

## Healthy Mind Platter - Tool For Self Care

“*The Healthy Mind Platter*” is from a Neuroleadership Journal by David Rock, Daniel J Siegel, Steven A.Y. Poelmans and Jessica Payne.

The platter consists of - Sleep Time, Physical Time, Focus Time, Down Time, Time-In, Play Time and Connecting Time.

This is a tool that you can have in your self-care tool kit. It ensures you take care of your executive mind centre as well as helps to expand your window of tolerance for stress.

## Pre-Frontal Cortex (PFC) Our Executive Mind Centre

The latest developed part of our brain, our pre-frontal cortex is tiny. Three (3) business cards thick, in fact. It is expected to perform our executive functions of

- Differentiating among conflicting thoughts
- Determining good and bad, better and best, same and different
- Understanding the future consequences of current activities
- Working towards our defined future goals
- Predicting outcomes and expectations from our current actions, and
- Controlling our emotions so that we fit into our social group

It is important to look after this part of our mind.

## Window Of Tolerance - Stress

We all have emotions and thoughts that come in and out to us during the day. Some of them are positive, some negative.

We all have a window of tolerance around which these emotions fluctuate (refer diagram).

At the top register there can be a feeling of being overwhelmed, anxious or angry. There is a sensation of flight or fight.

At the bottom register, we can feel zoned out, depressed or even numb. There is a sensation of shut down or freeze.

It is better for our emotional state if we can keep our emotions fluctuating without reaching either the top register or the bottom register.

Having self-care through the Healthy Mind Platter Tool you can expand your window of tolerance for stress. This helps cope with keeping the wobble out of your juggle for your daily game plan.



## ZONE OF HYPERAROUSAL

- Feeling overwhelmed, anxious or angry
- Body wants to fight or flee

## THE WINDOW OF TOLERANCE



### Optimal Arousal Zone

- Feeling just right and can manage life
- Calm but not tired
- Alert but not anxious



## ZONE OF HYPOAROUSAL

- Feeling zoned out, spacey or numb
- Body wants to shut down and/or freeze

Adapted from - Siegel, D. (2009). *Mindsight - The New Science of Personal Transformation*. NSW, Australia: Scribe Publications.

### The Healthy Mind Platter Detail

Here is some information about each of the platters. A suggestion is that you can build your daily game plan around these important platters.

#### Sleep Time

Research over the past 20 years has begun to provide partial explanation for why we must sleep. The scientist know that it does not just serve one purpose. Instead it appears to be needed for the optimal functioning of a multitude of biological processes – from the inner workings of the immune system to proper hormonal balance, to emotional and psychological health, to learning and memory, to the clearance of toxins from the brain.



## Physical Time

Routine physical activity of moderate or vigorous intensity substantially reduces the risk of dying from heart disease, stroke, diabetes, cancer and other ills. However, physical activity also boosts brainpower – specifically the ability to carry out tasks that require attention, organization and planning, and reduces symptoms of depression and anxiety in some people.

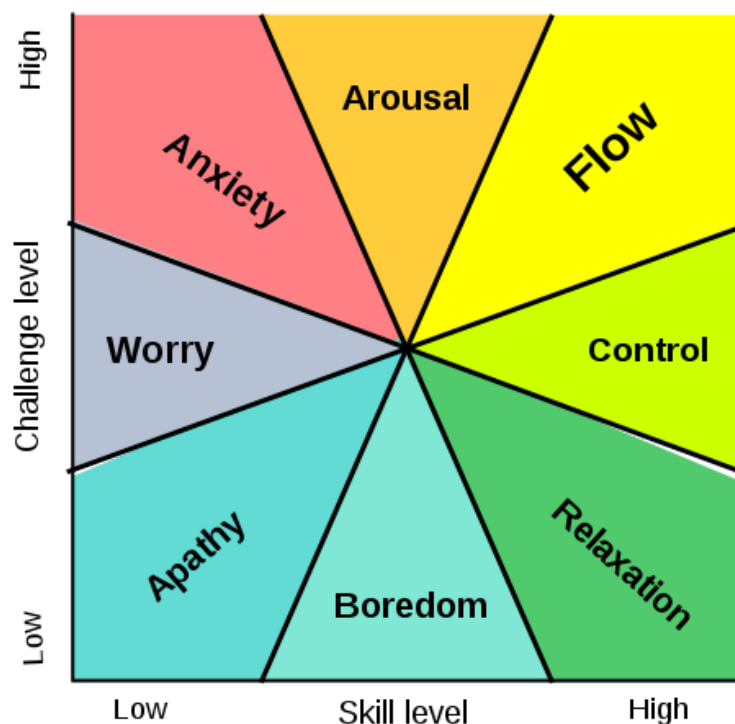


## Focus Time

Our minds are not built for multitasking (sorry women readers to burst your bubble). If you want a sense of a mastery and completion, then it is necessary to pay attention to one task at a time. We need focus time. This allows us to avoid the feeling of being overwhelmed and incomplete which can often be the outcome of multitasking.



Focus time can lead to a sense of flow or being in the zone of total engagement - a feeling of energized focus, full involvement, and enjoyment in the process of the activity that you are undertaking. In essence, flow is characterized by complete absorption in what one does, and a resulting loss in one's sense of space and time.



Mihály Csíkszentmihályi in 1975 named this concept and developed the diagram shown.

## Down Time

Neuroscience is showing that our minds need spacing to allow disparate bits of information to be connected. Down time provides this spacing. It allows creativity to flow as well as a chance to quiet the internal mind-chatter. It allows us to step-back from the swirl of doing, doing and doing which our current modern society appears to value.



Researchers have also shown that insight is preceded and aided by disconnecting from deliberate, goal-directed, conscious thinking. A meta-analysis confirmed, across many studies, that unconscious thought produces better decisions than when people decide immediately using conscious and logical reasoning.

## In Time

Mindfulness meditation is a deliberate practice around mindfulness. It is about taking as little as 10 or 15 minutes to sit quietly or walk slowly if you prefer and just be aware of what is happening to you physically, mentally and emotionally and not engaging or following the thoughts that arise or having any judgement about your emotions. Just being aware of your breathing is a mindful action and the simplest awareness tool to break the cycle of following the thoughts.



Neuroscientists are finding that there are enormous benefits to this deliberate practice. Some of the benefits are improved attention, lessened impact of stress and anxiety, emotion regulation and even help with pain management.

## Play Time

You will be pleased to know that neuroscientists are discovering the value in play for our minds. Research reveals that play-joy is a basic emotional system and essential in child development and adult creativity and learning (Panksepp & Biven, 2012).



Play-joy stimulates the reward centres of the brain releasing dopamine, which facilitates the establishment and consolidation of new neuronal pathways (creativity) and memory (lasting connections).



## Social Time

Many scientific studies reveal that social support is reliably related to beneficial effects on aspects of the cardiovascular, endocrine and immune systems. This means positive effects on heart reactivity, blood pressure and depression and can even mean lower mortality.



Most of all good social connections lower stress which is the main reason it is included in the Healthy Mind Platter. Oxytocin is the hormone that is released in the brain when we connect with good friends and this can create the feelings of trust, empathy and generosity.

If you are feeling stressed prior to an important business meeting and you have the time, it may help to catch up for a coffee and chat with a friend. This will lower your stress hormone cortisol and increase your oxytocin which will hopefully allow the meeting to run smoothly.

Healthy Mind Platter Diagram

