

Health Insights

June 2021

Tidy Desk or Messy Desk?

In prior studies conducted by psychological scientist Kathleen Vohs and her fellow researchers at the University of Minnesota they found that a clean setting leads people to do good things: not engaging in crime, not littering, and showing more generosity. However, it has also been found that a messy setting can yield valuable outcomes.

Being in a clean room seemed to encourage people to do what was expected of them. Compared with participants in the messy room, they donated more of their own money to charity, and were more likely to choose an apple over a candy bar.

But the researchers hypothesized that messiness might have its virtues as well. In a new experiment, participants were asked to come up with new uses for ping pong balls. The participants in the messy room generated the same number of ideas for new uses as their clean-room counterparts, but their ideas were rated as more interesting and creative when evaluated by impartial judges. "Being in a messy room led to something that firms, industries, and societies want more of: Creativity," says Vohs.

The researchers also found that when participants were given a choice between a new product and an established one, those in the messy room were more likely to prefer the novel one – a signal that being in a disorderly environment stimulates a release from conventionality. Whereas participants in a tidy room preferred the established product over the new one.

"Disorderly environments seem to inspire breaking free of tradition, which can produce fresh insights," Vohs concludes. "Orderly environments, in contrast, encourage convention and playing it safe." The specific physical location didn't seem to matter: "We used 6 different locations in our paper – the specifics of the rooms were not important. Just making that environment tidy or unkempt made a whopping difference in people's behavior," says Vohs.

There is continued research that is investigating whether these effects transfer to a virtual environment. The preliminary results show that there are similar behaviors. "We are all exposed to various kinds of settings, such as in our office space, our homes, our cars, even on the Internet," Vohs observes. "Whether you have control over the tidiness of the environment or not, you are exposed to it and our research shows it can affect you."

Association for Psychological Science. "Tidy desk or messy desk? Each has its benefits." ScienceDaily. www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2013/08/130806091817.htm (accessed May 24, 2021).



Mental Health Moment

Two Hours of Nature is the Key Dose for Health and Wellbeing

Research led by the University of Exeter, published in *Scientific Reports* and funded by NIHR, found that people who spend at least 120 minutes in nature a week are significantly more likely to report good health and higher psychological wellbeing than those who don't visit nature at all during an average week.

The study used data from nearly 20,000 people in England and found that it didn't matter whether the 120 minutes was achieved in a single visit or over several shorter visits. It also found the 120 minute threshold applied to both men and women, to older and younger adults, across different occupational and ethnic groups, among those living in both rich and poor areas, and even among people with long-term illnesses or disabilities.

Dr. Mat White, of the University of Exeter Medical School, who led the study, said: "It's well known that getting outdoors in nature can be good for people's health and wellbeing but until now we've not been able to say how much is enough. The majority of nature visits in this research took place within just two miles of home so even visiting local urban greenspaces seems to be a good thing. Two hours a week is hopefully a realistic target for many people, especially given that it can be spread over an entire week to get the benefit." There is growing evidence that merely living in a greener neighborhood can be good for health, for instance by reducing air pollution.

Co-author of the research, Professor Terry Hartig of Uppsala University in Sweden said: "There are many reasons why spending time in nature may be good for health and wellbeing, including getting perspective on life circumstances, reducing stress, and enjoying quality time with friends and family. The current findings offer valuable support to health practitioners in making recommendations about spending time in nature to promote basic health and wellbeing."

Higher Emotional Intelligence Leads to Better Decision Making

A recent study published in *Psychological Science* suggests that the anxiety people feel when making investment decisions may have more to do with the traffic they dealt with earlier than the potential consequences they face with the investment. However, that may not be the case if the decision maker has high emotional intelligence, says Stéphane Côté, a professor at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management and lead researcher Jeremy Yip of the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, who co-wrote the study.

The study's first experiment showed that participants with lower levels of emotional understanding allowed anxiety unrelated to decisions they were making influence these decisions. Those with higher emotional intelligence did not.

A separate experiment involving the willingness to sign up for a flu clinic found that people with lower levels of emotional intelligence can also block unrelated emotions from influencing their decisions about risk, simply by making them aware that their anxiety was not related to the decisions at hand.

The findings likely apply not only to negative emotions a person may experience but positive ones too, such as excitement. And far from suggesting people should try to rid themselves of all emotional influence in their decision making, the paper points out that learning to pay attention only to those feelings that are relevant to the decisions being made is what counts.

"People who are emotionally intelligent don't remove all emotions from their decision-making," says Prof. Côté. "They remove emotions that have nothing to do with the decision."

University of Toronto, Rotman School of Management. "Higher emotional intelligence leads to better decision-making." ScienceDaily. www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2013/11/131119153027.htm (accessed May 23, 2021).

University of Exeter. "Two hours a week is key dose of nature for health and wellbeing." ScienceDaily. www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/06/190613095227.htm (accessed May 24, 2021).



Hummus and Grilled Vegetable Wrap

Ingredients:

- 2 medium zucchini, cut lengthwise into ¼-inch slices
- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- ⅛ tsp salt
- Pinch freshly ground black pepper
- 1 C store-bought hummus
- 4 pieces whole-wheat wrap bread (about 9 inches in diameter)
- 1 medium red bell pepper, thinly sliced
- 2 oz baby spinach leaves (2 cups lightly packed)
- ¼ C pine nuts, toasted
- ½ C red onion thinly sliced into half moons

Preheat the grill or grill pan over medium heat. Brush both sides of the zucchini slices with the oil and sprinkle with the salt and pepper. Grill until tender and slightly browned, about 4 minutes per side. Spread ¼ cup of the hummus over each piece of bread. Sprinkle 1 tablespoon of pine nuts on top. Top with 3 slices of zucchini, 2 pieces of red pepper, ½ cup of the spinach, a few sliced onions, and 1 tablespoon of the mint. Roll each of them up and cut in half on a diagonal.

Calories: 320kcal, Carbohydrates: 42g, Protein: 12g, Fat: 15g, Saturated Fat: 2g, Sodium: 795mg, Fiber: 8g

Krieger, E. (2015, January 13). Hummus and Grilled Vegetable Wrap. Food Network. <https://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/ellie-krieger/hummus-and-grilled-vegetable-wrap-recipe-1910036>.

See page 4 for quiz answers

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Environmental Health Quiz

Tidy Desk or Messy Desk?

1. What is one of the positive things listed that comes from having a messy space?
 - a. Teamwork
 - b. Playing it Safe
 - c. Creativity
 - d. Making Project Due Dates
2. What is something that a disorderly environment inspired?
 - a. Breaking the office norms
 - b. Breaking free from tradition and a fresh insight
 - c. Ideas to renovate past projects
 - d. Collaboration between team members

Two Hours of Nature Is Key Dose for Health & Wellbeing

3. People who spend at least 120 minutes in nature a week are significantly more likely to report good _____ and higher _____ than those who don't visit nature at all during an average week.
4. Which of the following were other positive outcomes from spending 2 hours a week outside?
 - a. Perspective on life circumstances, reducing stress, and enjoying quality time with friends and family.
 - b. Fresh air, a greener neighborhood, and a healthy yard.
 - c. Improvement in mental and social health
 - d. Better quality of life and chronic disease prevention.

Mental Health Moment

5. How does having high emotional intelligence impact your decisions?
 - a. Reduces anxiety toward decisions
 - b. Helps eliminate emotions that are not relevant for the decision being made
 - c. Brings in emotion about other decisions
 - d. Uses past decisions to help make current decisions

Healthy Habits Calendar

June 2021 - Environmental Health

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 Start June's Wellness Challenge: Tidy Up BINGO!	2	3 Thursday Check-in: Plan to declutter a room	4 Tidy Up BINGO: Organize your pantry.	5
6	7 Motivation Monday: Try something new; listen to a new podcast or start a new book.	8	9 Wellness Wednesday: Eat lunch outside. Time in nature improves health and wellbeing.	10	11 Friday Fitness: Go for a hike, run, bike ride, or walk.	12 Service Saturday: Take your decluttered items to a thrift store
13 Self-Care Sunday: Stay hydrated by drinking 64 oz. of water.	14	15 Tuesday Tip: Clean up as you cook to help decrease clean up time.	16	17 Thursday Check-In: Try to check off a box in the monthly challenge today.	18 BINGO: Clean out your car	19
20	21 Motivation Monday: Find a volunteer opportunity in your community and sign up.	22	23 Wellness Wednesday: Go for a walk or enjoy an evening at the park.	24	25 Friday Fitness: Get some friends together for a game of tennis or pickleball	26 Service Saturday: Take a walk around your neighborhood and pick up the trash you find.
27 Self-Care Sunday: Go to bed early to gear up for the week ahead!	28	29 Tuesday Tip: Pack your lunch the night before and include some extra fruits and veggies.	30			

Answers to Quiz:

Q1: c. Creativity | Q2: b. Breaking free from tradition and a fresh insight | Q3: Health / Psychological Wellbeing

Q4: a. Perspective on life circumstances, reducing stress, and enjoying quality time with friends and family.

Q5: b. Helps eliminate emotions that are not relevant for the decision being made



Name _____

Date (m-d-yyyy) _____

June Challenge: Tidy Up

Being organized can help to improve different aspects of your life. Research has shown that having an organized space can help improve sleep. By taking time to clean, declutter and organize you are also reducing stress. By completing the bingo you will be one step closer to better health and wellness.

Check the box when you've completed one of the organizational activities below

Spend 10 Mins. Cleaning Up the Living Room	Go Through Clothing Tops	Make Your Bed in the Morning	Declutter and Clean Fridge	Go Through Shoes
Clean Out Car	Declutter Garage/Storage Space	Drop Off Clothing Donations	Vacuum and Dust the House	Declutter Something of Your Choice
Pull Weeds	Plan Out the Day the Night Before		Go Through Clothing Bottoms	Do Something You Have Been Procrastinating
Check Expiration Dates in the Kitchen	Declutter Kitchen	Sanitize Technology	Organize Pantry	Plant Something New
Organize Computer Files	Declutter and Clean Office/Workspace	Organize Your Workspace	Spend 10 Mins. Cleaning Kitchen	Unsubscribe From Something You Don't Need