



APRIL 2019 CRUISE CONTROL



the supplement
FACILITATING VITALITY

I have vivid memories of teaching my sons to drive. I owned the coolest car at the time. It was an Infinity FX45. Black with an interior the color of a baseball glove, it had guts. It was exquisitely sensitive to pedal pressure – gas or brake. I loved driving that car. My sons could not wait to get behind the steering wheel. With their 15-year-old size 12 lead feet, we lurched around the abandoned church parking lot exactly twice—once for each of them. Then I made two very significant decisions: I outsourced the driving instruction to a professional and I traded in the Infinity. The gently used new ride had a throttle that rivaled Fred Flintstone’s. If they stomped on either the gas or the brake, the Fred-mobile’s response was far less electrifying. And it didn’t have cruise control, so maintaining the speed limit became an acquired skill. As with driving, cruise control in day-to-day life is also an acquired skill. Some call it work/life balance. I call it cruise control.

No one had trouble with work/life balance before advances in technology made it possible to communicate 24/7. The office closed at 5 PM, the phones stopped ringing, and people went home. On the way home, they might listen to the news, talk radio or some music. The commute provided a reasonably pleasant buffer between the world of work and family life. Once home, families ate dinner together, caught up on each other’s days and perhaps watched television. Then, they called it a night. Contrast that with today’s model of laptops, cell phones, cable television and Uber Eats. What is the primary difference? No more “off switch, anywhere—not at home, not at work, not in the spaces in-between.



Boundaries such as office hours, meal breaks, and prime time viewing are gone and with them so did the cues to rest and recover. We remain permanently stuck with our foot on the gas. It is relentless and we are wearing ourselves out. Back when work was work and home was home, it never occurred to employees that taking a break might make them more productive. The day and the week had natural beginnings and endings with breaks in between. People had two weeks of vacation per year and they took them. Today with personal time off (PTO), flex time and telecommuting, breaks are not discernable. Employees internalize this as “we never get breaks.” Because we actually need breaks every 90 to 120 minutes to function optimally, employees begin to take them inappropriately or worse, to not take them at all. It appears that one can earn merit badges for eating at one’s workstation, for operating without sleep or for accumulating unused vacation days. We are speeding through our days until our bodies slam on the brakes in the form of injury, illness or burnout.

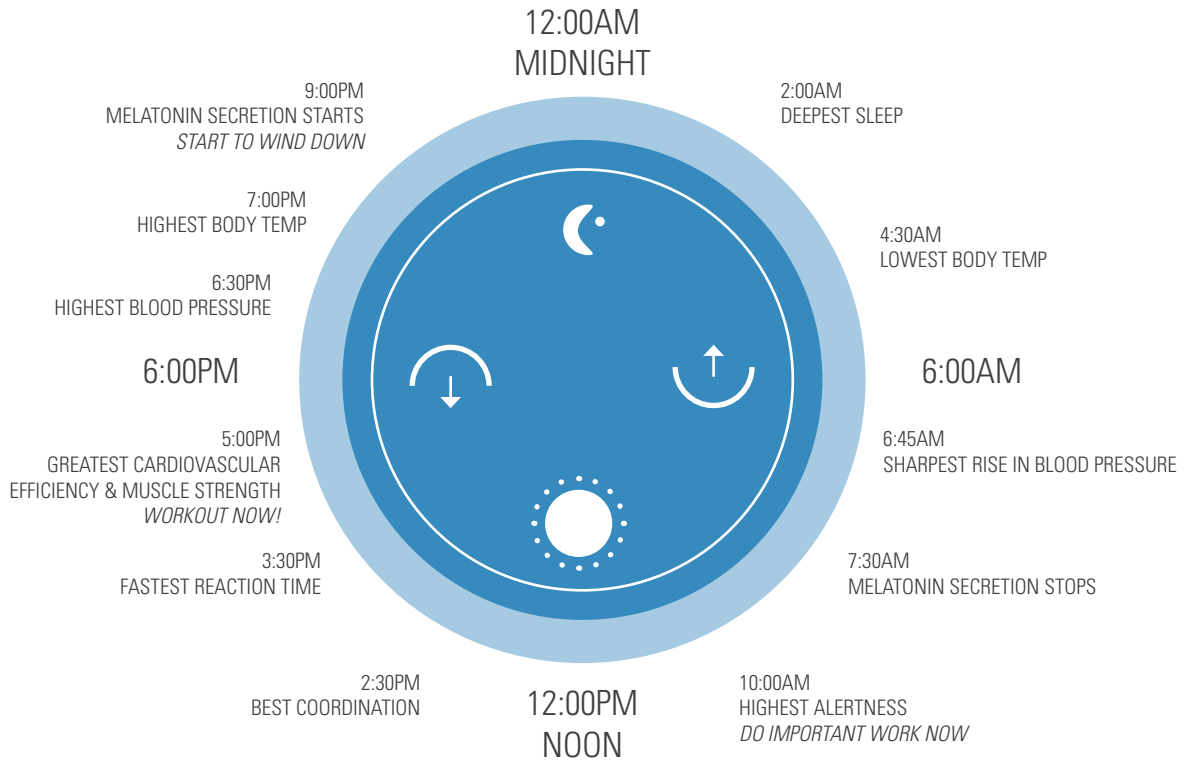




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Despite our advances in technology, our bodies still operate in very primitive patterns. These patterns ebb and flow in seasons, in lunar months, and in shorter cycles of 24 hours called circadian rhythms. Circadian rhythms break down further into 90-to-120-minute cycles called ultradian rhythms. Technology ignores these patterns and it is increasingly falling on you to re-establish the boundaries that promote rest and recovery. Daily life can be a wild ride. Instead of lurching through it like a teenager learning to drive, find your speed limit and enjoy the view.



Building In Breaks – Check out the App Headspace. It provides a library of 3-to-20-minute courses that can help you clear your mind, get some sleep or be more productive. I have used it in my classes for some time now and people have actually fallen asleep on the spot!



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Patricia M. Fuller has dedicated the last 20 years to designing and delivering wellness programs. Her events earn consistently excellent ratings for her holistic approach and her real world application.

Prior to concentrating in wellness, Pat taught accounting and auditing as an adjunct professor at the University of Tampa. She earned her CPA designation in 1992 as a senior associate for Coopers & Lybrand. She has a Masters in Business Administration from the University of Utah.

Pat has a PhD in holistic nutrition. In 2010, she was board certified by the Holistic Nutrition Credentialing Board. Her areas of research include stress management and eating habits. She is a Certified Wellcoach and a member of the Institute of Coaching. She is an annual attendee to The Harvard Medical School Conference, Coaching In Leadership & Healthcare.

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