

The Surprising Link Between Mental Load and Creativity

Would you believe that being idle could actually make you more interesting? A recent study suggests that mental clutter stifles creativity while unburdening your mind encourages originality.

Researchers at an Israeli university looked at what happens when your mind is occupied with stray thoughts and nagging concerns. Subjects who were tasked with remembering 7 digits responded slowly, and gave boring conventional answers on a free association test. On the other hand, subjects assigned only 2 digits were quick to come up with innovative replies.

As a leader, you are expected to create innovative solutions for your enterprise.

Learn how to liberate yourself from mental overload. Explore these tips for meditation and other intuitive experiences.

Reducing Mental Load Through Meditation

1. **Face yourself.** Some unconscious thoughts can be disturbing. Remember that bringing them to the surface is the first step in healing. Once you own your baggage, you can develop more constructive habits. Remember, you cannot change what you're not willing to acknowledge.
2. **Scan your body.** Your body is an excellent guide to how to find your flow. *Notice what conditions help you to lower your shoulders and unclench your jaw; these are indicators of relaxation.*

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3. **Focus on your breath.** Your brain requires oxygen to function at peak levels. Simple breath work helps beginners and advanced practitioners to become more mindful. Notice the air as it enters your nostrils and travels through your body. Spend as much time exhaling as inhaling.
4. **Count your blessings.** *Engage with the present moment by noticing what you're grateful for.* Celebrate the taste of morning coffee and the sound of your children laughing. This opens the portal to increased insights and problem solving.
5. **Practice daily.** Work your way up gradually and consistently. Even a few minutes of stillness can be beneficial.

Reducing Mental Load Through Other Activities

1. **Write things down.** *Put your "to do" list onto paper so you can forget about it without worrying that you'll miss your next dental appointment.* In this age of computers, electronic versions of task lists and calendars also support this effort. My team and I use [Trello](#) to keep ourselves organized, but there are many to choose from.
2. **Play games.** Do you lose track of time when you're planning your next move in Words with Friends? That's a good thing; taking a break from work provides a mental break and helps you return more refreshed.
3. **Move around.** Clear your mind with an afternoon run or visit to the gym. Physical exercise burns calories, releases stress and also supports new brain cell growth.
4. **Use your hands.** *Repetitive movements can trigger breakthrough ideas as you tap into your unconscious.* Knit a scarf or play piano.

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Chop vegetables for dinner or paint an accent wall in your bedroom.

5. **Slow down.** If running too many programs at a time makes your computer less effective, think what excess multitasking does to your brain. Try to immerse yourself in a single task while you remember your purpose.
6. **Appreciate nature.** Nature is a powerful antidote to cognitive overload. Spend a moment enjoying bird songs, cool breezes or the ocean's waves.
7. **Take a nap.** If you can fall asleep easily during the day without disrupting the quality of your nightly slumbers, napping could be for you. Studies show that a brief sleep enhances memory formation. According to some research, people who nap also tend to live longer.
8. **Turn off your phone.** Some distractions are beyond your control, but you can opt out of being available around the clock for non-emergencies. Disconnect your devices for an hour each day. Give yourself quiet time to stimulate your creativity and think on a deeper level.

If pushing yourself to succeed is tiring you out, try thinking less. Allow your mind to become clear so your creativity and productivity can soar.

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