Wellness @ Work
April 2020

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Focused work, fulfilling life

Your world is the result of what you pay attention to. Choosing to focus on one demanding task at a time without distraction not only increases job performance, but also provides a sense of fulfillment. This concept is called deep work, as defined by author of our monthly book club selection and professor, Cal Newport. Deep work is a trainable skill that will make you better at what you do, help you learn new skills more quickly, and provide the sense of true fulfillment that comes from purposeful craftsmanship.

A mastered skill is the result of developed brain circuits. Practice and use of the brain circuits develops more myelin around the relevant neurons, which allows the corresponding circuit to fire more effortlessly and effectively. Focusing intently on a singular task is the only way to isolate the relevant circuit enough to trigger useful myelination. As Newport explains, “to be great at something is to be well myelinated.”

Deep work generates a psychological concept called flow, where you may lose track of time, challenges are manageable, and progress is made towards a goal. Studies show that more flow experiences in a week correlate with higher life satisfaction. If you spend your time bouncing from distraction to distraction, even outside of work, you can permanently reduce your capacity to perform deep work.

To increase your experiences of flow at work or at home check out the Activate section of our newsletter and try these tips:

- Make sure your tasks are challenging, but not too difficult
- Establish a quiet, peak time to do your work
- Turn off distractions like email, music or your phone

Book Club

Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World
by Cal Newport

Deep work is the ability to focus without distraction on a cognitively demanding task. It’s a skill that allows you to quickly master complicated information and produce better results in less time. In short, focus is like your personal super power in our increasingly competitive twenty-first century economy.

Instead of arguing that all of our favorite distractions are bad, he instead celebrates the power of its opposite. The book has two parts, part one makes the case that for any career, cultivating a deep work ethic will produce a great return. Part two is a mind training regimen, presented as a series of four “rules,” for transforming your mind and habits to support this skill. The training includes:

1. Work Deeply
2. Embrace Boredom
3. Quit Social Media
4. Drain the Shallows

With a mix of actionable advice and memorable stories, Deep Work is the guide to anyone seeking focused success in a distracted world.

Discussion questions

1. What are two high-level goals for both your personal and professional life, and what are two or three activities to help you satisfy them?
2. Newport explains that much in the same way that athletes must take care of their bodies outside of their training session, you’ll struggle to achieve the deepest levels of concentration if you spend the rest of your time fleeing the slightest hint of boredom. What distracts you? What boundaries can you create?
3. What professional tasks create flow for you?
4. How will you create a routine for deep work?
Give it a try...

**Insight Timer App**
Reduce stress, control emotions, increase self-awareness. The benefits of meditation are well documented. But, the benefits go beyond the immediate effects. Those who meditate on a regular basis have less inflammation in the body, increased attention span and ability to focus on work tasks along with reduced age related memory loss. One recommended way to get started is to use a guided meditation app.

With a guide speaking to you, meditations become easier to focus on. The Insight Timer App allows you to:

- Utilize 30,000 meditations
- Select the topic and length of your meditation
- Select the right meditation for you based on ratings and book mark your favorites

This free app is available for download in the Andriod and iOS stores.

Find out more and listen online at [INSIGHTTIMER.COM](http://INSIGHTTIMER.COM).

**Skills-based volunteering**
Giving back is a great way to improve your job skills, practice your talents and fulfill your purpose. It also fills a void that many non-profits across the country are experiencing—being stretched thin with the increasing needs of those they serve. Professional expertise may be a resource you can provide to make an impact on social issues.

Skills-based volunteering means leveraging the specialized skills and talents of individuals to strengthen the infrastructure of nonprofits. This type of giving back will help organizations build and sustain their capacity to successfully achieve their missions, overcome challenges and increase their capacity.

What types of skills can you donate?
- Strategic planning
- Marketing
- Information technology
- Training
- Research
- Survey and reporting
- Recruitment
- Recruitment and retention
- Program development

**Event training**
Warmer temperatures often encourage people to spend more time being physically active outdoors. Race training is a popular activity that many people often aspire to do, but sometimes do not know how to begin. Here are a few tips to consider when training for an event:

1. **Make sure you purchase good running shoes.** Everyone’s feet are different, so it is important to work with a professional at a performance shoe store to find the type of shoe that is going to work for you. Having the right shoe reduces your risk for injury.

2. **Stay hydrated.** Once you start training, it is important that you increase your water intake. By the time you feel thirsty, your body is telling you that you are already dehydrated.

3. **Remember to start slow.** If you sign up for a running event, it is okay to start with just walking or interval training (alternating running and walking). Using an app that cycles through these two physical activities can be helpful. Try running 3 days a week to allow rest days so your body can recover.

4. **Try cross training.** Doing alternative modes of exercise like strength and flexibility training will help increase your endurance and reduce risk of injury.

If you are thinking about training for a race and would like additional guidance, contact Sanford Health Plan Exercise Specialist for a consultation at maggie.rechtenbaugh@sanfordhealth.org or call (605) 328-6852.
Chocolate Swirl Berry Yogurt Bark

Serves: 15
Total Time: 6 hours | Prep: 5 min

Ingredients:
32 Ounces Fat Free or Low Fat Vanilla Greek Yogurt
1 to 2 cups of fresh Berries of Choice - blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, sliced strawberries
3/4 Cup Chocolate Chips (semi-sweet or milk chocolate)

Directions:
Cover a rimmed cookie sheet with parchment paper and evenly spread the entire container of yogurt into an even layer.
Sprinkle with berries and slightly press them down into the yogurt. Place the chocolate chips in a microwave safe bowl and heat for 30 second intervals, stirring in between each interval, until melted. Drizzle the chocolate over the berries and yogurt. Freeze for at least 6 hours or until hardened. Cut or break the bark into about 15 pieces and store in an airtight container in the freezer for up to 2 weeks.

Nutrition Facts:
Calories: 53   Total Fat: 1g   Sodium: 27mg   Total Carbohydrates: 6g
Dietary Fiber: 1.5g   Total Protein: 6g

Nutrition information compiled using MyNetDiary.com

Activate!

SKILLS TEST
You can train your brain to improve focus despite distractions, tiredness or even boredom. Each question of the skills test will help you reveal strategies to improve your focus as well as increasing awareness of how well you can currently focus today. Take the test, then add in routines and rituals to your working life that minimize the amount of willpower needed to transition into deep work. Come back to the test in a month to see what has changed or improved for you.

Here are a few more strategies to increase your focus and create flow at work or home:
• Batch hard but important work into long, uninterrupted stretches
• Have a specific goal that will return tangible and substantial professional benefits
• Schedule in advance when you will do something that is considered distracting, like using the internet or checking your phone
• Plan a walk during your workday for the purpose of applying productive meditation to your most pressing problem at the moment

Monthly Observances
Alcohol
Autism
Distracted Driving
7—Health
16—Healthcare Decisions
17—Donate Life
24-30—Immunization

QUICK LINKS
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SET-UP A
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