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A quarterly
newsletter
of INVEST EAP

M E S S E N G E R A P



Supporting a Healthy Organization

Volume 21

Issue 1

Winter 2019

Take a Break to Maximize Your Creativity

What were you doing the last time you had a great idea? Many people report that their most creative thoughts happen unexpectedly while they're in the shower or taking a walk - not at the office. That's because we are most likely to access the creative parts of the brain when we are relaxed and distracted.

Researchers have been trying to pinpoint the neurological mechanisms in the brain that lead to creativity. For years scientists believed that the right hemisphere of the brain was the creative center. New research has found that creative ideas emerge when networks that are located in both hemispheres of the brain are able to connect.

In January 2018, Dr. Roger Beaty and colleagues published the results of their research showing neurological variations in the brains of creative people. The researchers recruited 163 volunteers who agreed to have



their brains scanned using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) while they tried to come up with creative ideas for everyday objects.

They found that there are three regions (also known as networks) in the brain that are involved in creative thought. The default mode network is the brain's idle state. It plays

a critical role in imagination and spontaneous thinking. The salience network detects what is the important information, and the executive control network sorts through ideas to help us focus on those that are most useful.

From the research they found that it appears to be the strength of the connection

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between these networks that matters most. To best engage the three networks we need time to let the mind wander, which can be frowned upon in some workplaces because productivity is highly valued. However, when people don't take mental breaks and give their minds

time to wander, they are likely to generate the same old solutions and ideas.

Anxiety is a creativity killer.
Learn healthy techniques to manage your anxiety

Scientists recommend strategies to best cultivate creativity in the workplace and in our personal lives.

Take breaks during the day to clear the brain - walk (with no podcast or music), practice deep

breathing exercise, or draw/doodle.

Pay attention to your thoughts during off-peak work hours when you are likely to be more relaxed.

Take chances and risk making mistakes in an effort to support creative thinking.

Anxiety is a creativity killer. Learn healthy techniques to manage your anxiety, such as deep breathing and relaxation.

Change your environment physically and mentally. Find a different workspace if possible. Expose yourself to new ideas by listening to a lecture or a TED Talk about a topic unrelated to your work.

InvestEAP is confidential and free of cost to you. Call 1-866-660-9533 to speak with a trained counselor or visit investeap.org (create a login) for more information.

RESOURCES

Roger E. Beaty, Yoed N. Kenett, Alexander P. Christensen, Monica D. Rosenberg, Mathias Benedek, Qunlin Chen, Andreas Fink, Jiang Qiu, Thomas R. Kwapil, Michael J. Kane, and Paul J. Silvia; "Robust prediction of individual creative ability from brain functional connectivity," January 16, 2018, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences USA, <http://www.pnas.org/content/early/2018/01/09/1713532115.short>

Rex E. Jung, PhD, Speaking of Psychology: The neuroscience of creativity <https://www.apa.org/research/action/speaking-of-psychology/neuroscience-creativity.aspx>

The Real Neuroscience of Creativity <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/beautiful-minds/the-real-neuroscience-of-creativity/>

EAP SERVICES

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