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Bill Gates the former CEO of Microsoft is said to read around 50 books per year. Expose yourself to new ideas and learn from other people's mistakes.

- The productivity Challenge - Chris Bailey
- The Subtle Art of NOT giving a F**K - Mark Mason
- Dream BIG, Hustle Hard - Abadesi Osunsade

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THE LONGER READ

7 Modern life habits that can be incredibly bad for your brain health (Lifestyle habits that influence your cognitive / thinking health and what to do about them)

We live in an era of better technology ... we are being rewired to do more but is it to the detriment of our brains.

According to experts, our modern lifestyle is chipping away at our neural pathways and making us slower, denser and less capable of an original thought. Hyper connectivity is increasingly taking its toll on our brains. In the end, we could end up less productive and more ineffective.

When it comes to our health, we don't always think about 'caring for our brains' the way we nourish our bodies. But to be our most productive self, we need to do more of what improves our brain health, and less of what causes cognitive decline.

Maybe a good place to start is by adjusting your daily habits and avoiding these common modern habits – your mind will thank you for it !

Poor sleep upsets your brain

Insufficient sleep is a huge problem for many of us. Sleep deprivation can have serious short-term and long-term consequences – delay reaction times, affect your mood, headache, impaired memory, and even hormone imbalances. Recent research shows that not getting enough sleep may actually shrink your brain. Wow ! Sleep is essential for your brain. When you deprive your brain of 'healthy' sleep its ability to process information, consolidate memories, make connections, and clear out toxins declines. Lack of sleep slows down your thinking, impairs your memory, concentration, judgment, and decision-making, and impedes learning. Improving your sleep habits could be an important way to improve brain health. On average 7-9 hours/night of good sleep is essential for stimulating new connections and brain growth ... but note that we are all individuals as with many things in life what suits one person is not always the best fit for the next person.

Sitting for too long is hurting you brain as much as your back

Sitting is one of the worst things we can do for our health. A UCLA study reports that people who are more sedentary have thinning in brain regions linked to memory. It finds that sitting isn't just a physical health risk – it's a neurological risk as well. The authors wrote in their paper, "it is possible that sedentary behaviour is a more significant predictor of brain structure, specifically [medial temporal lobe] thickness, and that physical activity, even at higher levels, is not sufficient to offset the harmful effects of sitting for extended periods of time." Move, move, move ... Physical inactivity has its price tags – It's linked to the development of chronic health problems like heart disease, obesity, depression, dementia, and cancer. Many people are too busy to make time for "basic movement activities" that can slow cognitive decline – walking, cycling, stretching, etc. Regular physical activity can benefit you cognitively – increase brain chemicals which promote better memory and learning, and medically. Truthfully you know this to be true ...

Information overload leads to unnecessary overstimulation of the brain

The sheer volume of emails, social updates, and notifications we receive is overwhelming – it takes a huge bite out of the day for many people. The constant stream of content if not managed can cause stress and lead to decision overload. Some people proudly boast of how many things they can juggle in a single day. Glenn Wilson, former visiting professor of psychology at Gresham College, London found out in his research that being in a situation where you are trying to concentrate on a task, and an email is sitting unread in your inbox, can reduce your effective IQ by 10 points!

Think you're multitasking? Think again

Our smartphones have become Swiss army knives. We use them all the time. We text while we're walking across the street, catch up on email while commuting, read or listen to podcasts while standing in a queue. You've likely heard that multitasking is bad for your productivity. It turns out, it's a habit that also rewires the brain and makes you less effective. Earl Miller, a neuroscientist at

MIT and one of the world experts on divided attention, says that our brains are “not wired to multitask well... When people think they’re multitasking, they’re actually just switching from one task to another very rapidly. And every time they do, there’s a cognitive cost in doing so.” Multitasking also increases the stress hormone cortisol as well as the fight-or-flight hormone adrenaline, which can overstimulate your brain and cause mental fog or scrambled thinking.

All that screen time can negatively impact our mental and emotional wellbeing

Today, face-to-face interactions are increasingly being replaced by digital tools. People spend more time online than ever before. Anything with a screen (television, phones, tablets, computers, video games) constitutes screen time. A face-to-face conversation is incredibly beneficial for your brain. A study by the University of Michigan found that even just 10 minutes per day of conversation with another person improved memory and cognition. “In our study, socialising was just as effective as more traditional kinds of mental exercise in boosting memory and intellectual performance,” said Oscar Ybarra, a psychologist at the U-M Institute for Social Research (ISR) and a lead author of the study with ISR psychologist Eugene Burnstein and psychologist Piotr Winkielman from the University of California, San Diego. The lack of true personal interaction limits the brain’s opportunities to make better connections. It can also lead to loneliness and depression – mental conditions that contribute significantly to reduced brain health. On a physical health note, looking at screens all day can hurt your

eyes, ears, neck, shoulders, back, wrists, and forearms. It also interferes with getting a good night’s sleep (didn’t we just cover the importance of sleep ?). According to experts, excessive screen time has a negative effect on intellectual abilities as well as emotional well-being.

It’s surprisingly easy for your headphones to damage the parts of the ear vital to healthy hearing

People, by nature, love to switch up the volume. It makes the music sounds more “fun” and immersive. In the age of noise-cancelling earbuds and headphones, you can easily damage your hearing. When the rest of the world gets too distracting, it’s tempting to pop in your earbuds, crank up your favourite tunes, and close yourself off to focus better. If you consistently blast your music too loudly, you will damage your hearing. But it’s not just your ears: Hearing loss in older adults is linked to brain problems, such as Alzheimer’s and loss of brain tissue. When your brain has to work so hard to understand what’s being said around you, it can’t store what you’ve heard into memory. So, protect your hearing by adjusting the volume of your headphones – it’s an excellent way to preserve your hearing and allow your brain to work better.

Finally ...

If you are concerned about the health of your brain and the quality of your thinking now or in the future, learn to take care of your brain. A few simple changes to your lifestyle could boost your memory, learning, mental resilience and overall health of your brain (and body).

