



# Mindfulness @ Work

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# Life 1000 Years Ago



- Comparatively a life of silence
  - No noise of traffic or an approaching TTC subway
  - No constant hum of computer fans and central air
  - No television, radio, or telephones intruding on our auditory space
  - No crowds aggregated within massive malls with voices reverberating off the walls as if we are living in a giant instrument
- A life of routine
- A life with serious dangers, but obvious dangers and sporadically so

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# Life Today: Loud



# Life Today: Mirage of Routine



07:00	07:00 - Remember Cat Medication
	07:30 - 7:30pm to 8pm Daycare Drop off (MD's day)
08:00	
	08:15 - Contact CPO regarding reg documents
09:00	09:00 - 10:00 Therapy - HS
10:00	10:00 - 11:00 Therapy - LT
11:00	11:00 - Supervision - JM
	11:30 - Supervision - KB
12:00	12:00 - 13:00 Lunch meeting with SCB
13:00	13:00 - 14:30 Assessment - PK
14:00	
	14:30 - 16:00 Assessment - WY
15:00	
16:00	
	16:45 - Daycare Drop off (MD's day)
17:00	
18:00	
19:00	19:15 - 20:15 OAPA Quarterly Meeting (GoToMeeting)
20:00	
	20:30 - Supervision - DB (GoToMeeting)
21:00	
22:00	
	22:30 - 23:30 Go To Bed: Your night feeding night
23:00	

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09:00	09:00 - 10:00 Therapy - HS	TODD NEEDS INSURANCE FORMS BY END OF DAY
10:00	10:00 - 11:00 Therapy - LT	
11:00	11:00 - Supervision - JM	TODD: CPO APPAREL DUE WEDNESDAY
	<del>11:00 - Supervision - JM</del>	<del>TODD: CPO APPAREL DUE WEDNESDAY</del>
		<del>DO INSURANCE FORMS FOR HS</del>
12:00	12:00 - 13:00 Lunch meeting with SCB	TODD: COMPLETE ASP CONTRACT LA. NEEDS US TO CO-TRADE SCAM- EBOOK PART ONE AND TFC CPO SAYS DOCUMENTS NEEDED TO FIND + ISSUED BY THE END PL CALLS - WHELAN AND ZUMBA
13:00	13:00 - 14:30 Assessment - PK	30 MINUTES LATE! WY INFORMED TO START AT 3PM CALLED P.L. SACK; THERAPY SESSION ADDED TO A.M.
14:00		
15:00	14:30 - 15:00 Assessment - WY	15:00 - 15:30 DAYCARE CALLED RE: LATE PICKUP TODD: MAKING CPO DOCUMENT FOUND; SIGNED
16:00		
17:00	16:45 - Daycare Drop off (MD's day)	- LAT THOM KNOW TOMORROW DROP OFF EARLY
18:00	Pick-up NIGHT DIAPERS	NOTE: CPO DOCUMENTS CAN'T BE SIGNED ON iPad OR FAX; SCB TO COVER
19:00	19:15 - 20:15 OAPA Quarterly Meeting (GoToMeeting)	MY TODD: CONTACT SPEAKERS; LEGISLATION UPDATE FOR MEMBERS BY PRIOR. DELEGATE: CONFERENCE VALUE PROBLEM
20:00		
21:00	20:30 - Supervision - DB (GoToMeeting)	CAN WE FIND \$ FOR TREATMENT WEBINAR? ↳ SHOULD I TAKE TO?
22:00		EMAILS: 100+! SLACK: RESPONDED TO ALL STAFF MESSAGES. Yay!
23:00	22:30 - 23:30 Go To Bed: Your night feeding night	

# Life Today: Shifting Dangers



- Old dangers no longer part of daily life
  - We don't have to worry about wild animals
  - A small cut does not likely risk death
  - Starvation is very unlikely
- New dangers
  - Chronic stress and fatigue
  - Judgment errors due to distraction and sensory overload
  - Lack of time to complete other essential activities (e.g. physical fitness)
  - Broken relationships creating future losses and hardships

# The Problem: Evolution is Slow

- Here's the problem:
  - Evolution is a very slow process
  - Our brains have changed very little (if at all) over the last 1000 years
  - Our world is changing at an exponential rate
  - This has thrown things out of balance



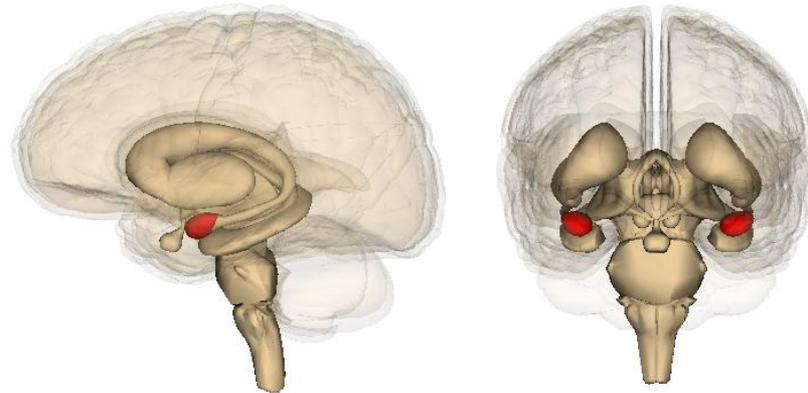
# Your Lifestyle Brain is Making You Sick



- It is not our environment that is the problem, it is how we are interacting with our environment
- A very old part of our brain is treating many daily activities as if they were attacking bears
- Our attention system is unable to properly filter our environment, leading to a lack of awareness regarding what is impacting us in the moment and putting us on autopilot

# Amygdala

- Our fight, flight, or freeze system
- Activation prepares our body for crisis
- It also deactivates our strategic problem solving



# Attention



- When bombarded by attention signals our brain chooses to filter out much of what we are being exposed to
- However, that filtering may restrict only our conscious reactivity
- What unconscious factors are influencing us in this moment?



# Where does this leave us?



- With a lack of control
  - Our compromised attention system means we are not aware of what factors are driving us from one moment to the next
  - Our amygdala is placing us into crisis mode throughout the day, making us less effective at moving forward and resolving problems even if we are aware of them
- We lack attention *and* intention

# Where does this leave us at work?



- We are less productive due to distraction and a lack of acting strategically
- We are prone to illness, increasing sick days and decreasing continuity
- We are unhappy, leading to turnover
- We require increased mental health supports, but face dwindling budgets
- We are interacting with our peers, our clients, and our employees in a manner that is influenced by every previous interaction or event in our day

# Forget Darwin, Let's Change it Ourselves



- Fortunately, we have hard science showing that we can counter evolutions problems
- Mindfulness exercises, when properly trained and practiced routinely, have shown measurable and permanent changes on MRI scans within weeks
- So what are mindfulness exercises?
  - Cognitive exercises that promote increased control over your attention systems and your self-directed responses to those signals
  - In essence, they promote self-awareness and self-control

# Who's on board?

- Military: Navy Seals
- Police Forces
- Mental Health
- Customer Service Training
- Management Training



# Breathing Practice



- Why breathing?
  - It's always there – a point of focus
- Breathing exercises can derail an out of control amygdala
- Let's try an exercise:
  - Focus is lost?
  - Notice this (attention)
  - Return to point of focus (intention)

## What's the research say?



- Daily for 5 weeks, call center employees listened to 10 minutes of guided meditation before work and five minutes after lunch
  - Over the course of the program stress, anxiety, depression, negative emotion, and fatigue all dropped
  - Clients satisfaction went up
- There are hundreds of similar studies on group work, leadership, communication, etc.

# What kind of practices can be applied?



- Choosing to start your day
- Looking for transitions to reset
- Mindful eating and drinking practices
- Look for opportunities to not multi-task (e.g. walking)
- Noticing at your desk (e.g. computer rebooting; phone ringing)
- Checking in – what is here with me right now?
- Be mindful of pseudo-mindfulness peddlers, there are good trainers out there.

# References

- All images were used under creative commons licenses:
  - <http://www.cgpgrey.com/>
  - <https://www.flickr.com/photos/rthakrar/>
- Call center study:  
<http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12671-014-0328-9>

