



Harnessing the Power of Stress

Marcia Narine Weldon
 Founder, CEO Illuminating Wisdom®
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Who am I and why should you listen to me?

Law Professor at University of Miami	GC of a startup
Former Deputy GC, Chief Compliance Officer, Chief Privacy Officer, HR Executive of Fortune 500 Company	Former lawyer at two AmLaw 50 law firms
Executive coach for lawyers and other professionals	Trained/certified in mental health first aid, meditation, EFT, reiki, brain health, hypnotherapy, breathwork, and NLP
Two very ill parents and a family member with bipolar and a substance use disorder	Happy lawyer for 31 years (really!)

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My mission is to
change the legal
profession and
how we practice
law



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Reorient
how you
think about
stress

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Study of 30,000 adults in the US over 8 years

Those who had a lot of stress the prior year and believed that stress would kill them had a 43% higher death rate

Those who had significant stress the prior year and believed that stress was natural and wouldn't hurt them had the lowest risk of death

- Even lower than those who did not experience significant stress

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You will leave with tools but...

Check with a medical or mental health professional before trying some of the recommendations

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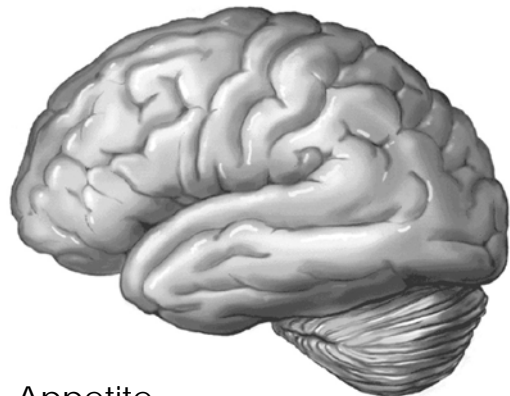
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Know Your Brain

Some practical brain regions

- Prefrontal Cortex: CEO
- Anterior Cingulate: Cognitive Flexibility
- Basal Ganglia: Motivation, Emotions,
- Amygdala: Fear Factor
- Limbic System: Mood, Memories, Sleep, Appetite



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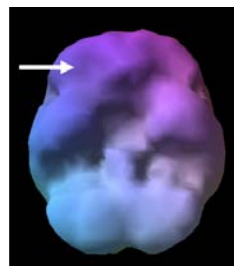
PFC Functions

- Focus
- Forethought
- Judgment
- Impulse control
- Organization
- Planning
- Empathy
- Learning from your mistakes

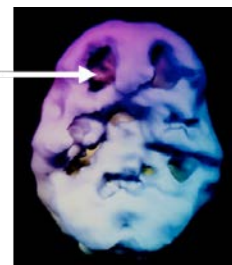


PFC Problems

- Short attention span
- Distractibility
- Disorganization
- Procrastination
- Impulse control problems
- Poor judgment
- Lack of empathy or insight
- Trouble learning from mistakes



Healthy
Prefrontal
Cortex Activity



Low Prefrontal
Cortex Activity





Brain Chemicals

Dopamine- pleasure reward

Norepinephrine- sparks interest

Epinephrine/Adrenaline- brings energy

Cortisol- scan for danger

Oxytocin- bonding- mother and child/orgasm

Serotonin- stabilizes mood, well-being, satiety

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Happiness Pays Off

Happy people are 31% more productive, have 37% higher sales, and are three times more creative than their counterparts.

Happiness helps the cardiovascular and immune systems, influences hormones and inflammation levels and speeds wound healing.

People's happiness setpoint is based 50% on genetics; 40% learned habits; 10% circumstance



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Happy people
are 35% less
likely to get sick

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Cortisol levels
(stress response)
are 32% lower in
happy people.

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Sleep disorders
are 47% higher
for people who
aren't happy

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Happy people
live on average
9 years longer

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Happy employees
are **78%** more
engaged
at work

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THE THIRTEEN WORKPLACE FACTORS



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NON-NEGOTIABLE EXPECTATIONS

- 1) PH is an AmLaw 20 law firm. You're in the big leagues, which is a privilege, act like it.
- 2) We are in the business of client service – you are the concierge at the Four Seasons, a waiter at Alinea. The client always comes first and is always right. If a client wants a mountain moved, we move it. No questions.
 - As a junior, your "clients" are the associates and partners on the deal team.
- 3) You are "online" 24/7. No exceptions, no excuses.
- 4) Timelines/Quality: clients expect everything to be done perfectly and delivered yesterday.
- 5) Someone is paying \$850+ for one hour of your time. Think about that in everything you do. All communication and work product needs to be prompt, professional and polished.
- 6) Take ownership of everything you do. Once you touch a document/work stream, you own every mistake in it – fair or not.
- 7) WFH is a luxury. Don't take advantage of it. Buy a full home setup (2 monitors, docking station, keyboard/mouse and a working phone) or come into the office. No poor connections. No excuses. See #3 and #5.
- 8) No questions until you've tried to figure something out for yourself (Google unfamiliar concepts, search the DMS, read statutes, read the instructions, etc.). Still can't figure out the answer? Talk to your classmates.
- 9) "I don't know" is never an acceptable answer. See #6 and #8.
- 10) This is YOUR career. Embrace that reality and always put your best foot forward, if not for the Firm or your deal team, for yourself. At the end of the day, it's your reputation that will carry you – whether that's here or in-house or elsewhere. Make it count.

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What Happens
When The
Psychosocial
Factors Don't Exist
In The
Workplace?



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What is stress?

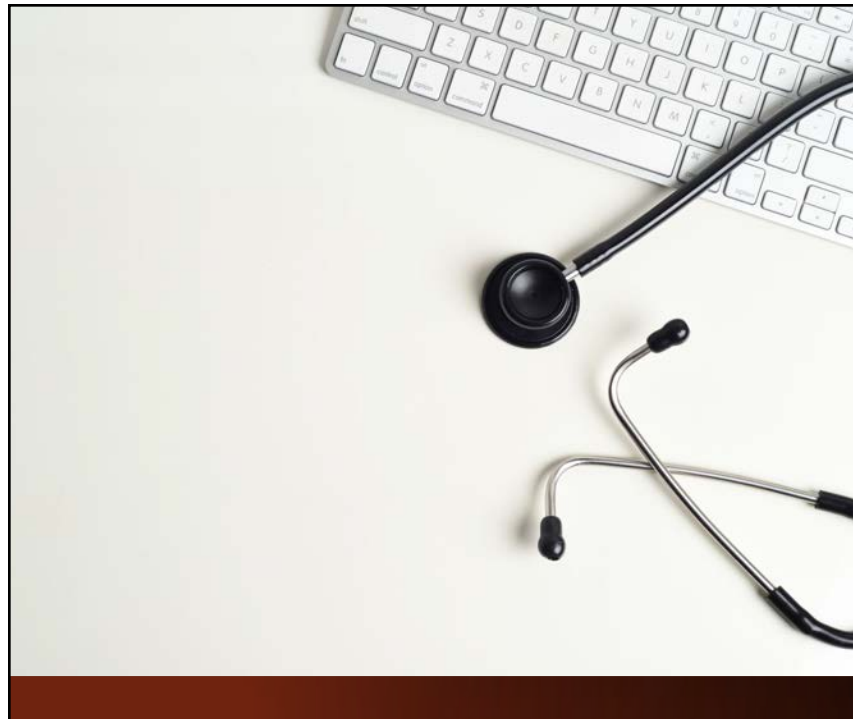
- What happens in your mind and body when something you care about is at stake
- We only stress about things we care about
- We don't stress about what we don't care about
- What matters is how we channel it and what our mindset is



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Burnout

"A syndrome.... resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed." - World Health Organization

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What is Burnout?

"A state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by long term involvement in emotionally demanding situations." – Ayala Pines and Elliot Aronson.

"A state of fatigue or frustration brought about by devotion to a cause, way of life, or relationship that failed to produce the expected reward." – Herbert J. Freudenberger.

Burned out people are committed to their work

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Stress	Burnout
You put in too much effort	It's hard to put in any effort
You feel emotions more strongly	Your emotions feel blunted
You feel hyperactive and anxious	You feel drained and helpless
You have less energy	You have less motivation
It takes a physical toll	It takes an emotional toll

Dr Craig Dike, 2017

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Impact on Productivity and the Bottom Line

Chronically stressed employees can be up to 70% less productive

90% of lawyers score in the bottom half of the scale for resilience

Litigators and solo practitioners burn out at higher rates

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Sobering Statistics

32% of lawyers under age 30 have a problem with alcohol or substance abuse

28% of lawyers have struggled with some level of depression

19% of lawyers exhibit symptoms of anxiety and stress

11% of lawyers have had suicidal thoughts

Lawyers rank #4 among professions in suicide rates

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Top Four Impacts on Firm/Substance Use and Mental Health

1. Threat or damage to clients
2. Threat or damage to reputation
3. Threat to firm productivity
4. Damage to work environment

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Emotional Resilience

- The courage to grow from stress
- Putting yourself in stressful situations and choosing how you will change because of what you're dealing with



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Mindset:

Core beliefs or assumptions about domains or categories of things

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What Is Mindset?

Fixed Mindset

The belief that intelligence is a fixed trait, like eye color



Growth Mindset

The belief that intelligence can be developed, like a muscle

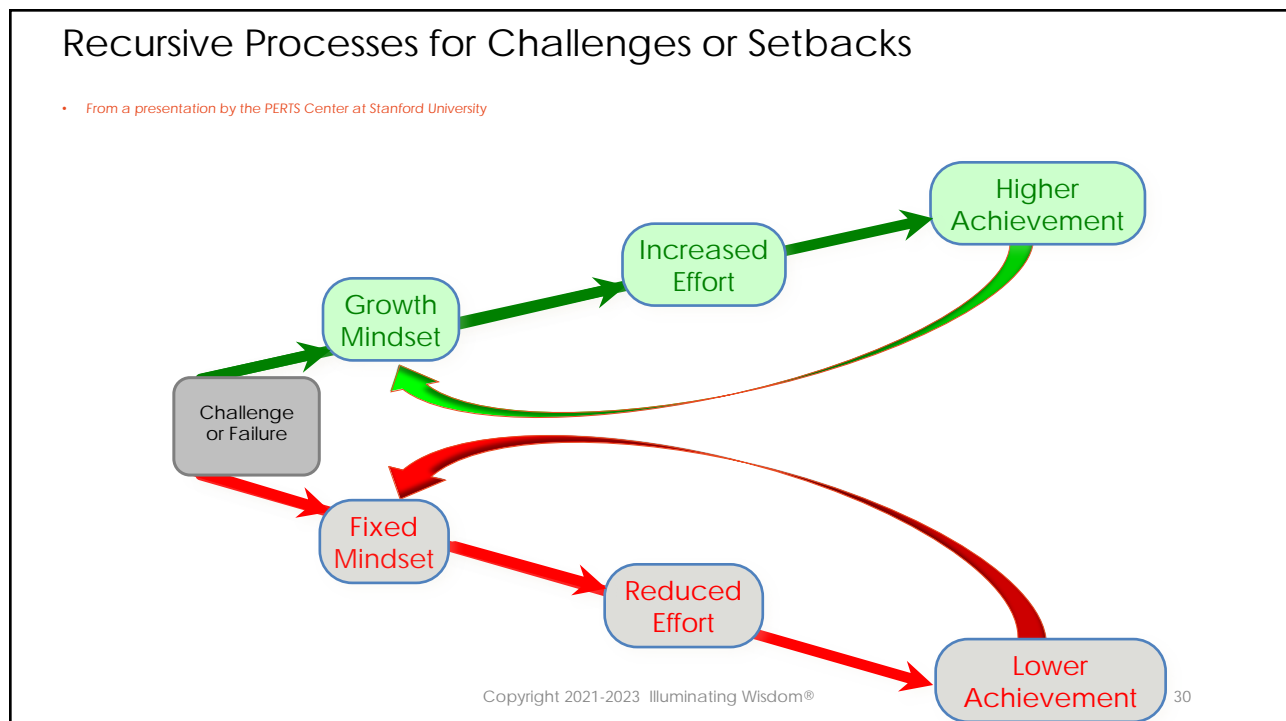


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The effects of a fixed mindset

- Fixed mindset won't course correct won't admit they are wrong.
- Focus on effort and not ability/praise
- On brainwave scans, fixed mindset brainwaves don't show change when they're told how they could have improved.
- Fixed mindset students show a higher level of depression because setbacks made them feel unworthy.
- Fixed mindset often devalues effort because the focus is on ability.

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Mindset and Failure

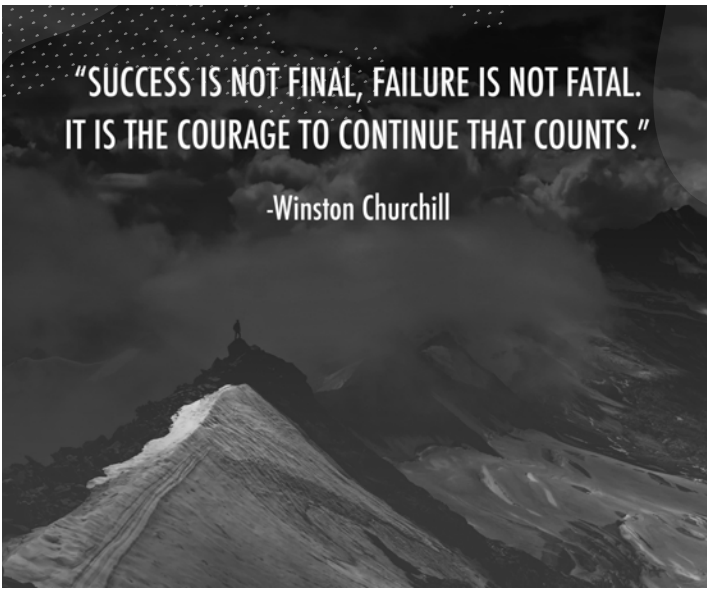
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Failure File

Learning from your mistakes

- When
- How
- Why
- What did I learn



"SUCCESS IS NOT FINAL, FAILURE IS NOT FATAL.
IT IS THE COURAGE TO CONTINUE THAT COUNTS."

-Winston Churchill

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"I really think a champion is
defined not by their wins but
by how they can recover
when they fall."

Serena Williams

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Mindset and Stress



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Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. For each question choose from the following alternatives:

- 0 Strongly Disagree
- 1 Disagree
- 2 Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 3 Agree
- 4 Strongly Agree

1. The effects of stress are negative and should be avoided.
2. Experiencing stress facilitates my learning and growth.
3. Experiencing stress depletes my health and vitality.
4. Experiencing stress enhances my performance and productivity.
5. Experiencing stress inhibits my learning and growth.
6. Experiencing stress improves my health and vitality.
7. Experiencing stress debilitates my performance and productivity.
8. The effects of stress are positive and should be utilized

Mindset and Stress

from SpeakUpSpeakOut

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Change as a threat

- Employees who see change as a threat suffer from **distress**.
 - Working memory shrinks.
 - Fight or flight response.
 - Can't be flexible.
 - Get bogged down in details.
 - Increase in anxiety.
 - Can't perform



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Change as a Challenge

- Employees who see change as a challenge experience eustress.
 - Increase in oxygen to brain.
 - Prepares you to deal with the challenge
 - Can think more clearly.
- Mindset is biggest predictor of whether you will see change as a threat or challenge



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Three phases of
stress-
Acute/Short
Term- Can be
good for you

Acute stress/short term/illness

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Medium-term
Stress-Several
days to several
weeks

Raise your stress threshold on purpose
first

Deliberately raise adrenaline and then
emotionally calm yourself

HIIT exercise while relaxing the mind,
which helps raise stress threshold

Bring heart rate up and then deliberately
broaden your gaze to dilate pupils

Let's your brain know its's safe to be calm

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Chronic/Long-Term Stress- Month/Years

Increase Serotonin- the well-being, bliss neuromodulator

If you're not getting good sleep on a regular basis, you'll have chronic stress

Social connection mitigates/reduces long-term stress

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Positive Stress Mindset Statements

Leverage Stress

My body's stress response is helpful, not debilitating

Stress is energy I can use

I'm able to handle, and even learn and grow from, the stress in my life

Stress is something that everyone deals with, and not something that proves how uniquely screwed up my life is

I'm excited (better than I am calm)

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How to look at stress when you're anxious- study from Harvard

My heart is pounding to
prepare me for action

My breathing is getting faster
to get oxygen to my brain

Physical stress response
started to change over time.
Blood vessels stayed relaxed.

Chronically restricted blood
vessels leads to heart disease

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Just another
cold dark
night on the
side of Mt
Everest

Have you chosen to
undertake something
difficult that will benefit or
change you in the end?



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Managing Stress

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Stress Remedies: How to Breathe

Most people breathe 18-20 times a minute

6 full breaths a minute is optimal

Lengthen the exhale when you have serious stress

Lengthen the inhale to energize you

Nasal breathing usually better than mouth breathing

Do the deliberate hyperventilation to combat sickness

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Breathwork

Connected, circular breathing

Pranayama

Nasal breathing

Alternate nostril breathing

Pursed lip breathing

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Box breathing

Diaphragmatic breathing

Holotropic breathwork

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Sleep

- MRI of person with full night sleep has good amygdala function with the right connection to the prefrontal cortex
- With no sleep, 60% more responsive and hyperactive. Connection to PFC was severed
- Sleep is emotional first aid
- People with regulated mood have consistent sleep wake cycles

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OWEN LAB/WESTERN

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If you spend 15-19 hours deprived of sleep:

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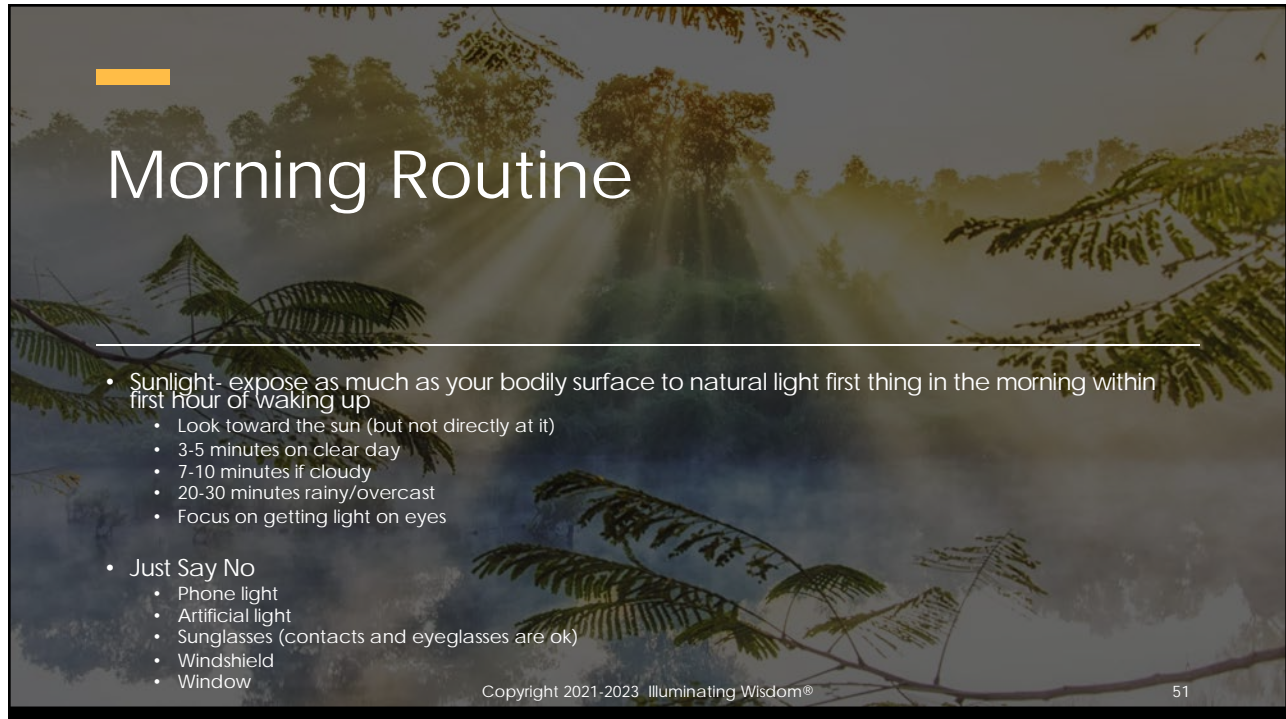
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Sleep Remedies- Sleep Like a Baby

To produce natural melatonin at night and the right amount energizing cortisol in the morning:

- Light meal
- Shower or bath to lower your core body temp
- Read in a cool, dark place
- Mindfulness/meditation/visualization for 15 minutes
- Block out the blue light, pings, and dings so you block the cortisol and dopamine rushes

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Morning Routine


- Sunlight- expose as much as your bodily surface to natural light first thing in the morning within first hour of waking up
 - Look toward the sun (but not directly at it)
 - 3-5 minutes on clear day
 - 7-10 minutes if cloudy
 - 20-30 minutes rainy/overcast
 - Focus on getting light on eyes
- Just Say No
 - Phone light
 - Artificial light
 - Sunglasses (contacts and eyeglasses are ok)
 - Windshield
 - Window

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Cold Exposure, Dopamine, & Adrenaline

- Uncomfortably cold for 11 minutes a week divided up into 2-3 minutes at a time helps build mental and physical resilience
 - Cold shower
 - Ice packs on neck or pants
 - Ocean, lake, pool
 - Ice bath
 - Walk in cold without coat
- Moderately cold, slightly uncomfortable for 45 minutes
- Releases adrenaline
- Helps resting metabolism, lipids, blood sugar
- Can lower heart rate- check with your doctor
- Activates parasympathetic nervous system
- Mammalian dive reflex



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Meditation and
mindfulness

Cooking

Cleaning

Walking

Housework

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Meditation types

- Breath-awareness meditation/breathwork
- Loving-kindness meditation
- Mantra-based meditation/Chanting
- Visualization meditation
- Mindfulness/vipassana
- Guided meditation
- Sound healing/sound bath

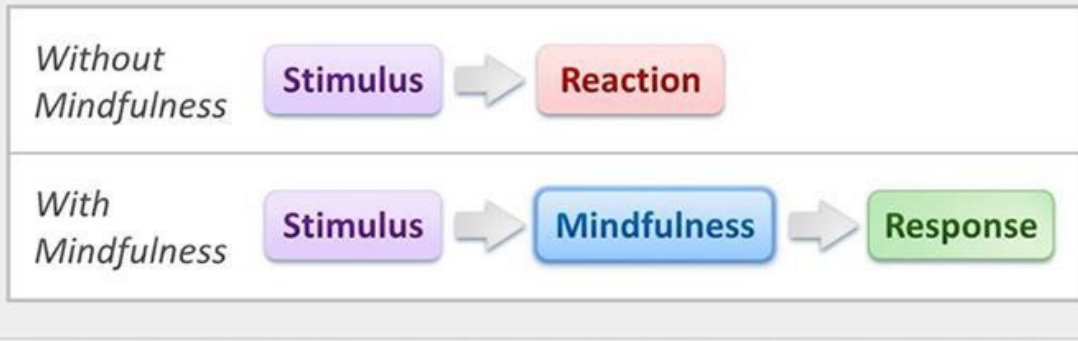


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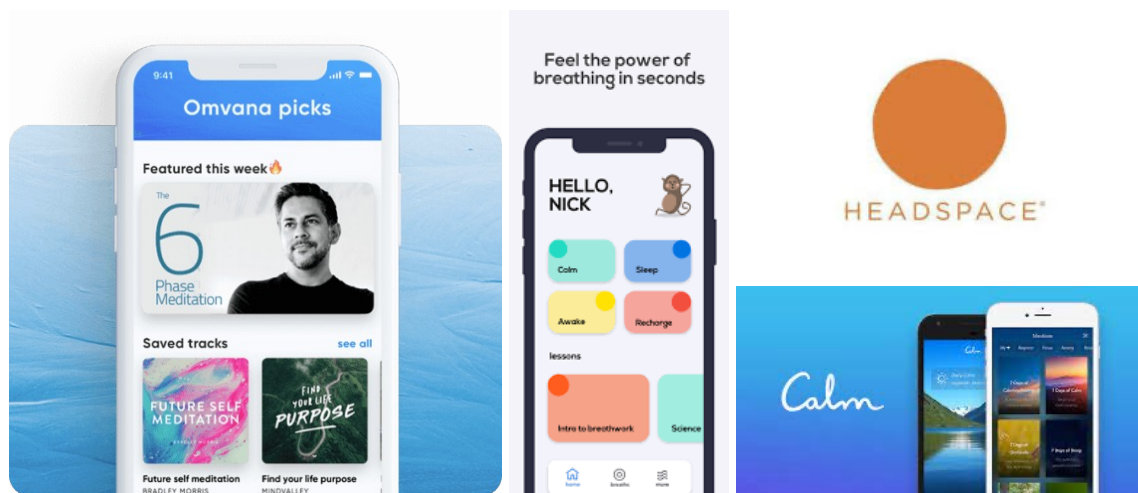
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“Between stimulus and response there is space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and freedom.” – Viktor E. Frankl



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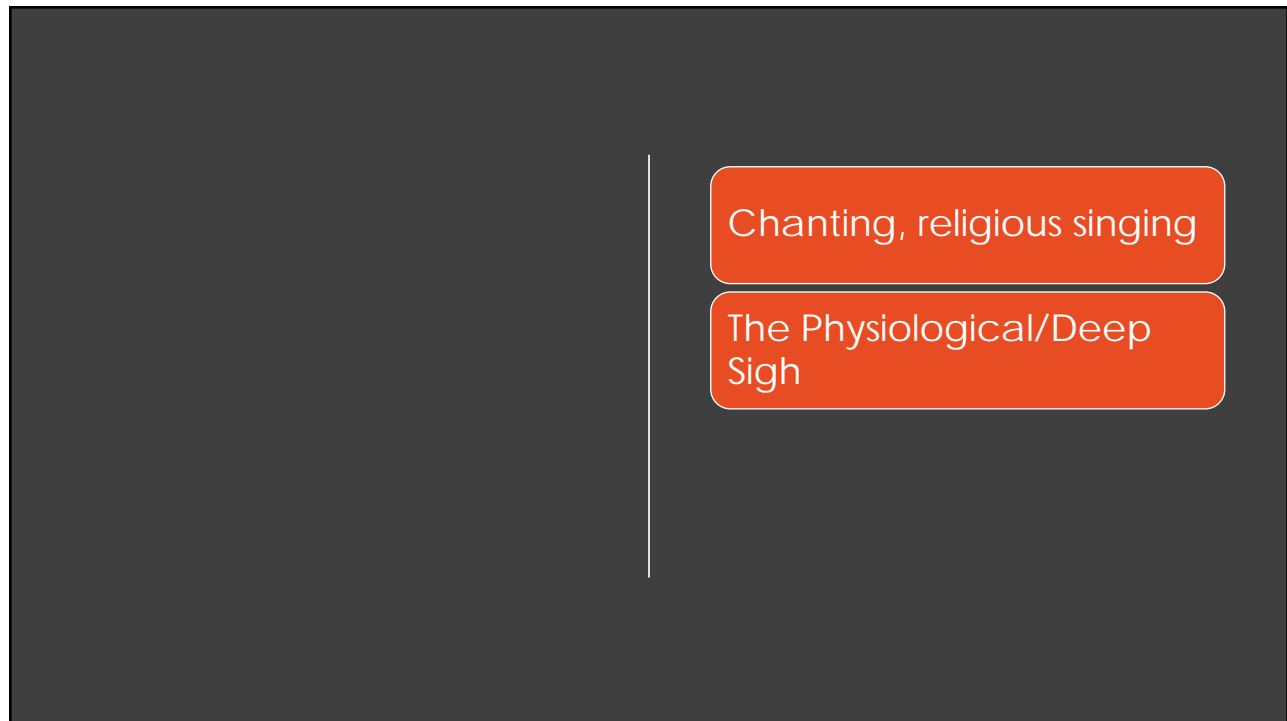


Meditation and Breathwork Apps

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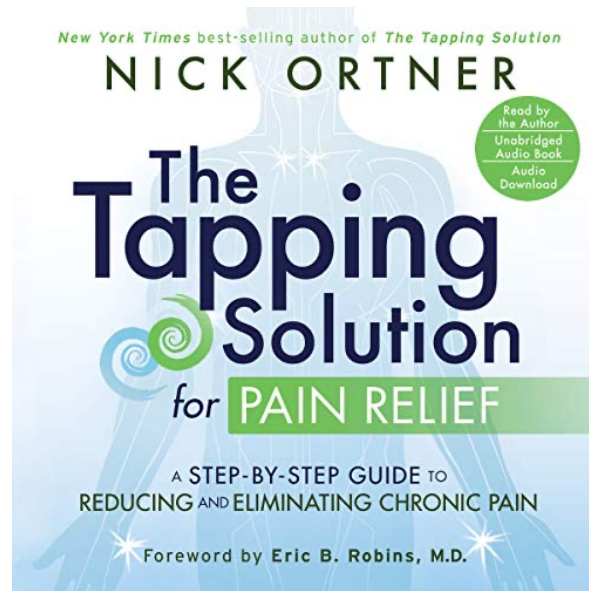
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Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT/Tapping)

- Uses energy meridians to reduce emotional, physical, and mental issues such as anxiety, depression, phobias
- Used for PTSD treatment with active military personnel and veterans
- Over 100 studies demonstrate efficacy
- Can be done daily in ten minutes or less
- Like acupuncture without needles
- Focuses on emotional and physical causes of pain
- "Borrowing Benefits"

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Pattern Interrupt for Anxiety 5 to 1 Grounding Technique



5 THINGS YOU
CAN SEE



4 THINGS YOU
CAN HEAR



3 THINGS YOU
CAN TOUCH



2 THINGS YOU
CAN SMELL



1 THING YOU
CAN TASTE

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Pattern Interrupt and Anchoring for Anxiety

Stand and look up with hands outstretched and smile

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Pattern Interrupt for Anxiety Dance and Play



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Build Your Resilience:
Do something scary
once a month

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Where Will You Take A Risk (and make
your brain happy)?



Learn a new language



Learn an instrument



Get out of your comfort zone

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What can you do for the profession?

- FL bar
 - add well-being as part of the duty of competence
- Leaders
 - encourage mental health first aid certification
 - Show vulnerability and admit you have struggled
 - Have social events without alcohol (or minimal alcohol) to foster connections
 - Don't reward extreme work hours
 - Retain culturally competent coaches for your entire legal staff, not just lawyers
- Law schools
 - Make well-being a core part of the culture and curriculum
 - UM mindfulness courses

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Factors for Success



Start your goal during a natural fresh start (birthday, New Year's, when moving jobs or domicile, Monday etc)



Temptation bundling- you can't do something pleasant unless you're working on your goal



Gamification. Accountability partners/leader boards



Hard and Soft Commitment devices

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Resources

The Florida Bar mental health helpline ([1-833-351-9355](tel:1-833-351-9355))

- free and confidential service that connects members with professional counselors
- up to five free counseling sessions per year

[988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#)

[American Bar Association Mental Health Resources](#)

[Mental Health First Aid Training](#)

[National Alliance on Mental Illness Resource Directory](#)

[Institute for Well Being in Law](#)

[ABA Substance Use and Mental Health Toolkit for Law School Students and Those Who Care About Them](#)

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How Will You Use What You've Learned?

What are your top three takeaways?

What can you implement today or this week?

What will you recommend to a loved one?

Who will you ask to hold you accountable?



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