pragmatic book Schurink gives the reader practical tools to better cope with problems. In a simple way, he makes clear how our brain operates and how the way we use our brain causes more hassle."

**Maarten Fijnaut**, [managementboek.nl](http://managementboek.nl)

"Managing hassle allows us to become more creative and releases more productive energy in teams, which is very motivating! Reading this book is highly recommended."

**Carola Lucas**, [Expand.nl](http://Expand.nl)

# Comments on the workshop

"Some workshops can be inspiring and astonishing, others can be fun. Some you forget only after one day. But yours was not only inspiring, it was also transformative. It was intelligent and complicated, while at the same time presented in an easy way! Stuff that touches people to the core. On behalf of everybody at XXS, thank you very much".

**Map van Arem**, managing director | partner XXS

"I haven't gotten rid of all my hassle, but that's OK now I know how to deal with it. "

**Frans-Willem van der Velden**, business architect UWV

"Eye opener, even though it's very (bio)logical."

**Jojanneke Wennekker**, account manager INDIE

"Hour and a half of hassle and the rest of your life peace of mind."

**Pieter van Oostveen**, Studio Westkaap

"I enjoyed participating and listening to Frank Schurink during his workshop. Frank has a fresh take on how we as humans often get trapped in negativity and hassle. And when I am stuck there, I lose my creativeness and zest for life. The exercises of getting unstuck were great. I've often think back on them. Thanks."

**Huub Veeneman**, spokesperson and media trainer

# Hassle management

**Hassle is only hassle when you make it hassle.**

You can not hide from hassle. It's everywhere in any situation. That makes hassle a hassle by itself. And a nuisance, because it can ruin your creativity, job satisfaction and effectiveness. But it is good to know there is a way to make hassle stop being a nuisance.

*Stop resisting it. You won't solve hassle by making more hassle.*

In this book by Frank Schurink you will get easy to use tools and surprising insights to manage your hassle, such that you can laugh about your own hassle. Discover how and why your brain is activated by hassle and how you can 'switch off' your hassle with the on/off button. Read how you switch from your red into your green brain so you can become the best version of yourself.



*'Pragmatic book with tangible tools to deal with problems in a better way.'*

**Maarten Fijnaut**, managementboek.nl

*'Clear, humorous and confronting contents. Interesting for anyone who has to deal with hassle.'*

**Karin van Wylick**, NBD Biblio