



For a Better Life...

news, tips and info for anyone interested in making life better- at home, business, sports and more! From Richard Walker, your local CPD* group facilitator. Hope you enjoy it!

Bad in-‘Flu’-ence? The Department of Health (DOH) says 3,000 to 4,000 ‘excess deaths’ are caused by flu in non-epidemic years, rising to apparently 30,000 excess deaths in epidemic years. The new DOH ‘factsheet’ on Influenza goes further, estimating that an additional 12,500 people die each year during the flu season in England and Wales. In the US, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website notes that, on average, 36,000 people die each year from flu in the US.

But, the Office for National Statistics own figures show that in 2004 only 33 people died of influenza in England and Wales, and the CDC’s own data showing that in 2002 just 753 people died from flu and in 2001 only 257. The discrepancy between actual deaths and those reported in ‘factsheets’ arises from the practice of combining flu deaths with a percentage of those from pneumonia and other respiratory diseases, making flu appear more deadly than it is.

While the flu vaccine is vigorously promoted by health agencies as the ‘best’ protection against flu, proclamations of how many people didn’t get flu thanks to vaccination are little more than fantasy; there is no truly reliable way to tell who would or would not have contracted the disease. Source: <http://www.i-c-m.org.uk/journal/2005/oct/a03.htm>

The noise is killing me! Too much noise, such as the sound of passing traffic, can increase the risk of heart attack in men by 50 per cent and in women by up to threefold. That’s according to a team of German researchers who interviewed 4,115 hospital inpatients, about half of whom were recovering from a recent heart attack; the remainder served as controls.

Stefan Willich and colleagues interviewed the patients about their experiences of noise at home and at work, and used a Berlin ‘noise map’, and work-place assessments to corroborate the participants’ statements. As might be expected from typical lifestyles, in men, noise at home and at work significant, whereas for women only noise at home was a factor. The suggested physiological link is via increasing catecholamine levels associated with increased blood pressure and plasma lipids [known risk factors for heart attack]”. There seemed to be a cut off level of 60 db (typical of a busy office), above which the risk increased. Current European Union regulations are that workplace noise should not be higher than 85 decibels. Source: <http://bps-research-digest.blogspot.com/2005/11/noise-increases-risk-of-having-heart.html>

You’re havin’ us on..! Ever had the feeling that you’ve really only got where you are by a mixture of luck and bluffing? If so, you’re not alone; it is common amongst high achievers, who also fear that their true lack of ability will be discovered. Psychologists call it the ‘imposter phenomenon’ and a new study reports the feeling is more common among women and people who measure their own success against the achievements of others.

Male ‘imposters’ tended to think “The reason I do my work is so others won’t think I’m dumb”, whereas the women tended to think “I would feel successful if I did better than most of the others”. All tended to measure their own success against the achievements of others, rather than viewing task success as an end in itself. Source: <http://bps-research-digest.blogspot.com/2005/11/do-you-ever-feel-like-fraud.html>

Meditate on that! New evidence suggests meditating can make parts of the cerebral cortex thicker and protect other parts from age-related thinning. Sara Lazar and colleagues at Massachusetts General Hospital scanned the brains of 20 people who meditated for an average of 40 minutes per day and 15 controls with no meditation experience. The meditating participants were practitioners of Buddhist Insight meditation, concentrating on stimuli ‘in the moment’, in a non-judgmental way - a process known as ‘mindfulness’.

Researchers found that meditators had thicker specific areas of the cortex. These were the right anterior insula, involved in monitoring bodily functions, and parts of the prefrontal cortex involved in attention and sensory processing. Older participants who did not meditate had a thinner prefrontal cortex, thus suggesting meditation might protect from age-related mental deterioration. The results also showed that the

effect was greater with increased expertise. Source: <http://bps-research-digest.blogspot.com/2005/11/how-meditation-alters-brain.html>

How Freddie thinks... To find out what it means to be 'mentally tough' in the world of cricket, a consultant psychologist, and colleagues at the English and Wales Cricket Board, asked 12 top world ranked English batsmen and bowlers.

Four main themes emerged: 'environmental influences', 'tough character', 'tough attitudes' and 'tough thinking'. The key was the way these themes inter-related, best visualised as a pyramid with 'environmental influences' at the base. These influences lead to a generally tough character, which in turn manifests as a set of tough attitudes. "Finally, and very specifically", they explained, "on top of these attitudes sits 'tough thinking', which represents the key psychological properties of a 'mentally tough' mind, oriented towards the competition demands of the moment".

A key environmental factor was overcoming childhood setbacks. "I [was] 15 when I was going to be signed up as a leg spinner and then just lost it... gone from being a hero ...to being a bloke who's lost it". Aspects of 'tough character' included being independent and having resilient confidence. 'Tough attitudes' included being willing to take risks, going the extra mile, believing in quality preparation and having a 'never say die' mindset. "It might take me 10 or 15 years but I will get there. I will play for England". Tough thinking included good decision making at critical moments in a match, honest self-appraisal, and overcoming self-doubts.

Source: <http://bps-research-digest.blogspot.com/2005/11/think-like-freddie.html>

Tips

Don't stress.. When a stressful situation arises, we might stew on it, or we might react strongly, but in either case the real issue often remains unresolved. You might try this simple NLP* trick. The very fact that we produce an emotion inside, tells us that this means something, personally, to us. Emotions are not there to mess up your life, they are there to guide you, and direct you to new understandings that will help you. So why not ask yourself, 'What else could this mean?'; think about it. You might also check out other perspectives.. (1) 'step into' the other person's shoes.. how does it look from there? (2) Put yourself in the position of 'a fly on the wall' – an independent observer; how does it look from there? Of course, you might prefer to remain 'right' – in which case you get to keep the emotion, and not let go of the stress.

So you thought you knew what you meant.. If you are serious about effective communication, then why not take responsibility for what outcome you get, rather than merely what you meant? A fundamental concept captured in NLP* is, 'the meaning of the communication is in the response you get'. Here's a simple example, from a real case. A father complained to me that he tells his daughter 'it's time for bed', but she doesn't go. This would escalate into stress and tension on his part, and with him repeating the demand, and her getting more belligerent and upset, until he finally dragged her upstairs. Meaning of communication =? 'Stay where I am'. How can he take responsibility? Well, if he were to ask his daughter, 'Just now, when I told you to go to bed, and you didn't, what were you thinking?', he might have got an interesting answer. In fact, he told me that she was probably thinking, 'No I'm not, I'm staying here till you drag me upstairs'. (Generally, wherever you can, it's best to ask!). So now he knows, and can try something else in response to that, better directed to the outcome! I suggested he says next, "Ok, you've got ten minutes to get up to bed. I won't remind you. I will just take you up. And you will not get a story." It worked a treat. No fuss. The point, is, you get new information to work on.

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**The CPD (Continuing Professional Development) Group is a voluntary commitment by specialists in solution focused behavioural change and healing techniques, including NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming) and Hypnosis. It's aim is to inspire, encourage and develop ourselves and others in a professional yet supportive and fun environment. Key themes are networking, critical discussion, education, business development, professional support and public confidence. It's hosted by Richard Walker (www.abetterlife-uk.com), based in Harpenden, with members from Herts, Beds, Bucks, Cambs and London.*