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ON THE BORDER

Info & insights from the interface between energy healing & science

November 2016



Welcome to the November 2016 edition of 'On the Border'.

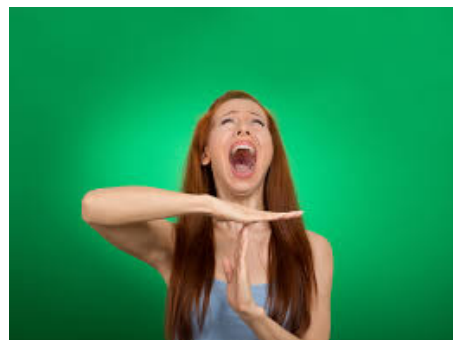
Our long holiday in Japan now seems like a distant memory. But my goodness, how wonderful it was to be away on holiday for so long (3 weeks) in a completely different culture. It had been 9 years since our last exotic holiday (Vietnam, and I hated it!). The whole experience of how replenished I felt got me looking into what science has to say about taking holidays, and so that is what you will find for this month's topic: **Take a Break!**

For those of you who are wanting to deepen your healing skills, the dates (all on Sundays) for the new **Heal! En jezelf ook course 2017** have now been finalised. See further down the newsletter for more details.

For those of you new to 'On the Border', this is Jayne's monthly Ezine newsletter about the latest information and insights into energy fields, healing and science. Each month I share with you some of the latest research and how it applies to healing, energy work & (daily) life. There is also a 'Freebie' section where you get something for nothing, gratis.

Take a Break!

Around the world, especially in industrial nations, over-worked employees and the scientists who study them are reaching similar conclusions. Overwhelming evidence now confirms that downtime of all kinds—whether it be a meditation session, lunchtime stroll through the park or a weeklong (or more) holiday—is crucial for productivity and overall health. When we are relaxing or daydreaming, the brain does not slow or stop. Rather—much as an array of crucial molecular, genetic and physiological processes transpire during sleep—many mental processes require periods of waking rest during the day. Downtime restores attention and motivation, fosters creativity, improves work efficiency, and is



essential to both achieve our highest levels of performance and simply make it through the day.



Under Pressure

Psychologists began formally studying the health and habits of workers in the first decades of the 20th century. Pioneering workplace psychologist Walter Dill Scott, elected president of the American Psychological Association in 1919, focused on how best to choose employees with the most appropriate skills. In the early 1900s Hugo

Münsterberg published the first textbooks explicitly focused on human behaviour in the workplace, a field that is now variously known as industrial/organisational, occupational or, simply, work psychology.

Although the field has long been interested in the relations among stress, rest and productivity, it was not until the 1980s and 1990s that topics such as work-related fatigue, mental breaks and work-life balance received widespread attention. In the past decade the number of studies on such issues has increased dramatically.

Researchers identify several reasons for this new emphasis, such as the growing number of couples and families in which both partners are managing full-time careers, as well as the rising prevalence of white-collar desk jobs in which the psychological toil of work takes precedence over the kind of physical repercussions associated with hard labour. But the biggest impetus is probably the advent of technology that makes it possible to keep working 24/7 and remain in touch with colleagues even when far away from the office. We've created a culture of immediate responsiveness. It is getting to the point where thanks to mobile devices we can work from anywhere, and we can interrupt one another anytime.

Studies confirm that many modern employees, are perpetually preoccupied with work: even when they get a break, they feel obligated to keep working. The European Union mandates 20 days of paid holiday, but the U.S. has no federal laws guaranteeing paid time off, sick leave or breaks for national



holidays. Canada, Japan and Hong Kong mandate just 10 or fewer days of annual holidays; in the U.S., workers receive an average of just eight days after one year on the job. But a 2014 survey by Harris Interactive found that Americans use only half of their eligible holiday days and paid time off. A 2015 report by Expedia showed that Americans collectively neglect 1.3 million years of vacation annually. And in several surveys, U.S. workers have confessed that they do not

fully unplug from phone or email even when they are on holiday or ill. The Americans are not alone when it comes to this.

Larissa Barber, a workplace psychologist at Northern Illinois University, and her colleagues recently coined a new term for such feelings: **workplace telepressure**, a nagging preoccupation with work-related emails and related communications, combined with a compulsion to respond immediately. It appears to be tied to our (increasing) culture of busyness. Being busy means status and prestige, and if you are not busy and overwhelmed, it might mean you are not important or not working hard enough (ouch!).



In a survey of more than 300 part- or full-time workers published last year in the *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, Barber and her colleagues found that employees who reported greater workplace telepressure missed more days of work,

experienced more physical and mental burnout, and did not sleep as well as their less email-obsessed peers. Barber also found that telepressure can lower the quality of an employee's work: responsivity doesn't always mean productivity - all it shows is that someone is responding and available, but that is different from doing good work.

The increasingly intrusive nature of work-related communication is especially troubling in light of one of the strongest conclusions from the past decade of occupational psychology research: to maximise the benefits of breaks, we need to fully disengage from our jobs—physically and mentally. Charlotte Fritz, an organisational psychologist at Portland State University who published a review paper on 'disengagement' last year, found that no matter how we look at it, detachment is good for well-being: the benefits include lower exhaustion, higher positive mood, better sleep and better quality of life.

The (Qualified) Case for More Vacation

Some of the most rigorous research on how uninterrupted downtime improves health and productivity has been carried out by Leslie Perlow. In one four-year study, she and her team monitored the work habits of employees at the Boston Consulting Group, who were used to working nearly nonstop. Every year the researchers insisted that employees take regular time off, even when they felt they should be in the office. In one experiment, published in 2009 in the *Harvard Business Review*, each of four consultants on a team took a break from work one day a week. In a second experiment, every member of a team scheduled one weekly night of uninterrupted, non-negotiable personal time.

Everyone resisted at first, fearing that work would pile up. But the consultants gradually came to love their compulsory time off because it restored their willingness and ability to work, making them more productive overall. After five months the study subjects were more satisfied with their jobs, more likely to see a long-term future at the company, more satisfied with their work-life balance and prouder of their accomplishments. These initial experiments were so successful that within four years, the Boston Consulting Group had implemented the same practices in more than 2,000 teams in 66 offices in 35 countries.

Collectively, studies by Perlow and other researchers suggest that the current model of consecutive 40-hour workweeks, punctuated by two-day weekends and one or two holidays a year, is not ideal for mental health or productivity. Psychologists have established that, like weekends and evenings, holidays have genuine physical and psychological benefits: they reduce stress, promote creativity and revitalise attention.

Yet a comprehensive meta-analysis, published in 2011 by Jessica de Bloom, a psychologist now at the University of Tampere in Finland, demonstrates that these benefits generally fade within two to four weeks. In one of her own studies, for example, 96 Dutch workers reported that compared with their typical daily experience they felt greater energy and happiness, less tension and more satisfaction with life during a winter sports holiday between seven and nine days long. Within just one week of returning to work, however, all sense of renewal had vanished. A second experiment on four and five days of respite came to essentially the same conclusion.

A holiday is like applying a single ice cube to a burn: it will help for a little while, but soon enough the discomfort returns. Many people save up their holiday time to use all at once. De Bloom's findings show that it is not necessarily true that longer breaks or holidays have better results. It seems that regularity is much more important.



Given the current work climate, the prospect of frequent breaks during which employees disconnect *completely* from their jobs may seem unlikely, but it is a much more pragmatic and affordable strategy than lengthy holidays. Baby steps involve curtailing job-related communications in the evenings and on weekends.

Some companies do set boundaries on work email: in 2011, for example, Volkswagen prevented employees from accessing work-related emails on company-issued phones during nonwork hours. France and Germany have restricted after-hours work communication in certain sectors or situations. But such practices are the exception. In one 2012 survey, only 21 percent of organisations had a formal policy limiting use of work-issued mobile devices during off-hours.

On an individual level, Barber recommends strictly managing expectations. Replying too quickly too often sets up unrealistic standards. On her class syllabus, she explicitly states when she is available to reply by email and when she is not. Meanwhile de Bloom spreads her holidays as much as possible throughout the year. And her polite but firm out-of-office email response cites studies on the benefits of mentally detaching from work during vacation!

Hitting Refresh

Weekends and holidays aside, simple daily practices can allow workers to mentally detach from their desk work. Tony Schwartz, a journalist and CEO of the Energy Project, has made it his mission to advise people on implementing these practices. Building on the available science, his company provides coaching and consultations for organisations that want to help employees avoid burnout and dissatisfaction.



The Energy Project instructs workers to get seven to eight hours of sleep each night, use every holiday day, take naps and other small breaks throughout the day, learn to meditate and take on the most challenging projects first to give them maximum attention. Although their approach counters the reigning cultural conviction that busier is better, the organisation has partnered

with Google, Apple, Facebook, Coca-Cola and a wide range of Fortune 500 companies. According to Schwartz, their strategies have pushed workers' overall engagement well above average levels (as measured by self-reports of how much people enjoy their job and are willing to take on extra duties). Google has maintained the partnership for more than five years.

More than a decade of research has uncovered the fact that although our mental resources gradually ebb from dawn to dusk, breaks can restore at least some of these cognitive faculties. Naps, for instance, can sharpen concentration and improve the performance of both the sleep-deprived and fully rested on all kinds of tasks. In a 2002 study, 26 physicians and nurses working three consecutive 12-hour night shifts dozed for 40 minutes at 3 a.m. while 23 of their colleagues worked continuously without sleeping. Although doctors and nurses who had taken a siesta scored lower than their peers on a memory test at 4 a.m., at 7:30 a.m. they actually outperformed their counterparts on a test of attention, more efficiently inserted a catheter in a virtual simulation and appeared more alert during an interactive simulation of driving a car home.

Some start-ups and progressive companies provide employees with spaces to nap at the office, but most workers do not have that option. Another restorative solution is spending more time outdoors, away from man-made spaces. Marc Berman, a psychologist at the University of South Carolina, studies the hypothesis that natural environments restore our attention. Built-up environments, such as busy city streets, he argues, may overwhelm the brain

with noisy, glaring stimuli, whereas the calm and quiet of green spaces, such as parks and forests, allow the mind to relax and recuperate.



In one of the few controlled experiments in this area, published in 2008, Berman asked 38 University of Michigan students to complete two attention-draining tasks: first studying lists of numbers and reciting them from memory in reverse order, then memorising the locations of words in a grid. Half the students subsequently ambled along an arboretum path for about an hour, and the other half walked the same distance through busy downtown Ann Arbor. Back at the laboratory the students once again memorised and recited strings of numerals. On average, the volunteers who had spent their time amid trees rather than city traffic recalled 1.5 more digits than the first time they took the test; those who had walked through the city improved by only 0.5 digit—a small but statistically significant difference between the two groups.

Clearing the Mind

In addition to enhancing one's powers of concentration, downtime can strengthen attention—something that scientists have gleaned through studies of meditation. In the past decade mindfulness training has become incredibly popular as a strategy to relieve stress, exhaustion and anxiety—especially for over-worked nine-to-fivers (or nine-to-niners, as is often the case).

Critics of mindfulness research observe, correctly, that studies on the benefits of this practice are typically small and that they lean on subjective reports; the science of mindfulness is still not a rigorous one. Nevertheless, at this point researchers examining the benefits of mindfulness have gathered enough evidence to conclude that meditation can improve mental health, hone concentration and strengthen memory. Experiments that contrast longtime expert meditators with novices or people who do not meditate often find that the former outperform the latter on tests of mental acuity.

In a 2009 study, for instance, neuroscientist Sara van Leeuwen, then at Goethe University Frankfurt in Germany, and her colleagues tested the visual attention of three groups of volunteers: 17 adults around 50 years old with up to 29 years of meditation practice; 17 people of the same age and gender who were not longtime meditators; and another 17 young adults who had never meditated before. These participants viewed a series of letters flashed on a computer screen, concealing two digits in their midst. Volunteers had to identify or guess both numerals; recognising the second number was often difficult because earlier images masked it. Performance on such tests usually declines with age,

but the expert meditators outscored both their peers and the younger participants.



Changes to the brain's structure and to behaviour most likely explain these improvements. Over time expert meditators may develop a more intricately wrinkled cortex—the brain's outer layer, which is critical for many sophisticated mental abilities, such as abstract thought. These practitioners may also have increased volume and

density in the hippocampus, an area that is absolutely crucial for memory. Finally, meditation appears to thicken regions of the frontal cortex that we rely on to regulate our emotions and prevent the typical wilting of brain areas responsible for sustaining attention as we age.

At this point, scientists are still unsure of how quickly these changes occur, although some studies suggest that a few weeks of meditation or a mere 10 to 20 minutes daily can sharpen the mind. But there is likely a catch: as with holidays, a few studies indicate that regularity is ultimately more important than the length of any one session. Just 12 minutes of daily mindfulness meditation helped to prevent the stress of military service from corroding the working memory of 34 U.S. marines in a 2011 study conducted by Amishi Jha, now at the University of Miami, and her colleagues. Jha likens mindfulness training to push-ups: as a mental workout: it is low-tech and easy to implement. In her own life, she looks for any opportunity to practice, such as her 15-minute daily commute.

One of the most impressive 'workplace revolutions' is the story of Mark Bertolini. It occurred during a family holiday. But it was not a happy moment; in fact, it nearly killed him.

In February 2004 Bertolini, then 47 years old, was on a skiing trip with his family in Vermont. While speeding downhill, he collided with a tree and fell down a ravine. The accident fractured bones in his neck and back and severely damaged nerves in his arm. Yet he lived, gradually regaining mobility despite chronic pain. Not wanting to remain on pain medications for the rest of his life, he turned to yoga and mindfulness meditation. He was so impressed by these pain- and stress-reducing therapies that he started to wonder whether his 50,000 employees might benefit from them, too. Bertolini is chief executive officer of the health insurance giant Aetna.

By 2010 Bertolini had enlisted the help of the American Viniyoga Institute and the meditation instruction company eMindful to customise free yoga and meditation classes for Aetna employees, even providing spaces at the office to practice. And he did not stop there. He also teamed up with health psychologist Ruth Wolever, then at Duke University and now at Vanderbilt University, to formally investigate the outcomes of these innovations. In a three-month study

of more than 200 Aetna employees, individuals who engaged in meditation and yoga slept better, felt less stressed overall and had more efficient heartbeat recovery rates after stress than those who abstained. In a follow-up study involving more than 1,000 employees, presented this past May at the International Congress of Integrative Medicine and Health, meditation and yoga were correlated not only with less stress but also with 47 to 62 minutes of increased productivity per week. The practices even seemed to reduce employees' spending on health care. (The studies were funded in part by Aetna and eMindful, but all were reviewed by independent committees at Duke.)

Since Bertolini introduced mindfulness and yoga courses to Aetna, more than 13,000 employees have participated. Now the company is deciding how best to extend these benefits beyond their offices to their 22.9 million health insurance members.



There has been an formidable increase in recent years in peer-reviewed work on mindfulness and related relaxation techniques in the workplace. Maybe we need to start to work against the culture of always being busy and develop more realistic expectations of what our brains and bodies can handle. As for me.....I am already starting to think about when we can go to Japan again.....and maybe for a short break within the next months ;=)

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Heal! En jezelf ook 2017, op zondag

Yes indeedy, this popular course is back for its yearly appearance!

The dates for you to note in your diaries (all on Sundays, and the course is in Dutch):

Sunday 15th January 2017

Sunday 29th January

Sunday 19th February

Sunday 5th March

Each Sunday class will take place between 10-16u in 'De Ruimte' (Weesperzijde 79A, Amsterdam) , and includes a fabulously lekkere lunch.

Price: €480 (incl. voor particulieren; excl btw voor business-to-business) and coffee/tea/lekkere dingen/lunch

For more information please see <http://www.jaynejubb.com/healcourse.htm>

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November Freebie

In this section you get the chance to get something for nothing. Helemaal gratis. Always a pleasure!

Meditation can sharpen attention, strengthen memory and improve other mental abilities. *Scientific American* editor Ferris Jabr examines the changes in brain structure behind some of these benefits in a 2-minute 'Egghead' video.

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/video/how-does-meditation-change-the-brain/2013-10-30/>

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