Brain Basics – There are 3 independent yet interconnected sections of the brain.
- **Reptilian** – primitive, instinctive survival, fight or flight, quick, without it we wouldn’t be alive
- **Limbic** – feelings, emotions, important in learning and memory, learns from mistakes, controls behavior
- **Prefrontal/Neo-cortex** – thinking/cognitive brain with infinite abilities, can process only a few things at once, uses lots of energy, tires quickly

**WE MUST LEARN TO BY-PASS THE REPTILIAN BRAIN IN ORDER TO THRIVE INSTEAD OF SURVIVE.**

Brain differences between men and women:
- Women have more serotonin (calming effect), oxytocin (promotes generosity and bonding), and a larger hippocampus (neuropathways to emotive centers).
- Men have more testosterone (dominance, decreased worry) and a larger amygdala (drives emotional impulses/impulsiveness).
- But keep in mind that 20% of people are bridge brain and think more like the opposite of the gender they were born with.

**What do the differences mean? Typically:**
- Men focus on 1 thing at a time. Women want a bigger picture.
- Men want activity & motion. Women prefer to be still & focused.
- Men prefer independent decisions. Women prefer a team approach.
- Men prefer written words & diagrams. Women want to talk through things.
- Men want recent examples. Women want historical data.
- Men focus on facts. Women focus on emotion and facts.

**Don’t overthink things. Overthinking happens when you are out of balance.**
- Recognize your inner critic and apply a full stop - “We’ve been over this again and again.”
- Notice and name the nagging feeling. Named feelings are actionable and spur questions.
- Nagging feelings may be fear or insight. Understand the fear; honor the insight.
- Ask yourself, “What’s the worst that could happen?”
- Connect with nature, think of peaceful words and focus on positive things.
- Live in the present and meditate regularly if you are a chronic over-thinker.

**Knee-jerk decisions are emotion-based and lack thought. Be careful of these.**
- Recognize your triggers – people, situations, events that are hot button issues.
Apply detachment to delay reaction and encourage objectivity.
Know your somatic markers – body sensations, a knot in your stomach, sweaty palms.
Slow your reaction with deep breathing, relaxing your body, or taking a break.
Try to understand the source of your reaction.

Complex decisions require all brain resources.
Resist making a quick decision.
Take a brain break – shut down visual and auditory inputs.
Mesh cognitive and intuitive by combining facts with feelings.
Watch for the decision that feels right.

YOUR BRAIN SPENDS A LOT OF TIME ON INFORMATION YOU SEE OR HEAR AND IT GETS OVERLOADED. WHEN YOU SHUT DOWN THOSE INPUTS, IT FREES YOUR BRAIN TO THINK IN A MORE CREATIVE AND FOCUSED WAY.

How to reduce cortisol and stress.
Take slow deep breaths in through the nose for 6 seconds.
Switch to whole foods and try an anti-inflammatory diet.
Clench and relax your face to remind the brain to relax muscles.
Do physical exercise regularly.
Go to bed early or take a nap.
Try meditation to reduce by 20%.
Have a great play list & dance: music lowers cortisol.
Sipping black tea has calming effects.
Hang out with a funny friend.
Have a massage or pamper yourself.

To keep employees happier, give them control.
Research shows that a sense of control over your environment triggers the reward response.
A reduction of control (micromanaging) triggers the threat response.
Give people the freedom to work at their best.
To launch a reward response, provide employees with a sense of control:
• “Here are a couple of approaches that could work, choose the one that’s best for you.”
• “We need to achieve this outcome. Use whatever approach you think is best.”
• “A long as you’re here 10am-3pm, you can adjust your work schedule to fit your needs.”

WE USED TO THINK OUR BRAINS WERE UNCHANGEABLE. IN ACTUALITY, WE CAN ALTER NEUROCHEMISTRY TO CHANGE BELIEFS, THOUGHT PROCESSES, AND EMOTIONS. THE BRAIN IS ABLE TO CHANGE BASED ON EXPERIENCES AND EVEN IN OLD AGE RETAINS NEUROPLASTICITY.

Neuroplasticity = neuro (brains) + plastic (changeable)
Every time we think, feel or do, we strengthen brain pathways.
New thoughts and new skills carve out new pathways.
With repeated and direct attention towards change, we can rewire our brains.
Seek pleasure/reward from healthy pursuits to strengthen pathways and form healthy habits.

BRAIN TRAINING: IF WE DON’T LEARN NEW SKILLS, WE DON’T ENGAGE OUR BRAIN’S PLASTICITY. THE BRAIN IS A MUSCLE THAT GROWS WITH EXERCISE.

Highly focused activities help keep the brain in good shape.
- Start a new creative hobby.
- Learn a new language
- Make a career change
- Do logistical puzzles
- Experience new environments

Mindfulness – becoming consciously aware of our thoughts and decisions, observing our inner experiences as if they were happening to someone else.

- Mindfulness and meditation help the brain create new pathways.
- After 10 weeks of mindfulness therapy, 67% of OCD patients improved.
- Try this – Count to ten to help restore your mind to clarity and peace in the present moment. Focus all your attention on your breathing and count. If your mind wanders, start again.

THE POWER OF BRAIN TRAINING MEANS THAT THE BRAIN CAN NOT ONLY LEARN NEW TRICKS, IT CAN ACTUALLY RESTRUCTURE ITSELF, EVEN IN OLD AGE. NEUROPLASTICITY PROMISES REMARKABLE NEW THERAPIES FOR MENTAL ILLNESS AND ADDICTION.

Tips to stop procrastinating.

- Stop thinking…start doing.
- Don’t blow a task out of proportion.
- Create a to do list and just do one task at a time.
- Start with the hardest task of the day and remove distractions.
- Get an accomplice to encourage you to stay on task.
- Focus on the end goal and finish it!

When your brain is distracted - the downsides of multitasking:

- Reduces efficiency and quality of work
- Kills prioritization and hampers creativity
- Drains energy and reduces well-being

Fool your brain by doing these things to decrease stress and become happier:

- Have a shut-down ritual for work. Write down what you need to do tomorrow.
- Turn weeknights into weekends.
- Engage in a hobby, don’t sit on the couch.
- Turn off your smartphone.
- Don’t go to bed angry.
- Write down the good stuff that happened.
- Schedule something to look forward to.

A LARGE PORTION OF THE WEEKEND EFFECTS IS EXPLAINED BY DIFFERENCES IN THE AMOUNT OF TIME SPENT WITH FRIENDS OR FAMILY (7.1 HOURS VERSES 5.4 HOURS ON WEEK DAYS). THE EXTRA 1.7 HOURS ON IN WEEKEND DAYS RAISES HAPPINESS BY ABOUT 2%.