



Endeavor
HealthSM

Maximize Capacity: Brain-Body Strategies for Stress, Growth, and Intentional Living

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What is Capacity?

- **Capacity Is More Than Endurance**

- Capacity refers to an individual's ability to tolerate, process, integrate, and respond adaptively to internal and external experiences while maintaining psychological, emotional, physiological, cognitive, and relational functioning (Levine, 2010; Siegel, 2020).

- **Capacity Includes Our Ability To:**

- Manage stress
- Navigate uncertainty
- Stay present under pressure
- Regulate emotions
- Recover from adversity
- Remain connected to others



- Capacity is not about how much stress we avoid, it is about how much experience we can navigate while remaining regulated and effective (Porges, 2022; Siegel, 2020).

Why Brain-Body Strategies Matter

- Stress lives in both the brain and the body
- The nervous system is the bridge
 - It continuously evaluates cues of safety and danger and shifts physiological states accordingly through neuroception (Porges, 2022).
- Chronic stress changes capacity
 - Repeated stress contributes to allostatic load, the cumulative wear and tear on the body and brain that can reduce flexibility, resilience, and adaptive functioning (McEwen & Gianaros, 2011).
- We cannot think our way out of stress alone. Lasting change requires engaging both the brain and body.

| Brain | Body |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Decision fatigue | Muscle tension |
| Reduced concentration | Increased heart rate |
| Mental overwhelm | Fatigue |
| Cognitive rigidity | Sleep disruption |

What Blocks Capacity?

- **Internal Barriers**

- Chronic stress
- Anxiety and fear
- Negative self-talk
- Burnout
- Perfectionism
- Sleep deprivation
- Emotional suppression



- **External Barriers**

- Constant interruptions
- Information overload
- High demands
- Time pressure
- Limited support
- Ongoing uncertainty

- Capacity is not only determined by stress; it is determined by our ability to recover from stress (McEwen & Gianaros, 2011; Porges, 2022).

What Athletes Can Teach Us About Capacity

- **Capacity Is Trainable**

- Elite athletes, ultrarunners, military personnel, and high performers demonstrate that capacity can be expanded through challenge, adaptation, repetition, and recovery (Duckworth et al., 2007; Southwick et al., 2014).

- **Lessons from Endurance Athletes**

- Importance of goal setting
- Stay present in discomfort
- Focus on process over outcome
- Differentiate discomfort from danger
- Build confidence through repetition
- Recover intentionally
- Trust adaptation
- Have an accountability system/partner

- Leadership, resilience, innovation, decision-making, and change management all require the same skills.



40% Rule

- Goggins (2018) proposed that when people believe they have reached their limit, they may have only accessed a fraction of their true capacity.
- "When your mind is telling you you're done, you're really only about 40% done (Itzler, 2015)"
 - In *Living with a SEAL*, Itzler discovered that many perceived limitations were psychological rather than actual barriers.
- Important Caveat
 - The goal is not relentless pushing.
 - The goal is learning when to stretch capacity and when to recover.
- Growth happens at the edge of capacity, not beyond it.



Growth Happens at the Edge of Capacity

- **What Creates Growth?**

| | | |
|----------------------|---|------------|
| Too Little Challenge | → | Stagnation |
| Optimal Challenge | → | Growth |
| Too Much Challenge | → | Overwhelm |



- **Flow and Capacity**

- Flow emerges when challenge and skill are balanced, allowing individuals to become fully immersed, engaged, and energized by an activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).
- The goal is not comfort. The goal is capacity.

Capacity: Challenge & Recovery

- Components of sustainable growth:

Challenge → Recovery → Integration → Growth

- **Without Recovery**
 - Increased stress
 - Increased burnout
 - Increased fatigue
 - Decreased creativity
 - Decreased performance
 - Decreased capacity
 - **With Recovery**
 - Increased adaptation
 - Increased resilience
 - Increased emotional regulation
 - Increased capacity
 - Increased sustainable performance
- Recovery is not the reward for hard work. Recovery is part of the work.

How Do We Expand Capacity?

- **Deliberate Challenge**

- Learning new skills
- Difficult conversations
- Leadership opportunities
- Stretch goals
- Meaningful discomfort

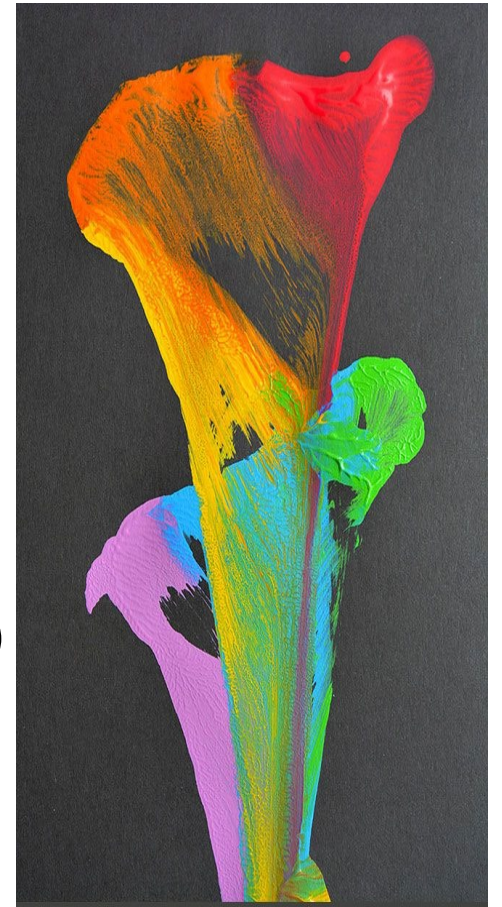
- **The Capacity Formula**

- Challenge without Recovery = Burnout
- Recovery without Challenge = Stagnation
- Challenge + Recovery = Growth

- **Deliberate Recovery**

- Sleep
- Good Fuel
- Movement
- Connection
- Mindfulness
- Gratitude
- Creative expression
- Micro-self-care

(Dana, 2021; Porges, 2022)



Self-Commitment: The Foundation of Capacity

- What is self-commitment?
 - The willingness to repeatedly choose actions that support well-being *even when* life becomes busy, stressful, or demanding.
- The practice of returning
 - Capacity is rarely built through a single breakthrough moment.
 - It is built through repeated experiences of: regulation, recovery, movement, reflection, connection, self-compassion and creativity (Brown, 2015; Dana, 2021).
- The goal is not perfection. The goal is returning.



From Self-Care to Capacity Building

- Reframing the Conversation
 - Traditional question: How do I reduce stress?
 - Capacity Question: How do I increase my ability to navigate stress?
- Capacity Is Built Through
 - Regulation
 - Recovery
 - Boundaries
 - Connection
 - Sleep
 - Movement
 - Meaning making
 - **Micro-self-care**
- Every act of self-care is also an act of capacity building.



What is Micro-Self Care?

- Small practices, significant impact
 - Micro-self-care consists of brief, intentional practices that can be completed in seconds or minutes and integrated into everyday life (Barbour, 2020; Morrow-Baez, 2017).
- Why it matters
 - Most people already have enough challenge.
 - What is often missing is recovery.
- Consistency matters
 - Small practices performed consistently often have a greater impact than occasional large efforts (Dana, 2021; Kabat-Zinn, 2013).
- You don't need an hour. You need a moment.



SMALL MOMENTS,
BIG IMPACT

Turning Micro-Self Care Practice Into a Habit

- Why Habits Matter
 - Capacity is not built through occasional acts of self-care.
 - Capacity is built through small practices repeated consistently over time (Clear, 2018; Kabat-Zinn, 2013).
- Small practices create big change
 - Research suggests that lasting change is more likely when behaviors are small, achievable, and connected to existing routines (Clear, 2018).
- Habit stacking & tracking
 - Attach a new practice to something you already do.
 - After I _____, I will _____.
- Examples:
 - After I send an email, I will relax my shoulders.
 - After a meeting, I will walk for one minute.
 - Every time I refill my water bottle, I will pause and stretch.
- Capacity-Building Formula: Small Practice × Consistency × Time = Capacity
- Note that consistency matters more than intensity. (Clear, 2018)



Brain-Body Strategies for Everyday Capacity Building

- Mindfulness
 - Four-square breathing
 - Visual anchoring
 - Gratitude practice
(Kabat-Zinn, 2013)
- Somatic practices
 - Hand on heart/stomach
 - Stretching
 - Walking
 - Shaking out tension
(Levine, 2010; Porges, 2022)
- Creativity, movement, and mindful awareness provide accessible pathways to regulation and resilience.
- Expressive Arts Practices
 - Doodle for one minute
 - Write one reflective sentence
 - Photograph something beautiful
 - Listen and move to music
 - Humming
(Malchiodi, 2020)



Glimmers & Micro-Moments of Gratitude

- **Glimmers:** Cues of safety, connection, comfort, hope, and pleasure that support nervous system regulation (Dana, 2021).

- **Create a Glimmers Pouch**

- Meaningful photos
- Smooth stones/crystals
- Essential oils
- Appreciation notes
- Gratitude reminders
- Pet photos
- Favorite music
- Affirmations



- **The Power of A Gratitude Practice**

- Send a thank-you email
- Recognize a colleague
- Send a supportive text
- Tell someone, "I appreciate you."

- Research demonstrates that gratitude supports resilience, positive emotions, and social connection (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Fredrickson, 2001).

In Summary

- Capacity is not built through occasional heroic efforts.
- Capacity is built through small, intentional brain-body practices repeated consistently over time.
- Intentional Living
 - When we increase capacity, we gain greater access to: ourselves, choice, purpose, creativity, connection, meaning and authenticity
- Maximizing capacity is not about doing more. It is about becoming more intentional with the energy, attention, and resources we already have.



Reflection & Commitment

- **Reflection Questions**

- What currently expands your capacity?
- What currently depletes your capacity?
- Which micro-practice could you begin today?
- What is one commitment you are willing to make to yourself this week?
- How will you hold yourself accountable?



- My commitment to myself is to run the Door County Fall 50, well, on 10/24/26.



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