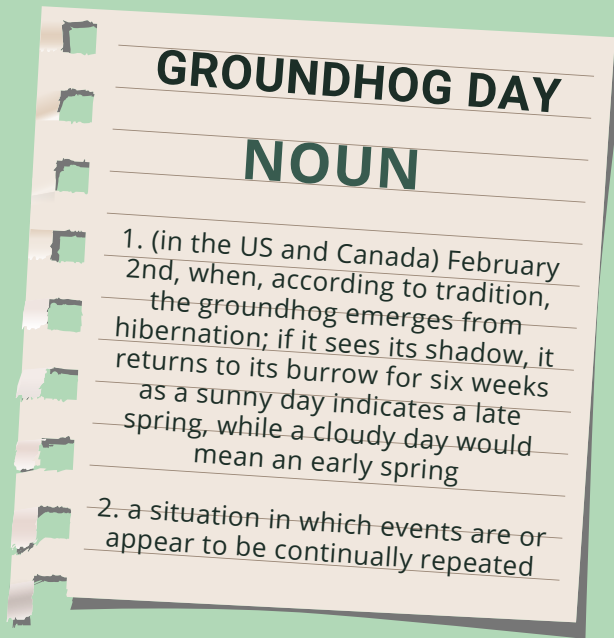


GROUNDHOG DAY



February 2nd marks Groundhog Day - a North American tradition, most famously celebrated at a ceremony in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, USA, where the actions of the groundhog are closely monitored as it first emerges from hibernation.

This event is of course, documented in the 1993 film 'Groundhog Day' starring Bill Murray. Murray portrays Phil Connors, a cynical television weatherman covering the event, who becomes trapped in a time loop, experiencing the same day repeatedly.

The film had a significant impact on popular culture; leading to the phrase "Groundhog Day" being recognised as a situation that could be experienced; it has become a common term to reference an unpleasant, monotonous situation or tedious events that appear to be repeating in exactly the same way.

The term has been used often during the COVID-19 pandemic, to refer to the monotony of quarantine, isolation and imposed lockdowns as we attempt to stem the spread of the virus. Many of us no doubt, feel trapped in a cycle that we definitely want to escape.

If we dig below the film's funny surface, we realise it presents a powerful message about finding purpose and meaning in our lives. The evolution of the main character in this story shows us the importance of living in the present moment and being an active participant in life.





"Do not dwell in the past, do not dream of the future, concentrate the mind on the present moment." Buddha

If you are feeling stuck in a Groundhog Day cycle, these simple habits might be worth a try! After all, the present moment is the only thing we can control.

Mindful Cooking

Can you chop a carrot without thinking about anything but the carrot? I bet you can't.



Take a mindful nature walk

The next time you feel the need for a walk—whether it's a quick trip around the block or a lengthy stroll through a pretty, scenic spot—make it a mindful nature walk. All you need to do is engage all your senses and stay aware of what's happening both around you and within you. Be intentional with your awareness; notice your feet hitting the ground with each step, see everything there is to see around you, open your ears to all the sounds surrounding you, feel each inhale and exhale, and just generally be aware of what is happening in each moment.



Mindful Music

Try this little experiment: While you're in your car or some other place listening to music, see if you can listen to one song all the way through without doing anything else (checking your phone, changing the station, etc.) or thinking about anything else (figuring out what to make for dinner, how you would rewrite that one line. Instead, simply focus on hearing and listening to the music. What is it like to feel music?



Single-task

It becomes easier to stay present for more time throughout the day by single-tasking. That means to not use tabs when you browse the internet but to just be fully engaged with one thing online at a time. It means to not use your smartphone or computer as you also try to watch the TV. Or to use any of those internet-devices during a conversation. Get a good start to your day and set the tone for it by doing one thing at a time as soon as you wake up.



Mindful Play

What does it feel like to have fun? When you find yourself in the middle of a game- playing fetch with your dog, Words With Friends with your sister, hide and seek with your son,- check in briefly with how it feels to have fun. If aliens arrived tomorrow and explained that they didn't understand "fun" and what it felt like (not what it is), how would you describe it to them?



5 Senses in 5 Mindful Minutes

Life is tough at the moment and living through this pandemic with the challenges we are facing both personally and professionally is undoubtedly taking a toll on wellbeing. Things may feel out of your control. You may be experiencing stress and anxiety.

One of the most powerful approaches you can take is to learn how to do a grounding exercise that immediately calms your body and mind.

Reconnecting with all of your five senses can ground you in the present moment, putting a stop to racing thoughts. It's not going to solve the problems on your to-do list, but you'll probably feel better equipped to deal with them. Five minutes is all you need to engage your senses and get a foothold on your day.



1. Relax:

Sit in a comfortable upright position with your feet planted flat on the ground. Rest your hands on your thighs or on your desk.

2. Breathe:

Just breathe. Refreshing, comfortable, and even breaths. Don't worry about technique, just allow relaxing breaths to enter deeply and exhale fully.

3. Engage:

It's time to engage each of your five senses, one at a time, for at least one minute each. You can keep a clock handy or just estimate. The point here is to focus on the present moment and how each sense is being activated in that moment. You might start like this...

Hearing:

Begin to relax by just noticing all of the sounds around you. Give yourself permission to suspend your judgement of the sounds. They are not good or bad, they just are. Are you now hearing more than you were before you started? Subtle sounds may have previously gone unnoticed. Can you hear them now? Remember your steady breaths while you are listening.

Smell:

Now shift your concentration to noticing the smells of your environment. Is somebody cooking lunch in your building? Can you detect the electronics smell of your computer or fresh air coming in through your window? Try closing your eyes so you can focus on the subtlest of scents.

Sight:

If you closed your eyes a moment ago, open them to notice the colours, shapes, and textures of your surroundings. If you really look, just about everything has colour variation and texture that may have gone unnoticed. How many shades of blue or red? Any colour missing?

Taste:

You can do this one regardless of whether or not you have food to put in your mouth. If you have a snack go ahead and take a small bite, noticing all of the flavours and textures that arise. If you don't have food, just notice your tongue in your mouth, your saliva, and your breath as you exhale. Most of us have tastes in our mouth at all times. Run your tongue over your teeth and cheeks- what do you notice? Keep breathing, one more minute.

Touch:

Last one. Where did you place your hands when you first started this exercise? Notice the sensation of where your hands meet something solid like the fabric of your clothes or the surface of your desk. Notice the pressure between your feet and the floor. Try feeling the textures that you noticed by sight a moment ago. To fully ground yourself in the room and bring the exercise to a close, feel several objects on your desk and perhaps even stand up from your chair to bring energy and sensation to all parts of your body.

Time is up. Even when there are distractions during this five-minute exercise, you can gently bring yourself back to your senses. No need to get frustrated when that happens, because a distraction is just another engagement of a particular sense. Incorporate it into the exercise.

**#wellbeingweek
#stayinthepresent
#dontruintoday**



*"Almost everything will work again if you unplug it for a few minutes, including you."
Anne Lamott*