



# THE TIMES OF INDIA

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**STUDENT EDITION**

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**THE TIMES OF INDIA**  
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**LATEST BUZZWORDS EXPLAINED**

## VIRTUAL COMMUTE

A way for people who work from home to separate their working hours from their personal time more easily. A blog post on govtech.com said: "If there's one thing remote workers probably don't miss about going into the office, it's the commute. Microsoft, however, disagrees. The company announced that it is working on a new feature for its Teams platform that will allow remote workers to schedule virtual commutes. The idea is to help give workers a solid separation between work and home, a time before and after work each day where they can reflect and set goals without work or home getting in the way."

Microsoft first floated the idea in 2020 and launched it in 2021. Virtual work is everywhere, and it is widely acknowledged that in some form, it is here to stay well past the end of the pandemic. The landscape of work is forever transformed and both employers as well as employees are still adjusting to it. The "fake commute" helps you get into a work day by adding ritual and virtual boundaries between you and your home. To help workers deal with burnout from working remotely, Microsoft's Teams platform's "Virtual Commute" is focused on fixing worker habits by improving productivity. The "Virtual Commute" feature presents a set of scheduled blocks of time that begins and ends the employee's workday, where list-based work objectives are self-quantified and later self-reviewed. You also have the option to rate your day and push tasks ahead into your schedule.

Pics: Istock



## JUST 'PYT' IT!

Move over lagom and hygge, 'pyt' is the new Scandinavian term for a happier life

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For a fourth-year running, Finland has been named the happiest place in the world with Denmark a close second in an annual UN-sponsored report – The World Happiness Report. This report asks people from 149 countries to rate their own happiness on parameters like social support, personal freedom, gross domestic product (GDP) and levels of corruption. The Scandinavian countries have dominated this list for many years now, a reason why a lot of us are tapping into their lifestyle philosophies to perhaps learn more.

In 2018, hygge (Danish word for 'cosy') became very popular followed by lagom (Swedish and Norwegian for moderation). In 2021, happiness words added yet another addition from Denmark – "pyt" which was recently voted the most popular word by Danes, beating out "dvæle" (to linger) and "krænkelssesparat" (ready to take offense).

### WHAT DOES IT MEAN

Pronounced "pid," pyt doesn't have a direct English translation like most Scandinavian words. It's more a cultural concept about cultivating healthy thoughts to deal with stress

and a way to move on at the time of adversity. Pyt in Danish is usually expressed as an interjection in reaction to a daily hassle, frustration or mistake. If you have to look for an English phrase it will be closer to "Don't worry" or "Stuff happens". Shattered a glass? Shrug and say, "pyt." Sitting to do your homework and your pencil/pen goes missing – shake it off and say "pyt". It's the philosophy of accepting what has happened and reset-

### LIFE LESSONS

ting to a more equitable state of mind. Use it as a reminder to step back from a stressful situation and refocus rather than overreact.

### HOW PYT CAN HELP

Pyt can reduce stress because it is a sincere attempt to encourage yourself to not get bogged down by minor daily frustrations. It can help you overcome the tendency to blame. Studies show that we are happier and live longer when we have fewer daily hassles.

### WHEN NOT TO USE "PYT"

- Don't "pyt" in response to being seriously wronged
- The word shouldn't be used when you ought to take responsibility
- It is not an excuse for inaction
- In fact, don't apply to everything – only minor frustrations of daily life

And in some cases, what constitutes a hassle is how we interpret other people's actions. For instance, you have something to share in an online classroom while another child just doesn't stop sharing. This can make it irrationally personal to you. By saying "pyt," you're deciding that it's not worth letting someone else's actions, which are out of your control, bother you.

It helps you find your focus too. The next time you're feeling frazzled about a minor situation, channel your inner pyt. Say the word out loud if you need to, or just use it as an internal reminder not to let things that are outside your control interfere with your mood. While it may seem like a minor step, reminding yourself to refocus when you're feeling annoyed or hassled by little things does add up. Letting go of minor issues can help you look at the big picture.

Danish classrooms use a literal "pyt button". Teachers use these buttons to teach students how to let go in terms of smaller issues like losing a game or misplacing stationery



## DIAL UP YOUR HAPPINESS QUOTIENT

With lifestyle lessons from world's healthiest, happiest, and longest-living populations

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When an eclectic team of anthropologists, demographers, and scientists studied the world's longest-living populations, collectively called the Blue Zones, what they discovered were many common habits shared by people of these regions. Be it eating a plant based diet, enjoying midday naps or prioritising tight-knit social networks, the "Blue Zones", namely Loma Linda, (US), Nicoya Peninsula (Costa Rica), Sardinia (Italy), Ikaria (Greece) and Okinawa (Japan), are living longer and disease free due to these way of living.

### 5 TAKEAWAYS

#### 1. PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Whether in Sardinia in Italy or Ikaria in Greece, people engage in regular physical activity and avoid too much dependence on modern conveniences like cars, vacuum cleaners or washing machines. While older Ikarians are likely to remain physically active well into the 80s and 90s, Sardinians walk significant distances through hilly terrain each day, promoting heart and bone health.

#### 2. PLANT-CENTRIC FOOD

The majority of people living in Blue Zones eat mostly plant-sourced foods. Animal proteins are generally consumed in small amounts and are often reserved for special occasions. And we needn't remind you that there is enough research to back the fact that a

plant-heavy diet, such as the Mediterranean diet, is associated with a lower risk of all-cause mortality and reduced cognitive decline.

#### 3. SENSE OF PURPOSE

Referred to as Ikigai in Okinawa and plan de vida in Nicoya (which translates to "why I wake up in the morning"), a sense of purpose contributes to human longevity and overall health and well-being. It could be a hobby, a booming career, or responsibility towards your loved ones – having a motto in life is associated with many psychological benefits, like improved happiness, self-esteem, gratitude.

#### 4. STRESS MANAGEMENT

There must be a reason why most of the world's longest-living people prioritise activities such as napping, praying, and attending happy hour with friends over work and worrying. It is because it makes them happy and stress free, leaving not much scope for problems of the heart or mind.

#### 5. MINDFUL EATING

Okinawans follow the principle Hara Hachi Bu, which means "eat until you're 80% full". Similarly, most of the other Blue Zones dwellers stick to the simple rules of eating small meals, eating mindfully and eating an early dinner, all factors supporting health and longevity.



### SELF-CARE

## 22 easy ways to get your BEST SKIN EVER...



1 Exfoliation is a rule to have a flawless, smooth and supple skin and more so when you are young. But its frequency depends on your skin type as well as the environmental conditions.

2 Be gentle on your skin. Don't use harsh chemicals or exfoliators.

3 Use dark UV protected sunglasses when you are out as that is the time we really strain our muscles around the eyes which leads to early wrinkling around the eyes called crow's feet.

4 Don't pick those acne or else they will form scars.

5 Working in closed air conditioned places for long hours? AC drives out all the essential oils and natural moisturising factors (NMF's) out of our skin and so these have to be supplemented on a 4 hourly basis to ensure the hydration level of skin is maintained.

6 Working for long hours in front of computer? Always use a sunscreen mixed with a moisturiser.

7 Like wardrobe, skincare is seasonal. Your skin gets flaky and dry in winter more so than in summer. Change your skincare accordingly.

8 Don't use soap on the face. Soaps tend to leave a thin layer on your face which makes your skin look very dull and lifeless.

9 Avoid puffiness under your eyes by adjusting your sleep routine. To reduce puffiness, apply a cold compress until the area returns to its original state.

10 Establish a once-a-month detox routine. Also deworm regularly.

11 Tanning is inevitable. No need to panic. Rub a piece of ripe papaya or banana on the tanned area for 15 mins.

12 Men need to wake up to skincare too. Avoid using after shave lotion which had irritant ingredients. Use a soother like aloe vera gel or a calamine lotion in case of

a shaving rash. Use sunscreen.

13 Treat constipation if you are suffering from it.

14 Get into a habit of splashing water on the face while washing your face instead of rubbing water on the skin with fingers. Lather the face wash on your palm and then apply it gently on face.

15 Don't be too harsh and crude while brushing your teeth. Remember it is also pulling and pushing our skin.

16 For acne and oily skin, here is a superb home remedy. Take 1/3 each of rose petals, mint (pudina) and neem leaves. Boil and strain. Now set this decoction in an ice tray and freeze. Rub this on your skin when you need instant glow.

17 Try skin hacks. Pinch your facial skin at 20 places on your face for a few seconds and then leave it. Do this more at places where you feel the skin getting loose or sagging. This helps in increasing the blood supply and adds to skin glow. You could even blow two big balloons a day.

18 Try to keep smiling all the time. This too increases the face value.

19 Don't go to bed with make up on. Makeup left on overnight seeps into your pores, clogs them, and congests your skin. Even if you don't use makeup, clean your face at night.

20 Invest in good skincare and don't use the cheapest option available.

21 Hydrate your face throughout the day. Whether it's with a commercial product, or one you make yourself (fill a spray bottle with distilled water, add a few drops of chamomile or essential oils, shake it gently before each use). And drink water.

22 Let go of stress. Stress can show up on your face, no matter how well you take care of your skin. TW

Expert: Dr Satish Bhatia, Mumbai-based dermatologist

### HEALTH

## Is this snoring...or MORE?

Many people treat snoring as a joke or something to feel embarrassed about. But loud snoring – especially when accompanied by daytime fatigue – may be a sign of sleep apnea, a common but serious disorder in which breathing repeatedly stops and starts as you sleep.

### THE PROBLEM

Obstructive sleep apnea is a sleep disorder in which breathing is briefly and repeatedly interrupted during sleep. Obstructive sleep apnea occurs when the muscles in the back of the throat fail to keep the airway open, despite efforts to breathe. Another form of sleep apnea is central sleep

apnea, in which the brain fails to properly control breathing during sleep. In adults, the most common cause of obstructive sleep apnea is excess weight and obesity, which is associated with soft tissue of the mouth and throat. During sleep, when throat and tongue muscles are more relaxed, this soft tissue can cause the airway to become blocked.

### SYMPTOMS

Chronic snoring is a strong indicator of sleep apnea and should be evaluated by a health professional. Since people with sleep apnea tend to be sleep deprived, they may suffer from sleeplessness and a wide range of other symptoms such as difficulty concentrating, depression, irritability, sexual dysfunction, learning and memory difficulties, and falling asleep while at work, on the phone, or driving.

### DIAGNOSIS

One of the most common methods used to diagnose sleep apnea is a sleep study, which may require an overnight stay at a sleep centre. The sleep study monitors a variety of functions dur-

ing sleep including sleep state, eye movement, muscle activity, heart rate, respiratory effort, airflow, and blood oxygen levels.

### TREATMENT

Positive airway pressure machines, used with a variety of breathing masks, are the most widely used treatment for moderate and severe sleep apnea. The American Academy of Sleep Medicine has also approved oral appliance therapy as a first line treatment for patients diagnosed with mild to moderate sleep apnea. Oral appliance therapy is an effective, non-invasive treatment that fits easily into your lifestyle.

### WHAT MAY HELP

- Lose weight
- Quit smoking
- Avoid alcohol and sedatives
- Exercise regularly
- Avoid caffeine and heavy meals
- Maintain regular sleep hours
- Sleep on your side
- Prop your head up while sleeping

### #GOALS

## LESSONS FROM OPRAH

January 29 is media mogul Oprah Winfrey's birthday. Talk show host, television producer, actress, author, philanthropist, Winfrey's life is one of hardship, sheer determination and courage. One can learn a lot from her...

### MOVE ON FROM THE PAST

"Turn your wounds into wisdom"

To say that Oprah had a tough childhood would be an understatement. Born to an unwed teenage mother, she spent the first few years of her life in extreme poverty on her maternal grandmother's farm. Winfrey left the farm when she was 6-years-old to join her mother. But she was subjected to child abuse at the hands of male relatives and a family friend. She was on a downward spiral due to this and this resulted in a teenage pregnancy at age 14. After her son died soon after birth, Oprah moved to Nashville to live with her father, Vernon – a turning point in her life.

Winfrey didn't let her past experiences define her. Instead of basing her identity on a previous life of poverty, abuse and self-destructive behaviour, Oprah focused on her potential and started on a new path.

### EDUCATION IS THE KEY

"Surround yourself only with people who are going to take you higher"

Oprah has stated many times that her father's love of learning was key to helping turn her life around. She believes that the only way a person can truly grow is by changing their way of thinking. She turned her life around by turning to education and becoming an honour student.

### DON'T FEAR FAILURE

"The only people who never tumble are those who never mount the high wire"

Much of Oprah's success can be attributed to the fact that she took risks and was willing to venture into new territory. She started as a radio jockey and was later offered a news-casting job at a local television station. She always took a chance on a new assignment,

### TRIVIA TIME

- Birthday: January 29, 1954
- First gig: In 1971, she was offered a job as a newsreader on the local radio. At 19, she became the first female Black news anchor in Nashville history. She was just 19
- Becoming a TV Talk Show Host: In 1976, Oprah moved to a TV station in Baltimore, Maryland where she hosted a TV talk show called People are Talking. The first day on the job, Oprah knew she had found her calling
- The Oprah Winfrey Show: Over 10 million people watched her show daily
- Net worth: \$2.6 billion (source: Forbes)



new format and not letting the fear of failure stop her. This willingness to take risks and explore new avenues has continued throughout her career. Even after the success of The Oprah Winfrey Show, she went on to start a production house, a publishing business and a charity organisation.

### BE AUTHENTIC

"When you undervalue what you do, the world will undervalue who you are"

Like all talk shows, even Winfrey's talk show was all about sensational topics. But she soon made a decision to go for a format that aligns with her values. She didn't want to be part of a show that "demeans, embarrasses, or diminishes another human being." From that point on, "The Oprah Winfrey Show" was all about self-improvement. The format clicked and the rest as they say is history.



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**H**ow about challenging yourself to a photo-free day? Just for a day, take absolutely no pictures — not of your lunch, your children or your plants. No photo messages. No cute baby pics. Instagrammers, it's gonna get tough. But it's manageable. We are exposed to photos online almost constantly, and researchers are beginning to point to some of the unseen consequences of this image onslaught, which range from heightened anxiety to memory impairment.

Are we photographing more and experiencing less? Snapping too many pictures could actually harm the brain's ability to retain memories, says Elizabeth Loftus, a psychological science professor at the University of California, Irvine. So you get the photo but kind of lose the memory. "We either rid ourselves of the responsibility of remembering moments when we take pictures of them, or we're so distracted by the process of taking a photo that we miss the moment altogether," adds Loftus.

Documenting every second of your life on social media has become



the norm, but Dr Linda Henkel of Fairfield University has warned of the 'photo-taking impairment effect' where you outsource your memory of an experience to an external device instead of experiencing it first hand.

### LET'S BE MORE MINDFUL ABOUT IT

■ **Be intentional with the photos you're taking.** Choosing what we take photos of more deliberately

### RETHINK

## HEARD OF THE PHOTO-TAKING IMPAIRMENT EFFECT?

RESEARCH SAYS THAT CLICKING PHOTOS MIGHT BE WIPING OUT OUR MEMORY

helps too. Research suggests that deciding what to photograph might reduce the ill effects on memory and even make it more fun.

■ **Use the subject as an anchor.** When we meditate, we focus on one aspect which helps us to clear out all distractions and

free our mind from thoughts. We do this by either having breathing exercises or by repeating a word, a mantra. When we do mindful photography, forget about the rest of the world and only focus on the subject. We need to ignore the surroundings, the various sense-

tions, distractions... Instead, we need to feel what we see.

■ **Focus on details.** If you immerse yourself in the details of a scene as you prepare to take a photo, that process can help anchor memories, according to a New York University research. "As we search the visual field to decide what to capture in a photo, we are more likely to commit those details to memory," it says.

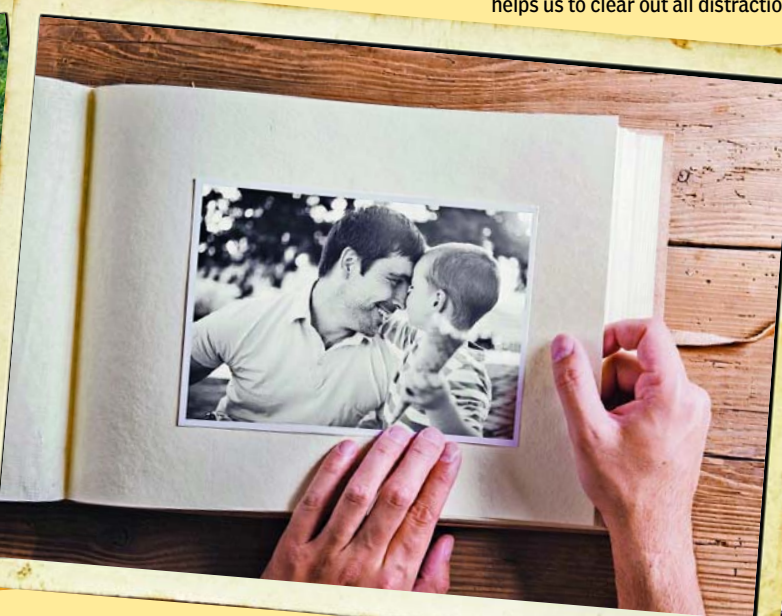
■ **Organise and revisit old pics.** We're so busy capturing photos that afterwards we don't actually look at them. Who hasn't dumped a bunch of photos of a graduation or trip into Dropbox and promised to make an album only to never look at them again? Organise your pics into albums and go through them every now and then. Create a simple system to keep track of photos on your drive. Creating a new folder for every year, for example, with subfolders labelled for holidays and special occasions, will make it easier to go back later and find the photos you need.

■ **Delete bad photos.** Remove duplicate and blurry shots right away. Save only the best.

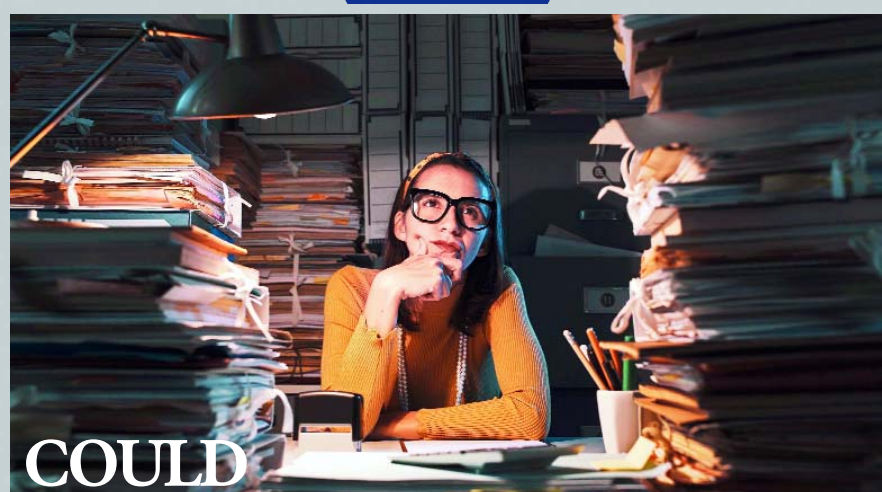
■ **Go old school.** When you pull out your phone, pretend you're using a disposable camera. You only have 24 shots to take: make them good ones! You can even download one of numerous disposable camera apps to enhance your retro picture-taking experience.

### SLOW PHOTOGRAPHY IS ON THE RISE

A small but growing group of bloggers and photographers who are making the case for a "slow photography movement" — a reaction, like that of foodies before them, to the gluttonous habits of a camera-captured culture. It advocates taking fewer pictures, more carefully posed and with reflection on the process of photography as much as the result.



### BRAINWAVE



## COULD MINIMALISM BE CRUSHING YOUR CREATIVITY?

Research says that the right kind of messiness can actually make you more creative, efficient and productive

**S**cientist Albert Einstein, famous for his genius and creative thinking, was known for having a messy desk. So was Mark Twain and Thomas Edison. Back in the day, a clean desk was considered a sign of slothful laziness. Busy people, and smart people didn't have time to straighten up. Einstein famously pointed out that, "if a cluttered desk is a sign of a cluttered mind, then, then, is an empty desk a sign?" Marie Kondo, the queen of decluttering, herself has warned against the tidiness temptation, saying organising one's possessions in clever storage solutions is a "booby trap".

### CLUTTER EQUALS CREATIVITY

People usually tend to dislike disorder, perceiving it as a sign of being unorganised or unproductive. Surprisingly enough, this is not exactly true. Kathleen Vohs, Ph.D., and her fellow researchers at the University of Minnesota did a series of experiments on the psychology of messiness. They found that while working in an orderly room encouraged behaviours such as generosity and healthy eating, working in a messy environment actually led to greater creativity. The researchers believed that doing work in a clean and tidy space activates social norms encouraging people to do what is expected of them.

Working in a messy space, on the other hand, relaxes that need and allows people to break free of social norms and expectations.

### CHANNELISE YOUR INNER-MESSMAKER

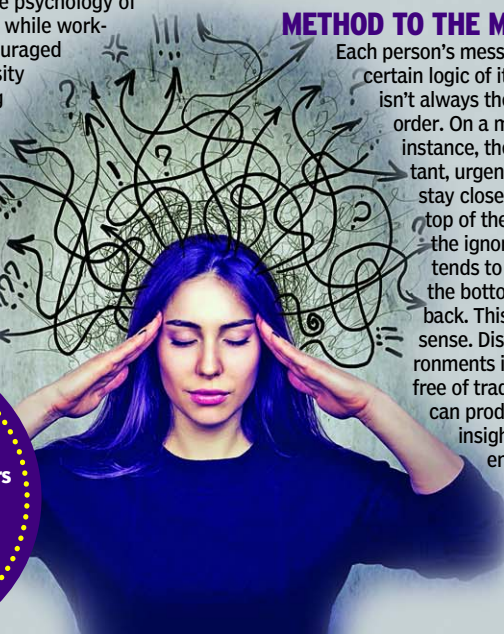
This doesn't necessarily mean that everyone who is exposed to a messy environment will become more creative. Forcing a person who prefers a tidy space to work in a disorderly environment, for example, might actually result in less creativity and lower productivity. Science suggests that perhaps tidiness (or the lack thereof) is an inherent trait: some of us are naturally neat, while others are born messy. If you fall in the latter category, then imposing a compulsive orderliness on yourself goes against your essential nature and could actually damage your productivity.

### METHOD TO THE MADNESS

Each person's mess comes with a certain logic of its own. Mess isn't always the absence of order. On a messy desk, for instance, the more important, urgent work tends to stay close by, near the top of the clutter while the ignorable stuff tends to get buried to the bottom or near the back. This makes perfect sense. Disorderly environments inspire breaking free of tradition, which can produce fresh insights. Orderly environments in contrast encourage playing it safe.

— Supriya Sharma

Remember that, messy environment is not equal to creativeness. Forcing a person who prefers a tidy space to work in a disorderly environment can actually hamper both creativity and productivity



### NEW RESEARCH

## USING MECHANICAL TOOLS IMPROVES OUR LANGUAGE SKILLS, STUDY FINDS

**T**ool use and language skills are linked in the brain — and practising one improves the other, according to a new study. It says that both skills — both considered hallmarks of evolution — rely on the same neurological resources, which are located in the same brain region. Interestingly, using a tool efficiently improves our ability to understand the syntax of complex sentences and vice-versa!

The Greek term syntax means

"arrange together." Human beings are exceptionally good at "arranging things together" in new and useful ways. In written or spoken language, syntax refers to the grammatical rules that govern how we string words together in a way that makes sense to a reader or listener. Much like using mechanical tools to build something functional by putting different pieces together. Hence, the connect.

Recent studies have suggested that areas of the brain which control cer-

tain language functions, such as processing the meaning of words, are also involved in the control of fine motor skills. A particular one, conducted by researchers from Inserm, CNRS, Université Claude Bernard Lyon 1 and Université Lumière Lyon 2 in collaboration with Karolinska Institutet in Sweden, found for the first time that the handling of tools and the syntax exercises produced

brain activations in common areas, with the same spatial distribution, in a region called the "basal ganglia." It was published in November 2021 in the journal 'Science'.

However, brain imaging has provided no evidence of such links between language and the use of tools.



faculties, with exercises to understand sentences with complex structure, improved motor performance with the tool!

### COGNITIVE TRAINING

As part of the study, the scientists also examined if it is possible to train one in order to improve the other — basically, does motor training with the mechanical tools improve the understanding of complex phrases? The participants were asked to perform a comprehension task before and after 30 minutes of motor training with the pliers. With this, the researchers demonstrated that motor training with the tool leads to improved performance in comprehension exercises. In addition, the findings show that the reverse is also true: training of language



### WHAT'S TRENDING

## The Power of MINDLESSNESS

SOMETIMES IT PAYS TO NOT BE TOO PRESENT



**B**e present." "Be aware." "Be mindful." Everyone will tell you these three as the mantras of mindfulness and how it is the key to self-awareness. Mindfulness has been proven

to increase focus and has its merits but psychological research has also revealed that in some circumstances it's important to be mindless. That is, as we develop skill in complex tasks, we can perform them with increasing facility

until attention seems to be unnecessary. Everyday examples range from riding a bike to chopping cucumbers to brushing your teeth. Underlying this state of "automaticity" (as cognitive psychologists call it) are mental processes that can be executed without paying attention to them.

Pay attention when you are learning a new skill, by all means, but once you have acquired a skill, paying too much attention might have damaging effects. In fact, this is one reason experts cite as reasons why

people who seem to be masters at something appear to "choke under pressure": they think too much about the mechanics of the task at hand.

In a classic study, cognitive scientist Sian Beilock and her colleagues had skilled golfers attempt to sink putts under different experimental conditions. In one scenario, the golfers were simply instructed to pay attention to the swing of their club and say "stop" when they finished their swing. In another condition, they were instructed to listen for a target sound while ignoring other noises and say the word "tone" when they heard the target sound. Counterintuitively, the skilled golfers performed substantially worse when they focused on their swing than when they paid attention to irrelevant sounds.

The effect of paying attention to their swing actually did better when they were warming up before the experiment began.

**YOUR TAKEAWAY:** Focusing too carefully on the execution of well-practiced motor sequences can cause mistakes. But that doesn't mean you give up on practice or paying attention. But if you have mastered certain tasks, you should let automaticity take over.

