



Mental and Physical Wellness

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March 2020

Urgent vs. Important

Important	Serving an existing client Meeting a job application deadline	Developing a new client relationship Learning a new topic/skill Exercise Rest
Not important	Submitting a speaker's bio Replying to an email thread	Accepting a coffee chat Most social media
	Urgent	Not urgent

"The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People" - Stephen Covey



1. Physical Fitness



Why This Lecture?

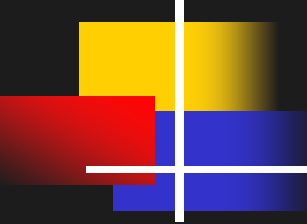
- I'm not an exercise scientist nor PT
 - Have read extensively on the science, but this is no substitute
- 1. Have experienced the challenges of incorporating it in a busy work schedule
- 2. I have no genetic ability
- 3. Behavioural economics
- I'll start by explaining the benefits of exercise
 - Why? We know that exercise is good – why not “just do it”?
 - We're busy; many things are good. Why exercise in particular?
 - Knowing the benefits help us draw up a regimen to maximise them



The Neurological Benefits of Exercise

- Increases blood flow to the brain
- Increases Brain-Derived Neurotrophic Factor (“Miracle Gro”)
 - Increases neurogenesis (production of new brain cells)
 - Neurons sprout more connections; connections form thicker myelin sheaths
 - Especially in hippocampus (memory and learning) children, adults and the elderly
 - Study of sedentary old people: one group hit gym 1 hour 3 times a week for 6 months; others did stretching. Not only 16% increase in VO2 max, but increase in brain volume

The Neurological Benefits of Exercise (cont'd)



- Stresses the body
 - Humans don't need a clear and present danger to elicit a stress response
 - Exercise teaches you view a higher heart rate and breathing as normal, rather than triggering a panic attack. Mild stress associated with challenge and growth
 - Study: 1 group of students ran at 60-90% MHR for 20 mins, 6 times, 2 weeks; another at 1mph, 50% of MHR. First group less sensitive to anxiety
- Increases neurotransmitters typically targeted by antidepressants
 - Serotonin: regulates anxiety
 - Norepinephrine: increases attention
 - Dopamine: gives reward/satisfaction
 - Endorphins: dull pain in the body, produce euphoria in the mind
 - Study: better than Zoloft at treating depression



The Mental Benefits of Exercise

- Focus

- Lecture 1: focusing improves brain. This lecture: exercise does also
- Chess players run and swim
- Study: exercise helped executive control; kids ignored distractions

- Empowerment

- Tangible improvement teaches growth mindset
- Long-term benefits but short-term milestones
- Study: after 2-month exercise programme, subjects smoked less, drank less, ate more healthily, curbed impulse spending
- Especially important for the elderly. Apathy; feel they're waiting to die



The Mental Benefits of Exercise (cont'd)

- Ownership and personal accountability
 - At work, it's easy to blame external circumstances, make excuses
 - Outrage culture. "Between stimulus and response there is that space. In that space is the power to choose our response."¹
 - Individual sport: it's down to you
 - "Fitness is the hardest thing to get because only you can get it. You can't inherit it. You can't win the lottery. You can't buy it. You have to work for it"²
 - "You can find a million and one excuses in life if you want to. I like the excuse 'It is my fault, I am going to do something about it' "³

1. Stephen Covey, *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*
2. Louis Rennocks, ex-Barry's Bootcamp
3. Stuart Pearce, former England football captain



The Mental Benefits of Exercise (cont'd)

- Discipline
 - Easy to make excuses not to exercise, or try less hard
 - “Rationalise” = “rational lies” (Stephen Covey)
 - Be comfortable being uncomfortable; associate pain with progress
- Overcome fear of failure; live boldly
 - Top baseball teams win 60% of games; top batters hit 0.300
 - “100% of the shots you don’t take don’t go in” (Wayne Gretzky)
 - Michael Jordan made more last-minute game-winning shots than any other NBA player. Who missed the most?
- Fun
 - Ex ante as well as ex post



Putting It Into Practice

- Behavioural Insights Team: EAST
- Easy: choose something convenient; make it the default
 - Consistency beats intensity
 - Add it to schedule even if an individual workout
 - Ensures you don't waste time before the workout
 - Small things, e.g. taking stairs – imprint in basal ganglia
- Attractive: choose something fun
 - Add additional rewards during, e.g. temptation bundling
 - Add additional rewards after, e.g. fruit shake, social coffee
 - Febreze in "The Power of Habit" (Charles Duhigg)
 - Focus completely for the mental break, "flow" state (no phone)



Putting It Into Practice (cont'd)

- Individual activity with measurable results
 - Empowerment
 - Accountability
 - Fulfilment (an extra reward)
- Social: group exercise
 - Serotonin from group activities
 - “Hubs”
 - Delegate motivation and design to an expert (coach)
 - Mental break
 - Arrange to go with a friend



2. Mental Wellness



Rest

- Important and not urgent
 - It takes work to stop working
- Society scorns rest
 - Busyness is a boast disguised as a complaint
 - Don't feel guilty about rest; it's earned through discipline in time management
 - Sleep
 - Operate under-capacity. You can't predict when you're suddenly thrust into a meeting and need to be sharp



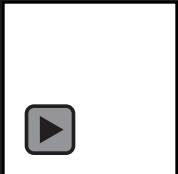
Putting It Into Practice

- Get in the discipline of saying “No” (see Lecture 1)
 - How do natives catch monkeys?
 - “I have to” vs. “I choose to”
 - You have much more agency than you think
 - Reverse pilot
 - Each day should be seen as a gift
- Maintain and cultivate outside interests
 - Work doesn’t drive your emotions
 - You work harder and more efficiently with something to look forward to



Putting It Into Practice (cont'd)

- Plan your rest time
 - Work is structured and stretching; leads to flow
 - Free time is unstructured; people often default to social media
- Take a complete break
 - Eating / listening on the run vs. sitting and enjoying
 - Don't just do something, sit there
 - We are human beings, not human doings
 - Study in *Science* on self-electrocution
 - "When you're in the room, be in the room" – *Hitch*
 - The best present you can give yourself is the present – Spencer Johnson





Respond

- “Between stimulus and response there is that space. In that space is the power to choose our response” (Victor Frankl)
- Reactive vs. proactive people
- Contentment is a discipline; you have to work on it
 - Society teaches us to be perpetually discontent
 - Practice gratitude daily (Shawn Achor’s TED talk)
 - If you don’t like something, like it
 - Pre-frontal cortex can synthesise happiness (Dan Gilbert’s TED talk)
 - “There is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so” – *Hamlet*
 - No glass is 100% empty
 - Focus on the intrinsic, not the instrumental



Dealing With Failure

- How to respond to a tough situation?
 - Failure is just part of life
 - “Once you know that life is difficult, then life is no longer difficult”¹
- A bad meeting
 - Is negligible compared to your whole career
 - Gives the chance to build character, like a tough workout
- Treat others the way you treat yourself
- Extract from Dr. Seuss – *Oh, the Places You’ll Go!*

1. M. Scott Peck, “The Road Less Travelled”

Dealing With Difficulties

"What is the bravest thing
you've ever said?" asked
the boy.



"What is the bravest thing
you've ever said?" asked
the boy.



"Help," said the horse.



Dealing With Difficulties

- You'd see a doctor when sick, a personal trainer for exercise
- You wouldn't be expected to run on a broken leg, so shouldn't be expected to suck it up if tired or emotionally broken
 - "Why we all need to practice emotional first aid": Guy Winch
 - Even as a first-year analyst
- Counsellor
- Executive coach