

Issue #1 | Tuesday, February 22

FROM MARY NICE

Exploring how to feel more alive at work

Hi Crew!

Welcome to the FIRST issue of a yet-to-be-named newsletter with a yet to be a profess-designed header (thx Canva). Cause around here, we just start.

My sister was the first person who sent me the widely-circulated Adam Grant NY Times article about [languishing](#). I know when she sends me something that dances around emotional wellbeing, I must pay attention.

She's the sister who side eyes 90% of personal and professional development content. And fair enough...it's mostly written by people who don't live in the REAL WORLD with REAL JOBS. She tempers the Pollyanna in me.

Back to the article. There is something **so productive** about putting a word to an emotion. It's like we can start healing. **LANGUISHING** did that. **It's not burnout, and it's not hopelessness**. Feelings like **stagnation** and **emptiness** mark it. And it blows.

On a wellness scale of 1-5 (one being the lowest), you're wavering between like a 2-3. Maybe not anxious, but **worried**. Maybe not flat out exhausted, but **constantly tired**.

So what the hell is going on and how do we get out of it?

Let's get nerdy.

Enjoy this first issue! **(And send me all of your ideas on how to make this newsletter helpful for you)**



All my best!

Mary

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Understanding the neuroscience behind WTH is going on in your brain is crucial to moving through it.

- **AMYGDALA = SIREN** - Your amygdala is the brain's first responder to a rise in cortisol (the stress hormone).
- **PREFRONTAL CORTEX = FOCUS AND PLANNING** - The prefrontal cortex (the part of the brain responsible for focus, managing your reactions, planning, etc.) decides what to do with this signal. If it's truly stressful, like watching my sister have a panic attack at a poorly planned Black Friday shopping excursion, your prefrontal cortex says RUN. If it's not that big of a deal, your prefrontal cortex says CHILL, amygdala.
- **HIPPOCAMPUS = MEMORY AND LEARNING** - Then there is the hippocampus - mostly responsible for learning and memory.

Here's what happens during sustained stress...like I don't know...the LAST TWO YEARS.

- The **amygdala gets larger**, and kind of goes berserk. Think of the amygdala as a drunk guy.
- And the activity in the **prefrontal cortex drops**. Think of the prefrontal cortex as a bouncer at the bar that is MIA.
- The **hippocampus is REDUCED IN SIZE**. This is where the metaphor goes off the rails.

So basically, the drunk guy is hanging out in your brain, and the bouncer is MIA. Then, layer on top, your inability to remember anything. It's kind of a recipe for malaise at best. And in many instances, resignation.

And often, we think **the only way out is to blow up our lives**. But DON'T DO THAT NOW.

Here's where to start:

1. Understand that you're not CHOOSING this. This is science.
2. Have hope because the **brain is resilient**, but you have to know how to help it.
3. **Get GOOD sleep**. If you wake up exhausted, you probably aren't getting quality sleep. [Email me for tips here](#). Recovery happens at night during sleep. It's essential.

4. **PLAY.** The brain can begin to adapt when it's open and receptive and there is nothing better than play. Choose an **activity that you love**, that **challenges** you, and is **low stakes**. Do it for an hour a week. A good place to start is what you love to do when you were a child: dancing, tennis, building legos, coloring.

Sleep and play are the baselines. We will talk through other ways to help the brain in future issues, but if you don't nail those two, the others won't be as useful.

Community Question

Is there such a thing as asking too many questions? I always ask but I feel bad about it. – Lina

Thanks for the question, Lina! This is situational, but the short answer is no as long as you ask good questions and read the room well. Most of the time, people don't ask enough questions. But it's not about the volume; it's about the quality.

While the question is about questions, I want to start with the second sentence. WHY do you feel bad about asking questions? I would guess there are two things at play here:

--- I used to feel like this, and then I started to understand that **we are conditioned NOT to ask questions**, and in some cases, be punished for asking questions.

--- **As women, we are raised NOT to inconvenience anyone.** Start to notice this feeling. It's amazing how often it shows up at work. I see it often in my coaching clients.

Some things to ask yourselves about the questions you're asking:

1. Are you asking a question that you can Google the answer to? Try to avoid this.
2. Focus on listening so you can ask good follow-up questions.
3. Try to focus on open-ended questions. Close-ended questions can feel like an interrogation.
4. If you're in a group setting, know when to save your questions for a 1:1. For instance, if your question only applies to your situation, or it puts the other person on the defensive.

I hope that helps!

My latest obsession

[Huberman Lab Podcast](#) – Dr. Andrew Huberman is a professor of neurobiology and ophthalmology at Stanford University School of Medicine. These episodes are LONG but super interesting. On his [YouTube channel](#), he time stamps everything so you can skip around if you want. I'm sure I'll be sending you the notes from some of the more interesting episodes.

Current favorite episodes:

[The Power of Play](#)

[Science of Social Bonding in Family, Friendship & Romantic Love](#)

[ADHD & How Anyone Can Improve Their Focus](#)



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