

In last month's Special Double Issue (16 January, 2006) Time Magazine featured a series of articles on "Staying Sharp".

Source: The collection of over 20 articles is available as 'premium content' on:
<http://www.time.com/time/covers/20060116/>

Help! I've Lost My Focus

- The epidemic of 'attention deficit trait', Edward Hallowell's term for overloaded circuits, competing tasks, frenzy in the workplace, falling behind yet becoming busier. See also a summary of his January 2005 Harvard Business Review article: <http://www.amandahorne.com.au/pdf/Aug2005-FrenziedUnderachievers.pdf>
- The cost of interruptions, studies showing that it can take a 'stunning 25 minutes to return to the original task'
- Constant multi-tasking leads to inefficiencies; performance declines, stress rises
- A little stimulation is good, too much causes work performance to decline
- "Some of the world's most creative and productive individuals simply refuse to subject their brains to excess data streams."
- The addictive effect of interruptions
- The importance of social connections and the "need to break free from our checklist and just think"

The Surprising Power of the Ageing Brain

- Neurologists and psychologists are "coming to the conclusion that the brain at midlife – a period increasingly defined as the years from 35-65 and even beyond – is a much more elastic, much more supple thing that anyone ever realised".
- At midlife people are able to maximise the ability to use the entirety of the information in their brain "biologically this is what wisdom is"
- Better integration of hemispheres
- Brain's flexibility improves
- Increased tolerance for ambiguity
- Improved ability to manage relationships
- Improved inductive reasoning
- Talent for reflective thinking "explains the role older adults have always played in the human culture"

Sleeping Your Way to the Top

- "Staying up late to get ahead? It might be more productive to get a good night's rest"
- Harvard studies show that we're living on the edge of sleep starvation and just accept it
- Sleep (7-8 hours) is important for: consolidating memory, improving judgement, promoting learning and concentration, boosting mood, speeding reaction time, sharpening problem solving and accuracy, and increasing efficiency

How to Get Smarter One Breath at a Time

- "Scientists find that meditation not only reduces stress but also reshapes the brain"
- Meditation is the 'secret weapon' for focused calm, maintaining energy in frenetic workplaces, improving performance, increasing concentration and vigilance.
- Many large organisations and multinationals offer meditation training to their staff

(for more on meditation: <http://www.amandahorne.com.au/pdf/Jul04MediationMedicationMeditation.pdf>)

Measuring IQ Points by the Cupful

(I started drinking a little caffeine again after reading this article! Any typos in this email result from caffeine-induced jitters)

- “Does it feel as if caffeine makes you more clever, upbeat and alert? Maybe because it does”
- Some research showing it does not lead to cancer, high blood pressure
- Could have a protective effect against other ills
- Heightens mental performance “if you’re well rested it tends to improve rudimentary brain functions like keeping your attention focused on boring repetitive tasks for long periods. It also tends to improve mood and makes people feel more energetic, generally better overall.” (research from Military Nutrition Division of the US Army Research Institute Of Environment Medicine)
- Doesn’t make you smarter, “just lets you call more effectively on the intelligence you already have”
- Neuroscientists have studied the brain activity e.g. positive impacts on the frontal areas associated with executive functioning, attention, task management and concentration.

5 Guilt-filled Days on the Big R for Ritalin

- An amusing account of one woman’s quest to see what life was like on the ‘other side’ i.e. on Ritalin (this article will not make you want to follow her example)

Getting and Staying in the Zone

- Achieving peak performance depends on controlling the mind that controls the body
- It’s not about the conscious brain
- The importance of positive self talk and relaxation techniques
- It’s about control of both the mind and body

Other articles include:

Alzheimer’s, the creative mind, brainy babies, what you eat, concentration ‘in a bottle’.

About this article

Each monthly email aims to provide you and your staff with professional and personal development information. Topics covered are based on areas of interest raised by clients and colleagues, with material drawn from journals, books, articles and shared experiences.

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