

Build Your Physiological Reserve to Survive Illness

Physiological reserve is your body's ability to tolerate and recover from stress, illness, and injury. The concept becomes increasingly important with age. Although many people focus on preventive care, immunizations, avoiding colds and flu, or preventing pneumonia, it is often low physiological reserve that places them at risk for poor outcomes, including death.



Treating an illness with antibiotics, for example, addresses only part of the problem. Even if treatment is successful, the body must still clear infection and inflammation and repair damaged tissue. Someone with a low physiological reserve may not have enough capacity to recover and survive. Do you or someone you care for have enough reserve to fight a serious illness?

Building muscle mass, improving cardiovascular and pulmonary capacity, maintaining good nutrition, strengthening immune function, preserving mobility, preventing deconditioning, and supporting mental health all contribute to physiological reserve.

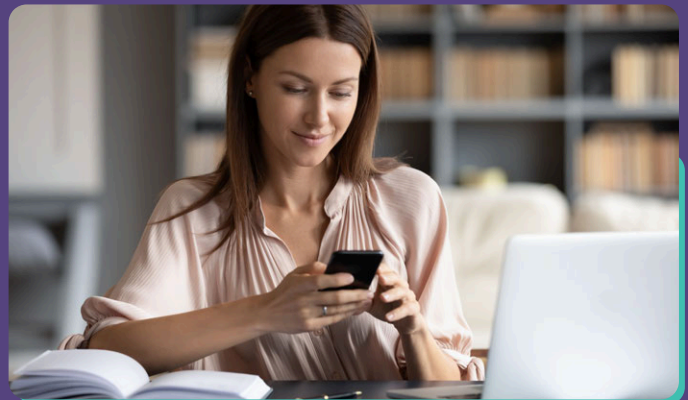
Small, consistent gains—not exceptional performance—can significantly improve survival from illnesses that otherwise carry high risk of fatality.

Make Distractibility a Valuable Trait

Being easily distracted is rarely viewed as a positive workplace trait. However, there can be an upside when distractions consistently lead to creative ideas, new opportunities, or breakthroughs.

If your thoughts tend to jump around, don't be too quick to label that a flaw. This pattern is known as productive distractibility. If mental wandering has produced some of your best insights, it may be an asset—especially if you manage it with practical strategies.

- 1) Jot down sudden insights as your mind wanders so you can return to essential work and revisit ideas later.
- 2) Schedule brief pauses and step away. Your mind often continues solving problems and generates insights even when you're away from your desk.
- 3) Create a "captured insight" folder and review ideas periodically to identify those that are worth developing.



Overcome a Short-Form Video Bingeing Loop

What's the mental impact on and cost to your employer for your bingeing on trivial, online, short videos that consume your time and attention? This activity is called brain rot. Brain rot hooks you into a constant loop of low-value, fast-paced content that captures attention while consuming time that could be used better. Over time, brain rot increases mental fatigue, making sustained thinking harder and reducing productivity. One study found 40 to 45 minutes of non-work social media drained roughly 9% to 10% of daily productivity. To break the habit:

- 1) replace short-form viewing with a walk, stretching, or an activity that restores attention;
- 2) notice how refreshed and focused you feel afterward;
- 3) use website blockers requiring a password to access distracting sites; and
- 4) set firm limits on short-form content—or save it for after work to protect energy during the day.

Stress Tips from the Field: Find the Very Next Step

Stress often spikes when the brain tries to solve an entire problem at once. Imagine being asked to explain a severe sales shortfall with no clear place to start. Anxiety surges as you worry where to begin, how you'll be judged, or about potential job repercussions.

Stress Tip: Focus only on the very next step. That step may not involve writing—it could be deciding to sit in a quiet library tomorrow at 9 a.m. to begin. Isolating the next step of any complex problem gives the mind clarity and direction, often causing stress to drop. Once you have a starting point, ideas surface naturally and momentum builds, making the problem easier to solve. Next time feeling overwhelmed hits, take a breath, name your next step, and act.

