

Lockdown: Creating a Bulletproof Mindset for Growth, Scheduling for Success and Cultivating the Children – Those without children, go straight to part 2 “You”

When the news finally hit, the schools were closing one of the first things to cross my mind was “We need a schedule, a routine, a timetable”

That had to be it right? A routine would keep the kids occupied and stop the household becoming akin to a cartoon watching, snack stealing remake of Lord of the Flies

Now, as I seem to be in the mood to fire out references to books and media, let's be sure that I am not suggesting you go crazy with an all work and no play schedule, as well we know this makes Jack a dull boy and the last thing we need while in this situation is crazed people hacking down doors screaming “Here's Johnny”



Now, there is no correct way of doing this. Much like nutrition, exercise and the mindset mastery we work upon there is no “Right” way, there are best estimates which we trial and adapt to give the best possible results – this is no different.

You may try and fail with these options and come up with something that suits your unique situation in a better fashion to mine, that being the case – go with it! I am not here to crack a whip and dictate to you what you must do.

- **I would suggest with a schedule if you do go that way, you write it down.**
- **Physically write it down**
- **With a Pen!**
- **Not on a phone, tablet or laptop**
- **Then read it out**



I know this sounds akin to a draconian suggestion – but there is some excellent research based on psychological clarity, focus and mindset – and importantly, memory

The process of taking the idea and physically committing it to a form of parchment, dry wipe board, written out in fridge magnets or etched into the dining table actually reinforces the idea.

Not only do you have to think of it, you have to use your motor skills to commit it to your chosen form of hieroglyphic, and then, in reading it out, you take what you thought of, what you etched, read the words, verbalised the words, and then heard the words you spoke.



From once and a bit (typing on a computer doesn't quite do it as well because it is so easy) to five or more times through the mind. It really isn't some sort of Wikka spell or ritualistic magic worthy of Hogwarts, it is simple repetition through multiple forms – because that's how we build a habit!



If you are compiling this with a few mini humans running around and any are quite young and perhaps pre-literate to the level required, by all means use pictures or emoji like icons to make it easier for them to understand.

Contrary to what I was saying, sort of, for kids, perhaps print or make a few copies of schedules to allow them to tick things off as you go.

But for you I command the written word! Quote the Raven: Nevermore!

To Schedule or Not to Schedule, that is the Question!



No self respecting scientist could propose an idea without a counter argument. So here it is in all its shining glory (Another shining reference)

This embraces the sudden freedom of time being mandated by Governments and Health officials

This is an open minded approach to rethink what your daily lives could actually be in the absence of School schedules, music lessons, after school clubs, restaurants, movies and other things.

You're actually left with quite a lot of activities – but not ones that society has thrown upon you.

- **Walk outside (while you can) with a dog if you have one**
- **Make a Fort – Who doesn't like a fort**
- **Play a board game (I really hate them, but the kids enjoy them)**
- **Ride a bike**
- **Facetime/Whatsapp/Video Call a friend**
- **Write a letter – Novel concept**
- **Cook**

Kids are more anxious than ever – and one of the major contributors is the lack of downtime they have.

Structure is all well and good, I'm an ex-Military lad and I love some structure, but at times there is something just so liberating about some good old fashioned messing around in the house!

As long as you clean up afterward!!!!

There is nothing wrong with trying to foster some joy in the current climate and it can go leaps and bounds towards your own personal goals.

This is an opportunity to cultivate some whims and passions, start some crazy projects! Sometimes with these there is no reason to be so rigid and inflexible.

So here comes the question that terrifies many:

What happens when children get a chance to do whatever they want, with, and this is very important, zero expectations to the outcome?

And how do we support them with this?

Okay, I am misleading you slightly here – because the trick is this, to schedule them in such a way that makes them think they are not scheduled. A better word here may be “Structured”



This is early on with the lockdown, so take all of this with a large fist of salt, the sort of thing that can work is using a schedule to plan out “What’s next” but without assigning a rigid timescale to it and adds more choice.

The tasks must be done still, but this allows you to not feel like a Commanding Officer is ordering a Sgt Mj to shout at you.

The goal?

Well, here it is simple; to give you a pattern and a routine that re-enforces the world is not completely upside down, but that isn’t so rigid that it stunts evolution and inspiration and thus you and your families personal growth.

Some options here are things that we do miss in normal life due to hectic schedules and despite our best intents. The prime one being rest.

We all know (or you should if you read the mindset mastery document) sleep improves mood, cognitive function.

So, let the kids sleep in a little. The usual rush and hustle to get them to school so you can proceed with your day is a vestigial thing at present – use it to your advantage.



- Children need more sleep, modern schedules have prevented this becoming a habit
- Use the time in the morning, you can get up as normal – but take that hour or two for yourself and your partner, meditate, answer important emails in peace and quiet, mentally prepare yourself for the day

Utilise the vast online recourses, relatively cheap websites (2 children for a month was £15/\$20), this gives them hundreds of Maths, English and Science studies with built in answers.



These are modern children; they love electronics – so why not use them to assist learning.

It will also help to keep them occupied for a while – freeing you up got other pursuits.

- Personally, I set my children up with their learning tools after breakfast, they are busy for at least an hour and the site is self explanatory – I use this time to get my morning workout in.
- Once they are finished with a break in between its time for a light lunch, and some family exercise – our walk at the park. Not only does the air and exercise boost activity – it also elevates mood for everyone.
- They are now desperate to get some down time, which is fine as they have worked and exercised, are fed and ready to settle a little. Reading, writing, lego, fort building and some screen time. Here is my opportunity to get a few hours work in, writing such documents as this for yourself.
- 17:00 is family garden circuit training to get another sweat on, and after this – for everyone but me it is quitting time (aside normal parental duties which never stop as well you know)
- We have dinner together -- obviously, but also something I'm grateful we can do, Talking or just watching a movie. Bedtimes have skewed later but we still manage reading to them in bed on most nights.

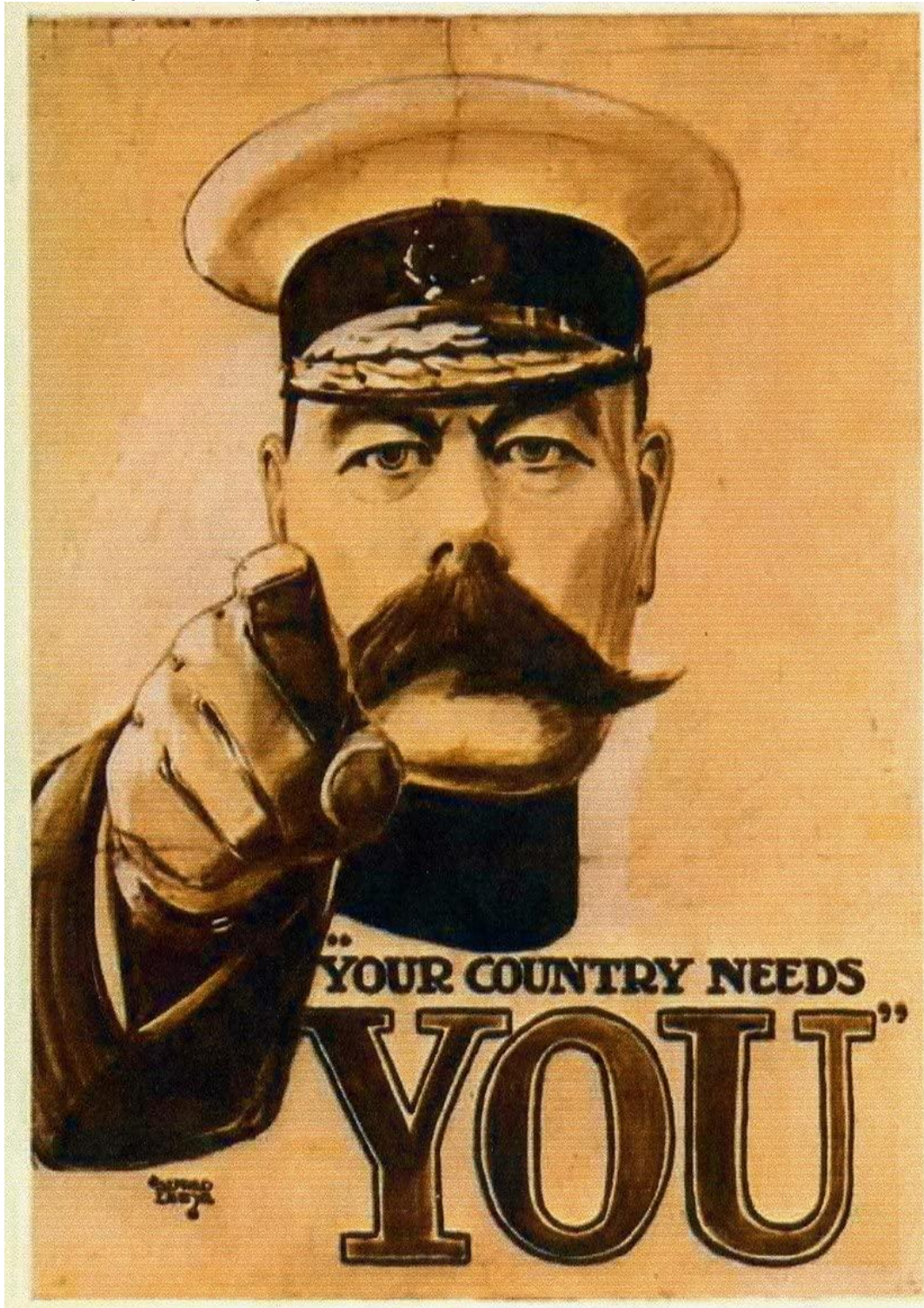
Our routine and rules are a work in progress. As yours will be and require adaptation.

We're paying attention to how we feel each day, how we get along, and what we get done.

That mindful attention has two benefits. One, we can tweak our schedule as needed to weather the weeks (months?) ahead. But, two, we can pay attention to how it feels to be less scheduled and free to determine our days.

So when our long national nightmare comes to an end and normal life resumes, what we've learned can hopefully shape a life that has a little more breathing room than before and what is truly important to the family unit.

Now that I have provided some important family suggestions for you – let's look at something you can control well, and work to optimise not just now but after the lockdown has ended: YOU!



Here are six key points for you to use, adapt and utilise to create a mindset that can tackle whatever life has to throw at it! This stimulates a boosted cognitive function and is direct advice from a Neuroscientist – so listen up!

Step 1: PRIORITIZE SLEEP



Research estimates the average Westerner slept between eight and nine hours a night in the 60s. That figure has now dropped to closer to six and a half hours.

Simply put, that isn't enough for most to function at their peak – sure you may function, but if you want to half arse your way through it all, you're probably better off not reading my material – half arsing isn't an option we use at Gforce.

Interestingly nine hours is a little too much for most people, seven and a half to eight for the vast majority is ideal. This will optimise your pituitary function, which in turn regulates crucial hormones governing appetite, mood and alertness – and in the long run, your overall resilience.

This won't always happen, but having a clear target to aim for is an important step.

Step 2: HYDRATE FIRST THING, AND NOT MASKED WITH CAFFEINE

We have all struggled with that groggy feeling when waking up, the first thing many of us do is reach for a strong coffee.

The thing is, upon waking you are usually dehydrated and part of the feeling of being groggy is down to that rather than the need for a stimulant, which also acts as a diuretic, further removing water from your body.

To tackle both these issues before you reach for the coffee, try drinking half a litre to a pint of water with lime or lemon juice, or half of either in the water.

Or a cup of turmeric tea, this ancient spice has been shown to improve memory, function and concentration. Even a single 400mg dose due to the active ingredient Curcumin provides benefits that are substantial.



Some varieties combine green tea and turmeric for a double brain boost. Green tea, to be fair, does have caffeine, but it contains considerably less than black tea or coffee and is packed with antioxidant compounds that boost brain health. If you add a teaspoon of coconut oil to the mix, you may even get an extra 20-minute brain boost.

This helps to bring your body back to pH balance, hydrate you and give your digestive tract the support it needs to function in its most efficient manner.

Step 3: EXERCISE AND STRETCH



This doesn't have to be your main workout if you think of it that way, but there is a huge benefit to circulation which in turn boosts cognitive function from working out a little in the morning.

Improved oxygen flow to your brain and blood pumping those nutrients around has considerable research demonstrating how effective it can be towards a productive mindset and a boosted immune system.

If you enjoy your main workout early, then perfect, if you prefer ten mins of gentle stretching and mobilisation can have huge benefits even without an exerting workout.

Step 4: MEDITATE FOR 10-15 MINS

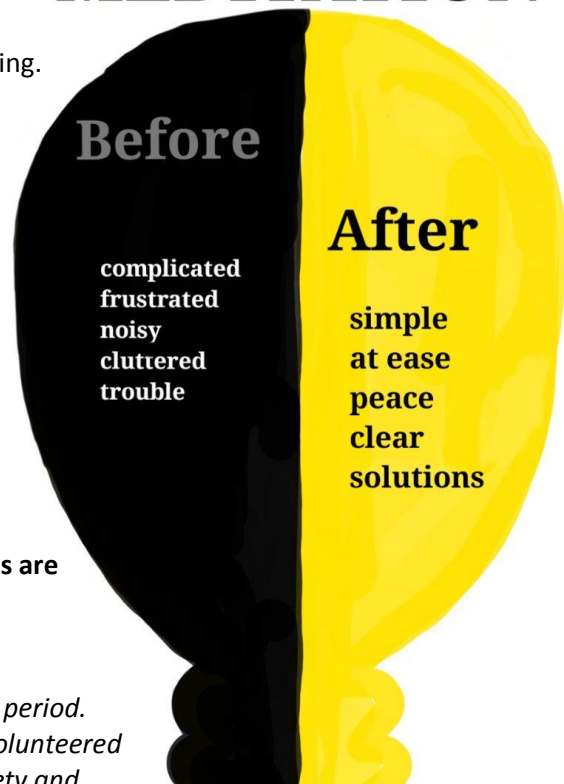
Around 80% of the most successful leaders this Neuroscientist has worked with use regular mindfulness routines in the morning. Mindfulness meditation can hugely benefit your focus and executive function, the higher level critical thinking required for effective and flexible problem-solving.

This also has another huge benefit in that this practice also decreases rumination, a type of negative brain energy leech that promotes negative thinking.

I am not suggesting some overly spiritual pursuit here chanting "Om" at the top of our voice – this is a simple method to just relax, close your eyes and be calm, observe your thoughts, allow them to happen and focus on each one, single it out and reduce the mental noise of everything else. Then move onto the next one. Thoughts and negative feelings are natural, but you can train yourself to observe them rather than be controlled by them.

What is great here is that you do not need to do this for a long period. A 2010 study using U.S Marines in a high stress environment volunteered and in just 12 mins a day, mental resilience was increased, anxiety and tendency towards depression was decreased.

MEDITATION



Step 5: EAT A NUTRITIOUS BREAKFAST AT THE SAME TIME



If you work with, or follow me you'll know I produce recipe books and energy balance guides and preach from atop the highest mountains about a sustained energy level being key to mental performance.

Higher fat (you all have heard of good fats), Eggs, avocado, salmon, nuts, seeds and berries give a great mental boost to the chemical norepinephrine (see the *Mindset Mastery* document) which can give you great clarity of thought and cognitive process.

Avoid high sugar and starchy foods, you crave the energy spike but will pay for it with an energy, and cognitive dip around an hour later.

Eating at the same time everyday helps to regulate your circadian rhythm and digestion, priming your brain for peak performance and reducing the need for unnecessary decision making.

Step 6: START YOUR WORKDAY WITH THE MOST DIFFICULT TASKS

Assuming you wake at a reasonable hour, Neurotransmitters such as serotonin take a natural 24hr dip at around 3 p.m. It is advisable to arrange challenging meetings or complex tasks that are mentally challenging, your mind is operating at its peak during this time, go into your business tasks with full ammo pouches.

Fortunately these simple things doesn't involve a complicated, lengthy process and routine.

Introducing gradually or as one, and, if need be, re-sequencing ones you have already adopted; you can start very small and make one change at a time.

This will also allow you to note the benefits of each part, and trust in them a little more.

A routine that optimizes your brain for peak performance is as much about what you do after waking up as how and when you do it!

Where you haven't already – I strongly urge you to read, absorb and take in the Mindset Mastery document, these tips are delved into in much greater detail.

Contact myself or one of the team on any of the links below for further information.

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