

TIME TO BREATHE

– By Calah Brooks



My neighbour Gerald has been in a go-go state of mind for the past few months, preparing and then finally moving in to a new living space. He told me once the move happened, his busy-ness would subside and he looked forward to slowing down. However, now that he is in the new building, he says he's "never been busier, there are so many things to do, daily activities, and it's overwhelming!"

We're told that the busy bee gets the nectar and that when you want something done, to ask a busy person – but is there a point when we max out our to-do lists and affect our quality of life?

"It is important to involve yourself in activities to stay connected to other people and explore new areas," says Catherine Bakker, Burlington Personal and Marriage Counsellor. However, she cautions that "anxiety can result if you're overwhelmed with routines like work and commitments, and not setting aside enough down time to read and/or reflect."

"A lot of people like to garden and do their hobbies, but activities can become all-consuming and they forget to take time for self," says Catherine. "It's important to not overbook and have 'ME-time' through the week."

The busy-ness can become the fast-food that feeds your life. Convenience has replaced nutrition, normalizing our visits to fast-food drive-through at the expense of slow cooked and natural ingredients. The same way that junk food makes you crave it, being busy increases your need for being busier and can make you feel anxious if your schedule isn't jam-packed (no pun intended)!

Mary Bridgemen shared she was glad that she had taken the day off, when her grandson had dropped in unannounced to introduce his new girlfriend. "I was happy to be home and check her out," she laughed. When we're too busy, we miss out on the spontaneity, the surprise visits. When your calendar is too full there isn't time for spontaneity and you can begin relating to people in terms of the "value" of the time you "spend" with the other individual. Often times, spontaneity in a relationship is the spice that makes the connection, and an unexpected memory.

We don't see the warning signs that we need to get off the busy ride and slow down, allowing ourselves TIME. Catherine recommends structuring your time for work and for staying involved with friends and family, while ensuring that you add me-time in your weekly plans.

Mindfulness is available to us in every moment, whether through meditation or mindful moment practices, like taking a few minutes in your day to pause and breathe deeply. Self-care by taking a restful bath, going for a leisurely walk, or in the form of a natural therapy like Reiki, can allow for me-time and result in improved health. •

"You can't live a positive life with a negative mind."



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NEUROPLASTICITY: THE BRAIN'S HEALING POWER

In a nutshell, Neuroplasticity is the brain's ability to change and heal itself in response to mental experience. Scientists have been studying this phenomenon for decades, and it's now considered one of modern science's most important developments.

University of Toronto psychiatrist and researcher, Dr. Norman Doidge, is one of the world's leader on the topic. In his books, Dr. Doidge shares the stories of patient recoveries without medication or surgery, through non-invasive movements and thoughts, which allow the body to access the brain.

Some of these movements include the simple act of walking, and how combined with healthier lifestyle (not smoking nor drinking, fresh fruits and vegetables, etc.) actually reduce the risk of developing dementia by a whopping 60%! Positive thinking and affirmations have also been used in Neuroplasticity, to heal mental illnesses and even physical ones.

“This is not a belief-based phenomenon, nor is it due to the placebo effect,” says Dr. Doidge. “It's about training up new brain circuitry. You don't have to believe this, you just have to be willing to do it.”

Neuroplasticity has been used to study and successfully heal people affected by physical as well as mental injuries – from stroke, brain trauma, amputation, anxiety, depression, addiction, suicidal tendencies, to find relief and heal patients suffering from Multiple Sclerosis, Autism, Alzheimer's, and several forms of chronic, debilitating pain.

Another recommended Neuroplasticity therapy includes meditation, as it has been shown to improve the body's speed and rate to heal. Neuroplasticity has been shown to actually change the density and thickness of brain grey matter, which in turn assists the areas of the brain that focus on learning and memory, emotional regulation, attention, concentration, cardiorespiratory control, stress control, and more.

Neuroplasticity may not be the end-all to illnesses and disease, but it's an encouraging form of therapy we can all do at no cost, and one which poses no risks or harm whatsoever. Perhaps a good place to start is by turning off electronics and beginning a daily meditation routine, or going for a simple walk. •

Spring is in the air! It's time to let Winter go...



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