

# Seven tips for a good day

## First, set yourself up for success...

### Priorities



Set deliberate direction and focus for your day

### The Science

Your conscious brain can only process a certain amount of information, so you're never able to see or hear everything that happens around you. What you do notice tends to be anything that matches what's already top of mind for you: your mood, expectations, and priorities. Everything else is likely to be filtered out as irrelevant spam.

### The Upshot

If you're in a bad mood, your brain will make sure you see things that confirm the world is indeed a bad place today. Go into a conversation with negative expectations, and you'll spot every little thing that proves you right. But if you decide to look out for more positive things, you've got a better chance of seeing those instead.

### The Advice

**SET INTENTIONS.** Before any important task or conversation, take a moment to articulate what you want to pay attention to. It will change the way you experience it.

### Productivity



Make the hours in the day go further

### The Science

When you skate across a lot of tasks (e.g. checking email, while keeping an eye on a website, while chatting), your brain isn't actually multitasking. It's switching off one task and switching on the next. That takes time and mental effort.

### The Upshot

We make 2x as many errors and slow down when we do more than one thing at a time. We think we're getting more done, but our days are longer and harder if we constantly flit from one type of task to another.

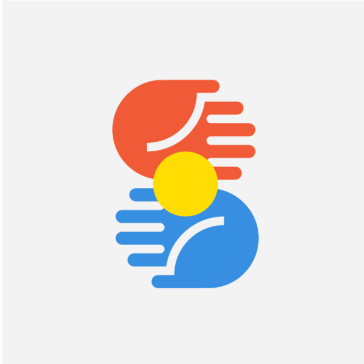
### The Advice

**BATCH YOUR TASKS.** Group together similar tasks and tackle them together, to take less time over them. For example, create 1-2 'zones' in the day when you blitz your email, and you'll spend less time on it than if you scatter it throughout the day.

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### Next, feel great about everything you do...

#### Relationships



Make the most of every interaction

#### The Science

When anything undermines people's sense of self-worth or social standing, their brain launches a defensive response involving fight, flight, or freeze behavior. At that moment there's less activity in the more sophisticated part of their brain.

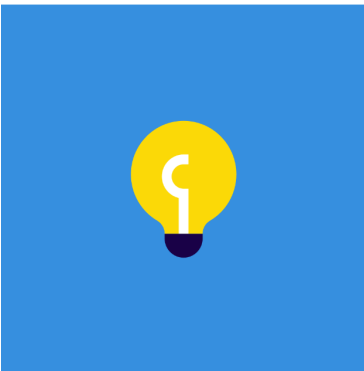
#### The Upshot

Most dysfunctional workplace behavior is a result of someone's brain launching this automatic defensive reaction to a perceived personal or social 'threat.' It doesn't make it OK, but it does make them human.

#### The Advice

SHOW APPRECIATION. If someone's behaving badly, find something genuine you can say to appreciate about them, however small it is. It will reduce their defensiveness and improve their behavior.

#### Thinking



Be your smartest, wisest most creative self

#### The Science

To save energy, our brains always look for easy answers – for example, by focusing on evidence that confirms our existing expectations (confirmation bias) or falling in with people around us (groupthink) – without us realizing it.

#### The Upshot

Our many mental shortcuts are useful in speeding up small decisions, e.g. what to have for lunch. But when we're making more important choices, we need a simple routine to broaden our perspective before we take action.

#### The Advice

DO A PRE-MORTEM. Imagine it's the future and your decision has played out badly. Ask yourself: what went wrong? What does that suggest you might be missing? So what should you do differently now?

#### Influence



Maximize the impact of all you say and do

#### The Science

Human beings are very social creatures. And most of us remember and process information more easily if it's 'socially encoded' – i.e. it's embedded in a narrative that involves people and interactions.

#### The Upshot

If you're trying to get information across, even if it's about technical issues, it helps to weave in a human example. People will remember and engage with it more easily.

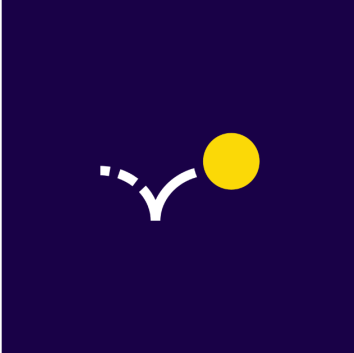
#### The Advice

HUMANIZE YOUR MESSAGE. Describe how your idea affects a real person. Trying to highlight a problem? Give an example of how life will be better for someone when it's fixed.

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### Finally, make it sustainable and enjoyable...

#### Resilience



Sail through setbacks and annoyances

#### The Science

When we're feeling unpleasantly stressed about something, our brain's defensive reaction reduces activity in the part of the brain responsible for reasoning and planning. That can make it hard for us to see how to get out of a difficult situation. But when we imagine that the challenge is being faced by someone else, not us, it reduces the sense of immediate threat.

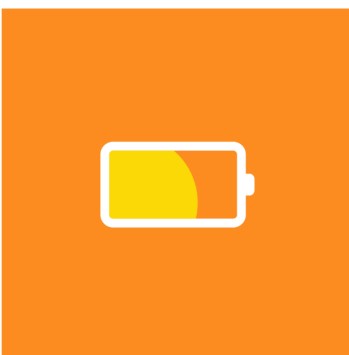
#### The Upshot

When facing a challenging situation, we can tap into more of our natural creativity and intelligence by adopting the perspective of someone else – or even that of our future selves.

#### The Advice

GET SOME DISTANCE. For example, imagine you're looking back on this in a year's time, or imagine you're giving advice to a friend about the situation you're in.

#### Energy



Boost your enthusiasm and enjoyment

#### The Science

When we decide how much we've enjoyed or disliked something, we don't consider our whole experience. Our rating depends disproportionately on two points: its peak, and the way it ends – something known as the 'peak-end effect.'

#### The Upshot

People rate an unpleasant experience as much less awful if it ends on a slightly better note – even if involves being uncomfortable for longer. People rate an enjoyable situation as being much less positive if it ends on a lower note.

#### The Advice

END ON A HIGH. Finish every day – and ideally each task and conversation – with something upbeat, by taking a moment to recap the best bits. "It was so good that this happened/we did this/to hear about that..." You'll remember it more positively as a result.