



MIAMI UNIVERSITY



Life Hacks for Stress: Holiday Edition

December 10, 2020 12-1pm

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Employee Benefits & Wellness



Introductions

- I've had the pleasure of working with Miami's Employee Benefits & Wellness program for the past 11 years.
- We promote physical activity, healthy eating, work & life support, preventive health, and healthy environment programs.
- My background includes a Master's Degree in Clinical Exercise Physiology and certifications for Yoga Instruction, Health Coaching, and Mental Health First Aid.



Game Plan

Webinar Overview

- Discuss stress, how it impact us, and why holidays are tough
- Review 6 “life hacks” for stressful times
- Try out a few of the hacks ourselves with guided activity breaks
- Make the case that a little goes a long way
- Leave time for discussion & questions

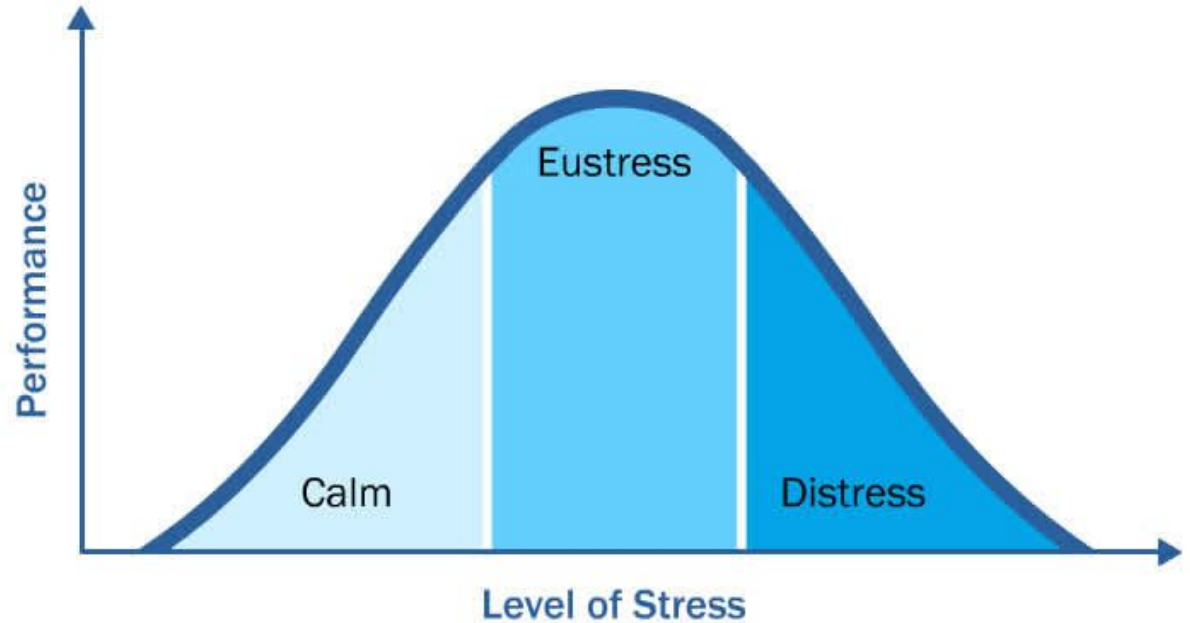


Stress Continuum

Not all stress is bad

Three main categories:

1. Calm/ relaxed
2. Eustress
3. Distress

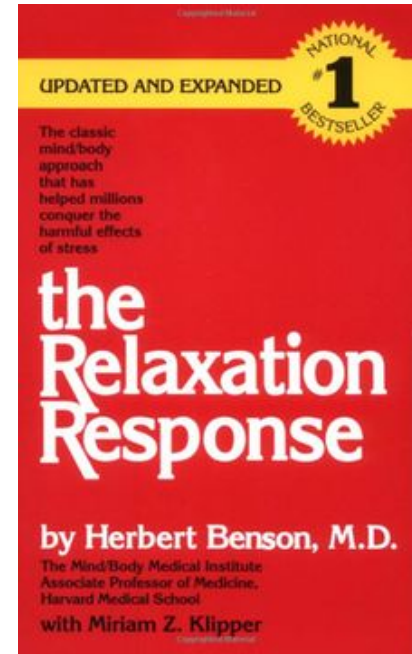


Stress & Our Body

The mind and body connection



vs.



Stress & Our Nervous System

SYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM

Stress Response

Revs you up, preparing you to fight, take flight or freeze

- Heart beats fast
- Breath is fast and shallow
- Pupils of eyes expand (can make you sensitive to light)
- Gut becomes inactive (difficult to digest)
- Blood rushes to your skeletal muscles and away from your brain, making it hard to think clearly
- Hormones rush through your body, making you feel anxious
- Expend your energy

PARASYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM

Relaxation Response

Calms you down, preparing you to rest, think and restore

- Heart beats in slow, rhythmic pattern
- Breath is full and slow
- Pupils of eyes shrink
- Gut is active (helps you digest and absorb the nutrients from your food)
- Increased blood flow to gut, lungs and brain
- Hormones rush in, lifting your mood and helping you to relax
- Conserves your energy



Holiday Stress

It's all about expectations

- Let's acknowledge these times are hard
- Changing routines are stressful
- We need self-compassion and kindness
- Regularly ask yourself how am I doing?
- Reach out for help and support
- Keep it simple, start small
- Try a Holiday Stress Life Hack...



6 Life Hacks

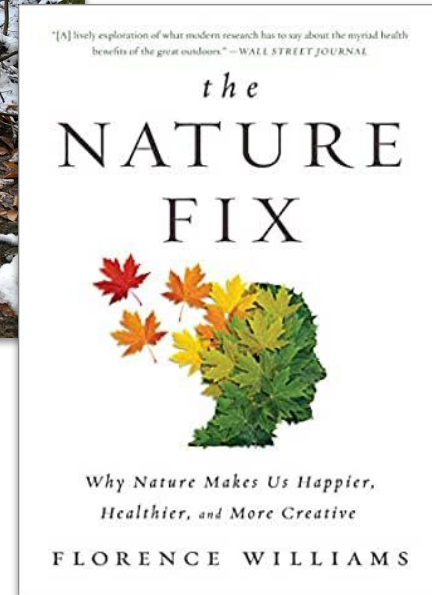
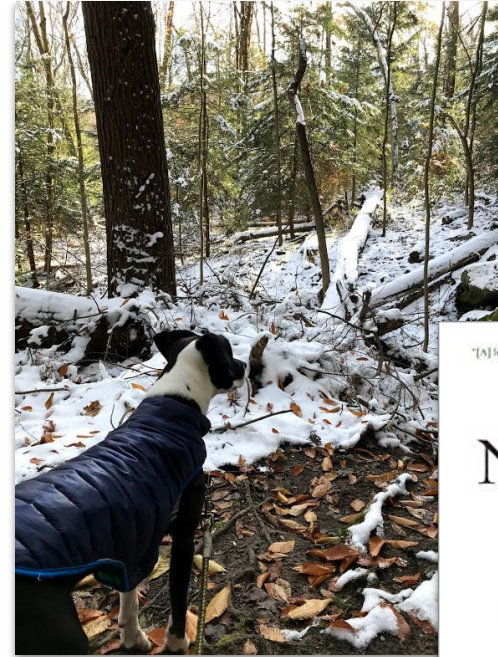
To surf the waves of holiday stress

- Nature
- Movement
- Gratitude
- Social Connection
- Meditation
- Play



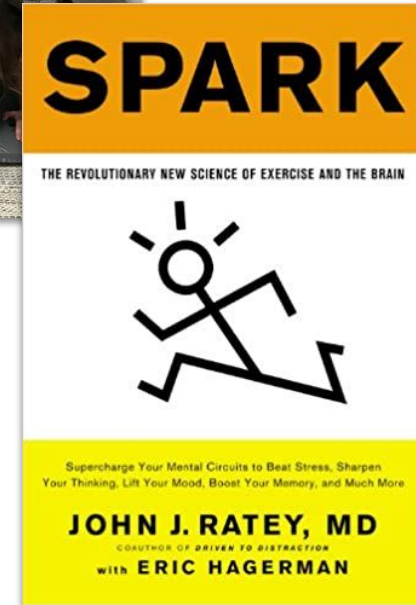
#1: Nature

- Spending time in nature makes us healthier, more creative, more empathetic and more apt to engage with the world and with each other. (Williams, 2017)
- People walking in nature (versus urban setting) showed decreased rumination. (Brotman et al., 2015)
- Feelings of awe can make your sense of time expand and increase willingness to give your time to others. (Rudd, Vohs, & Aaker, 2012)

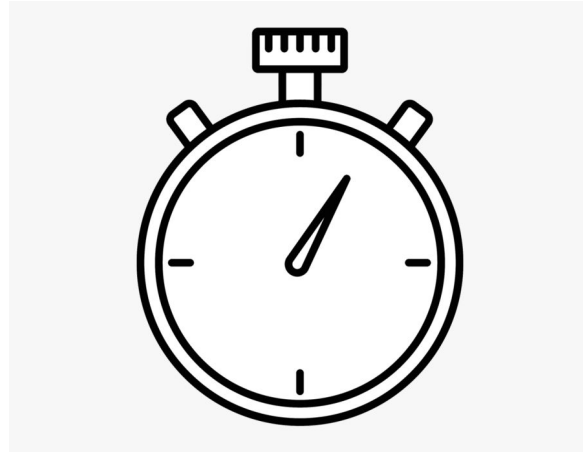


#2: Movement

- Hippocrates recommended that all people in a bad mood should go for a walk—and if the mood did not improve, walk again :)
- Multiple studies have nailed down a direct biological connection between movement and cognitive function (Ratey, 2013)
- Move the body to support mental health, sleep, and hydration

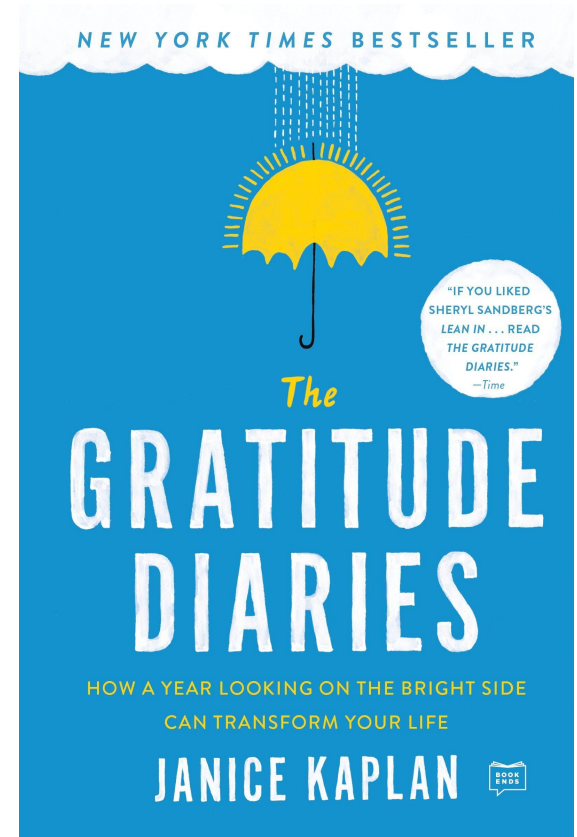


Stretch Break



#3: Gratitude

- Past adversity fosters ability to savor the present (Croft, Dunn, & Quoidbach, 2013)
- You can't be passively grateful, you actually have to stop and feel it, experience the emotion. This creates an inner richness that's sustaining in difficult times as well as good ones. (Kaplan, 2015)
- Researchers have found that people who write down three things they're grateful for every night (or even a few times a week) improve their well-being and lower their risk of depression. (Kaplan, 2015)

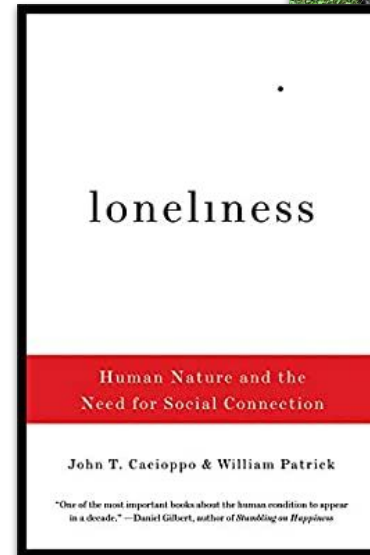


Journaling Break

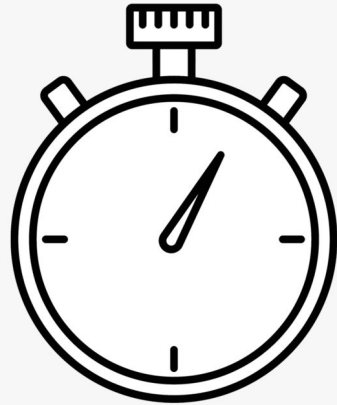


#4: Social Connection

- Belonging is a fundamental human need, invest in nourishing relationships
- A sense of isolation disrupts not only our thinking abilities and will power but also our immune systems (Cacioppo, 2016)
- “Weak ties” produce well-being above & beyond “strong tie” relationships (Sandstrom & Dunn, 2014)



Connection Break



7 DAYS OF CONNECTING CHALLENGE

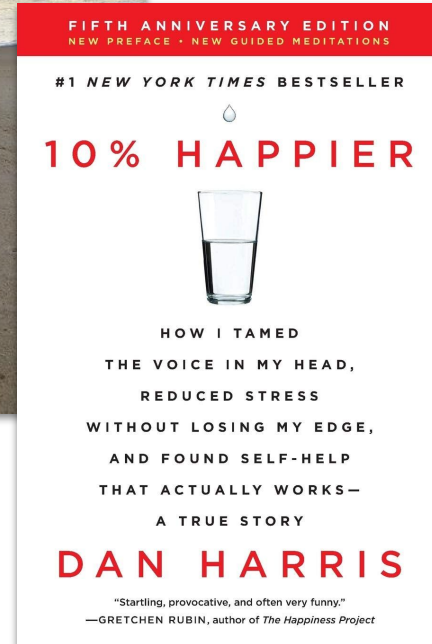
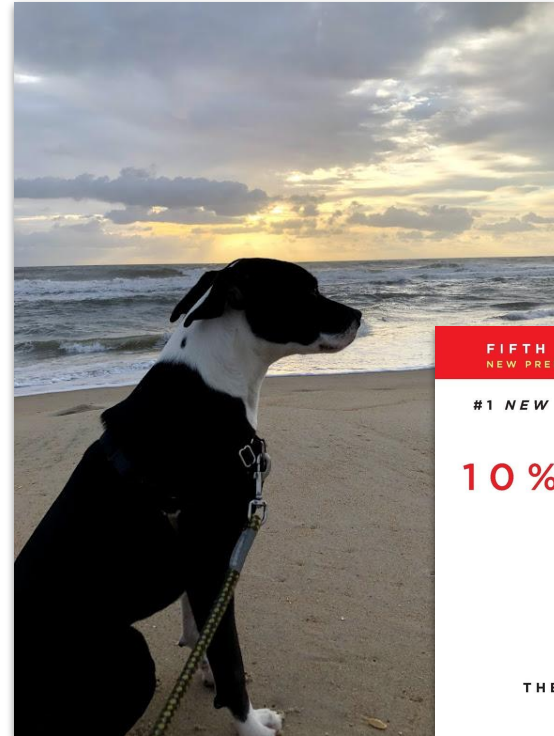
TRY FOR 7 DAYS IN A ROW OR PICK YOUR OWN
DAYS TO PARTICIPATE DURING THE MONTH OF
DECEMBER!

- CREATE SOMETHING (DRAW, JOURNAL, PAINT)
- VIDEO CALL A FRIEND
- READ YOUR FAVORITE BOOK OR WATCH YOUR FAVORITE MOVIE,
- SEND A LETTER.
- COOK/BAKE A NEW RECIPE AND DELIVER TO FRIENDS/FAMILY
- PAY IT FORWARD
- MESSAGE SOMEONE YOU HAVEN'T SPOKEN WITH RECENTLY TO CATCH UP

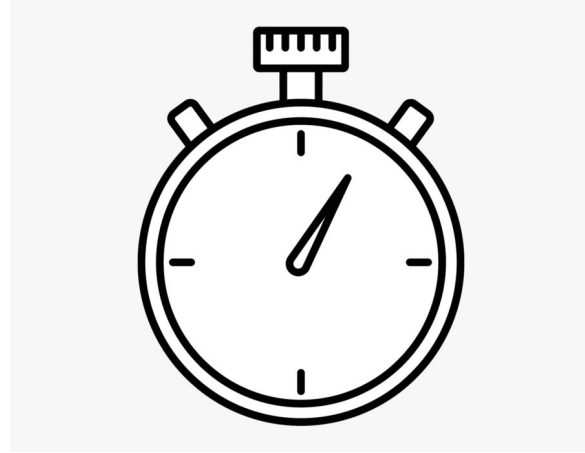


#5: Meditation

- Mindfulness meditation is paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally. (John Kabot-Zinn)
- Spend time with sensing vs thinking
- Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, but today is a gift. That is why it is called present. (Master Oogway, Kung Fu Panda)
- Meditation is not about feeling a certain way. It's about feeling the way you feel. (Dan Harris)

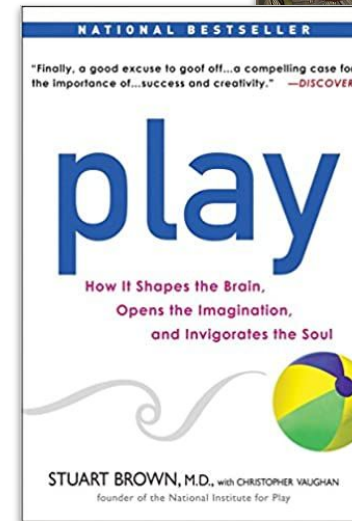


Mindful Break



#6: Play

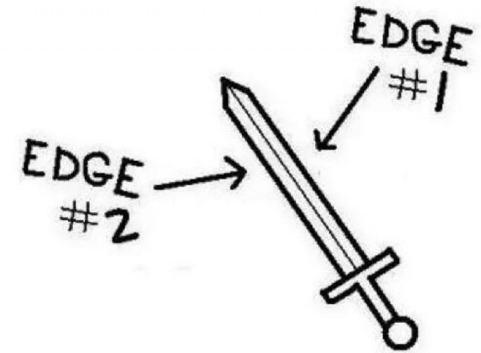
- Stepping out of a normal routine, finding novelty, being open to serendipity, enjoying the unexpected, embracing a little risk, and finding pleasure in the heightened vividness of life. These are all qualities of a state of play. (Brown)
- Laughter relieves stress, boosts engagement and well-being, and spurs not only creativity and collaboration but also analytic precision and productivity (Brown)
- The arts can offer stress relief in many forms...dance, music, comedy, movies, theatre, poetry, good book, etc.



**Any questions on our 6 hacks?
Please share examples or experiences?**

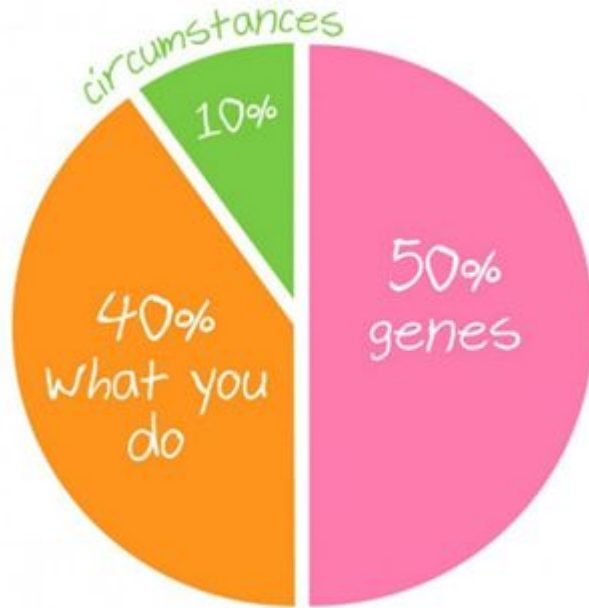


Technology



Happiness Set Point

What defines your happiness:



Three factors:

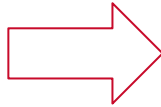
- Genes are predetermined by parents and family
- Circumstances have varied ability to control
- What you do: Your conscious actions, thoughts, and choices

Lyubomirsky, S., Sheldon, K.M., & Schkade, D. (2005) Pursuing happiness: The architecture of sustainable change. *Review of General Psychology*, 9, 111-131.



Summary

Absorb what is useful, discard what is useless, and add what is specifically your own. (Bruce Lee)





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Questions?





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Thank You!

