

Issue 380



Harmony Center
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Building Better Mental Health Through Connections

Your Life Is Better Than You Think

By Tali Sharot and Cass R. Sunstein- Co-Authors of
Look Again: The Power of Noticing What Was Always There

The undeniable popularity of self-help books, wellness podcasts, and happiness workshops reflects the constant human desire to make life better. But could it be that many of our lives are already better than we recognize?

While we may have a loving family, a good place to live, and a decent job, we often fail to notice those things. It's not because we are ungrateful or stupid. It's because of a basic feature of our brain, known as habituation.

Habituation is the tendency of neurons to fire less and less in response to things that are constant. You enter a room filled with roses and after a short while, you cannot detect their scent any longer. And just as you get used to the smell of fresh flowers, you also get used to a loving relationship, to a promotion, to a nice home, to a dazzling work of art.

Like the front page of a daily newspaper, your brain cares about what recently changed, not about what remained the same. And so, what once took your breath away becomes part of life's furniture. You habituate to it—you fail to notice and respond to elements of your life which you previously found enchanting.

The good news is that you can dis-habituate. That is, you can suddenly start perceiving and responding to things to which you have become desensitized.

The key is taking small breaks from your daily life. For example, when people return home from a long business trip, they often find their ordinary life has “resparkled.” Mundane things suddenly seem amazing. The actress Jodie Foster recently described this feeling when sharing her experience of returning home after filming on location for six months. “I came back from somewhere that is amazing and beautiful,” she explained. “But you know, you long for really dumb things that you're just used to...Right now, I'm like 'my God avocados are amazing!' or 'I'm so glad I get to go to the gym again!' things that six months ago were sort of what I was trying to escape from.”

Of course, Foster's life is far from ordinary, but we think that in this case her experience reflects a fundamental point. If something is constant, we often assume (perhaps unconsciously) that it is there to stay. As a result, we focus our attention and effort on the next thing on our list. But if we can make the constant less so, our attention will naturally drift back to it. If it is good at its core, it may just resparkle. This is why time away, however short, will enable you to perceive your life with fresh eyes- and to break up reality.

continued on page 8...

Monthly Recipe

Crock-Pot Ramen

Ingredients:

1½ -2 lbs. boneless skinless chicken thighs	3 cloves garlic, minced
1½ cups matchstick carrots	4 cups chicken stock, low sodium
1 large red pepper, sliced	½ cup soy sauce
8 oz. sugar snap peas	2 tbsp. brown sugar
3 scallions, chopped	2 pkg. chicken flavored instant ramen noodles, will only use one of the seasoning packets

Fresh Garnishes:

Scallions	Jalapenos
Soft boiled eggs	Sesame seeds
Peanuts	

Instructions:

1. Add the chicken thighs, garlic, carrots, pepper, sugar snap peas, and scallions to your crock-pot.
2. Pour the chicken stock, soy sauce, and brown sugar over the veggies and meat.
3. Add in one seasoning packet from ramen noodles. (Save other packet or toss it.) Stir to mix everything together.
4. Put the lid on the crock-pot and cook on high for 4 hours or low for 6 hours until the chicken is tender.
5. 30 minutes before you want to serve the ramen, add the 2 ramen noodle packets to the slow cooker and cover.
6. Stir the ramen every 10 minutes until the noodles are cooked, which will take about 30 minutes.
7. Garnish with your chosen toppings and serve.



Tips For Eating Healthy:

Add one fruit or vegetable every time you eat.

What if you approached the goal of “eating healthier” with a mindset of *addition*, instead of subtraction and restriction? Focus less on what to avoid or reduce, and start prioritizing *adding* more of the good stuff.

Challenge yourself. This will help you reap the benefits of fiber from produce, plus water and antioxidants, and it’ll also help you displace less-nutritious items you might have otherwise chosen to include on your plate at that eating occasion.

Start small and keep it simple.



What is Recovery?

The term 'recovery' is used widely throughout the mental health sector. It can have different meanings in different contexts. The NDIA (*National Disability Insurance Agency*) defines recovery as achieving an optimal state of personal, social and emotional well-being, as defined by each individual, whilst living with or recovering from a mental health condition.

The term 'recovery' in relation to mental health can be misunderstood, as it is often confused with the medical understanding of the word, which may mean 'being cured' or having no symptoms.

For people living with mental health conditions recovery is about the person's whole life, not their illness or symptoms. It is personal and will mean different things to different people. Recovery, and a recovery oriented approach, focus on someone getting back control of their life, which may or may not include living with symptoms. This may involve building or maintaining:

- * hope and optimism
- * strengths and abilities
- * an active life
- * a positive sense of self
- * a meaningful and purposeful life

"Recovery is about finding ways to overcome barriers."

"Support workers who work in a recovery framework should support a person to define what positive mental health means for them."

People who live with mental health condition have the right to expect to lead fulfilling lives, and to pursue their own choices about how they live and about the support they accept, regardless of whether they are experiencing symptoms or not.

MENTAL HEALTH REMINDEES

Start where
you are

Trust the
process

Setbacks are
normal

You can get
back on track

We all make
mistakes

You are
making
progress

DECEMBER at the Harmony Center

Peer Support Schedule

Mondays- 1:00pm- *Hybrid*
6:00pm- *Hybrid*

Thursdays- 3:00pm w/Andrea

Tuesdays- 1:00pm- *Hybrid*

Fridays- 1:00pm

Recovery “Living Well” Schedule

Tuesdays at 2:00pm-
Tech Help Day

Wednesdays at 1:00pm-
4nd - Book Club w/Williston
11th- Christmas Baking
18th- Speaker from “First Link”
25th- Center Closed Merry Christmas!

Thursdays all day-
What do you need help with day?

Fridays at 1:30pm on 13th and 27th-
Membership Meetings

Social/Recreational Schedule

Mondays at 11:00am-
Cards

Tuesdays at 11am-
Games

Wednesdays at 10:00am-
Fitness Time

Thursdays at 1:00pm-
Audio Book Club

Fridays at 2:00pm-
6th - Christmas Baking
13th - Christmas Craft*
20th - Hot Chocolate Social
27th - Bingo

(Please note that you can play cards/games or watch a video at anytime throughout the day, on any day, as long as it doesn't interrupt a scheduled activity.)

Special Events

2nd – Baking Cupcakes- 2:00pm
3rd – Birthday Celebration- 2:00pm
16th - Harmony Center Christmas Party!
19th - 8:00am SAFE TALK Training*
25th & 26th - Center Closed...Merry Christmas!

Community Stuff...

DECEMBER 2024

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2 Free Mondays Are For Murder... Minot Public Library... 6:00pm (Must Sign-Up)	3 Free Vets for Vets Peer Support Mtg... 720 Western Avenue... 5:30pm	4 Free Tech Ed at Parker... Parker Center... 10:00am	5	6	7 \$16.00 Holiday Tour of Homes... Taube Museum... 4:00pm
8 \$3.00 Flea Market... ND State Fair Grounds... 10:00am	9 Free MAPSS Meeting... Harmony Center... 3:00pm	10	11 Free That's Craftastic: Minot Public Library... 6:00pm (Must Sign Up)	12	13	14 \$25.00 Minot Symphony Orchestra... Ann Nicole Nelson Hall... 7:00pm
15 \$3.00 Dakota Flea Market... ND State Fair Grounds... 10:00am	16	17 Free CPKC Holiday Train... Downtown Minot... 6:30pm	18	19	20	21
22	23 Free Visit the Minot Public Library...	24	25 Merry Christmas!!!	26 Free Call a friend	27	28
29	30 Free Attend Peer Support Meeting at the Harmony Center ... 1:00pm & 6:00pm	31	Pancakes with Santa December 8 th 9:00am Moose Lodge \$5.00		Christmas In the Park December 1 st thru 31 st 6:00pm Oak Park \$5.00 per car	

For more **DECEMBER** activities in the community go to...
visitminot.org

Soup Kitchens in Minot:

Monday-	11am-12:30pm-	Faith United Methodist Church,
Tuesday-	11:30am-12:30pm-	Christ Lutheran Church
Wednesday-	11:30am-12:30pm-	Immanuel Baptist Church
Wednesday-	5:30pm-6:30pm-	Cornerstone Presbyterian Church
Thursday-	5:30pm-6:30pm-	St Leo's Catholic Church
Friday-	11:30am-12:30pm-	1 st Lutheran Church
Saturday-	9:30am-10:30am-	Congregational United Church of Christ
Sunday-	11:0030am-12:30pm-	7 th Day Adventist Church

DECEMBER Remember When...

Remember these toys?

1. Play-Doh
2. Tumbling Tower
3. Glo-Worm
4. Cabbage Patch Doll
5. My Little Pony
6. Care Bears
7. Mrs. Beasley
8. Pound Puppies
9. Mr. Potato Head
10. Barbie
11. G.I. Joe
12. Stretch Armstrong
13. Atari
14. Game Boy
15. Nintendo
16. Walkman
17. Connect Four
18. Rubik's Cube
19. Trivial Pursuit
20. Hungry Hungry Hippos
21. Pogo Stick
22. Sea Monkeys
23. Mystery Date
24. Trouble
25. Chinese Jump Rope
26. Operation
27. Tiddly Winks
28. Racko
29. Speak & Spell
30. Waterful
31. Magic 8 Ball



32. Silly Putty
33. Simon Game
34. Troll Dolls
35. Hi Ho Cherry O
36. Mouse Trap
37. View Master
38. Let's Go Fishin'
39. Fashion Plates
40. Lite Bright
41. Etch-A-Sketch
42. Pet Rock
43. Twister
44. Shrinky Dinks
45. Easy Bake Oven
46. Bop-It
47. Sorry
48. Clue
49. Lincoln Logs
50. Silly Sand
51. Battleship
52. Metal Lawn Darts
53. See & Say
54. Spirograph
55. Hot Wheels
56. Big Wheel
58. Rock'em Sock'em
59. Cootie
60. Ice Breaker
61. Ker Plunk
62. Tinker Toys
63. Erector

64. Perfection
65. Slinky
66. Life
67. Parcheesi



More information...

Recovery Center's Across the State

Region I- Williston	The Club	701-774-4600 316 2nd Avenue West
Region II- Minot	Harmony Center	701-852-3263 720 Western Ave. Suite 201
Region III- Devils Lake	Freedom Center	701-662-8424 1124 2nd St. NE Suite 100
Region IV- GrandForks	Mountainbrooke	701-775-3748 112 North 3rd Street
Region V- Fargo	Hope In Recovery	701-373-2188 111 9 th St. South
Region VI- Jamestown	Progress Community Center	701-251-2964 428 2nd St. SW
Region VII- Bismarck	Dacotah Recovery Center	701-255-6402 522 West Arbor
Region VIII- Dickinson	Prairie Rose Center	701-227-0131 202 East Villard

The Recovery Centers are safe and supportive places where you can build healthy relationships with peers in recovery and gain skills and confidence to support your health and well-being... at no cost.

They offer:

- *Weekly peer-to-peer support groups
- *Group recreation and social events
- *Connection to other community services
- *Recovery Education and Planning
- *Nutritious on-site meals or snacks
- *Peer support services

For even more information visit: helpishere.nd.gov/recovery-centers



...Your Life Is Better Than You Think...continued...

The renowned couple's therapist Esther Perel draw similar conclusions. When Perel asked people to describe an incident when they where most drawn to their partner, they mentions two general situations. First, they were especially drawn to their spouse when they felt unfamiliar and unknown- for example, when they saw their partner from a distance or when they observed them deep in conversations with strangers. Second, they were especially drawn to their spouse when they were away and then when they reunited. Perel's conclusion is supported by science. A 2007 study of 237 individuals showed that when people spend more time apart from their partner, they report greater interest in them.

But what if you are unable to get away from your daily routine, even for a short while? Well, perhaps you can change your environment using your imagination. Close your eyes and imagine your life, but without your home, without your job, without your family; create vivid images with color and detail. This small act might make you feel lucky about what you have.

It's a bit like having a nightmare in which you lose a loved one- when you wake up and realize it was all a dream and the person is right there besides you, you feel especially thankful. Before the nightmare you may will have *known* that you had a good thing, but after you awake from it, you *feel* it too.

Why, though, does the emotional response habituate so fast? Why have we evolved a brain that drives less and less pleasure from good things that are constant and frequent? And perhaps most importantly, wouldn't it be great if you marveled at your job, house, or spouse just as you did at the very beginning?

Maybe, or maybe not. Habituation to the good drives you to move forward and progress. If you did not experience habituation, you would be satisfied with less. For example, you might end up being happy with a low-paying, entry level position many years after getting the job. Now, being satisfied with less may seem desirable, but it also means that you would have reduced motivation to learn, to develop, and to change. Without emotional habituation, our species may not have ended up with the technological innovation and great works of art we do, because people might not have had the motivation to create them.

A delicate balance must be struck here. On the one hand, without habituation (and dare we say some boredom, restlessness, and greed), we might have remained mere cave dwellers. But on the other hand, habituation can lead us to be unsatisfied, bored, restless, and greedy. Perhaps then, rather than focusing completely on how to better our life we need to also learn how to see our life better- to notice the great things we have habituated to a little bit more.

