

Your Cognitive 1% Small Shifts for Sharper Thinking and a Healthier Brain

Stress

The amount of arousal in the system which is related to the amount and types of information it is exposed to; needed for learning; too little not helpful; too much can be harmful

High levels of stress can chemically down-regulate your cortex, thus negatively impact your thinking (i.e., cognitive processing efficiency), leading to the experience of “brain fog” (i.e., cognitive inefficiency).

Goal for maximizing cognitive efficiency is information management.

Information management

Types of information:

Sensory – see, hear, taste, smell, feel but also hunger, thirst, pain

Cognitive – thoughts and emotions

Goal for information management is to reduce extraneous information so that our brain can have fewer attentional streams and thus can “focus” on the germane information.

To maximize our cognitive processing, we need to weed out the extraneous by reducing distractions whether sensory or cognitive.

Listen to your brain. If you are feeling frustrated or overwhelmed, or you are making errors, your brain is telling you to reduce the amount of information it is processing.

Maximizing Brain Health

Goal: Feed your brain every day.

Physically – nutrition, hydration, sleep, physical activity

Cognitive 1% tips:

When sleep is cruddy, focus the next day at maximizing nutrition/hydration and physical activity

Raising heart rate and flexing muscles literally feeds the brain chemically so build in mini punches throughout the day

Cognitively – think, process, converse, plan

Cognitive 1% tips:

Break tasks down into smaller steps and focus on getting what you can done; don't try to push through being stuck

Switch between cognitively demanding tasks and cognitively lighter tasks across day

Do more challenging tasks, meetings during your best part of your day

The best cognitive exercise is a good conversation

Emotionally – engage in meaningful activities, share, connect

Cognitive 1% tips:

Engage in 5 minutes of relaxing, fun activity

Text a fun/loving/supportive message to someone you care before switching to a new task/to-do

Bottom line: You do not have time not to feed your brain every day physically, cognitively, emotionally.