



## Antología Liderazgo

**Neurowisdom**

# Neurowisdom

## HOW TO MANAGE YOUR BUSY BRAIN: SUPERLEARNING AND THE FOUR PILLARS OF WEALTH

Each year at Loyola Marymount University, a select group of CEOs, administrators, managers, and entrepreneurs enroll in our Executive MBA program. As one of the world's most demanding educational programs, it prepares highly motivated people to reap greater financial and personal rewards. If these students do not learn how to lower their stress levels and increase their productivity, their grades along with their businesses and careers will suffer. They will also compromise their personal happiness and self-esteem.

To help our EMBA students overcome the enormous stress inherent in achieving large goals, we created a special course called NeuroLeadership. It's based on the newest brain science showing how anyone can turn an ordinary workday into a rich and satisfying experience. But instead of using standard textbooks and traditional teaching models, we immerse our EMBA students in a unique experiential learning environment that has been proven to enhance cognitive performance, as we will document throughout this book. The course is complemented by an eight-week mindfulness and positivity training program that includes 58 Neuro Wisdom exercises, many of which are featured in this book (see the appendix for more information). Since its inception in 2009,

the NeuroLeadership course has attracted worldwide attention from many colleges, businesses, and community organizations. The success of this course has been documented in the Journal of Executive Education, and the article has become the second-most requested paper in the history of the journal.

This book will help you to create more inner and outer wealth, which we define as the combination of money, happiness, success, and personal contentment. Outer wealth, which is what the brain is programmed to seek, includes any object or activity that you (or your brain) consider to be valuable. Inner wealth begins with the neurological desire to experience pleasure, be it through social play or the involvement in any experience that provides greater meaning, purpose, satisfaction, and a lasting sense of well-being. The book presents both the scientific background and a set of Neuro Wisdom exercises and strategies that can be used to increase productivity and create a more meaningful and satisfying life. By spending just a few minutes each day practicing the exercises described in this book, your work will become more pleasurable and less stressful as you learn how to anticipate and solve problems more efficiently. These same strategies can also be used at home to build better relationships with your family and friends. You can use the exercises to break bad habits, to improve personal health, and to enhance your emotional well-being. The principles are simple, based on scientific research concerning the development of the human brain.

## The Four Pillars of Wealth

To better archive any important goal in life—money, success, health, love, friendship, happiness, contentment, etc. — you need to master four neurological processes: motivation, decision making, creativity, and the ability to become fully aware of yourself and the needs of others. These are the four pillars for building inner and outer wealth, and if you do not “exercise” these qualities, each of which controls a different brain function, you will limit your ability to turn your dreams into reality. The more you understand how these neural processes shape your actions and your future, the more you can harness them to achieve the goals you truly desire.



Figure 1. The Four Pillars of Wealth.

## PILLAR #1: MOTIVATION

The acquisition of wealth is a neurological process that begins the moment you wake up. First your brain uses its sensory system to survey the environment. Then, when something emotionally excites you or captures your attention, your brain decides whether to move toward the object of desire or away from any perceived threat. This motivational drive is fundamental to the survival of every organism. It gets you out of bed and causes you to seek out anything that promises you a pleasurable reward.

The motivation-and-reward circuit is centered in the nucleus accumbens (figure 2), located in the most ancient part of your brain. It is driven by instinct and curiosity, and when you perceive something interesting, the nucleus accumbens releases dopamine, a powerful neurochemical that wakes up the rest of your brain and prepares you to take action in the world.

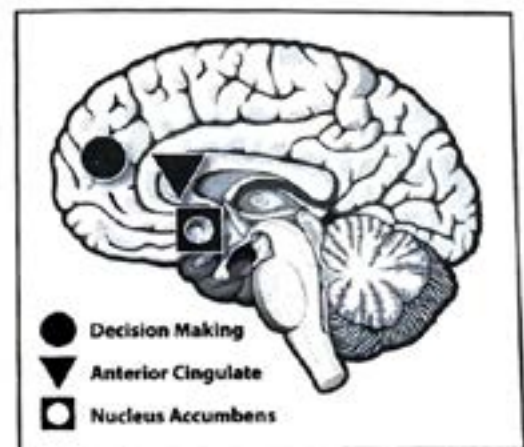


Figure 2. Key areas relating to Pillars 1, 2, and 4.

Dopamine stimulates desire; without it, your mind would remain in a lethargic state. Dopamine is essential for mental health, and when it's not being regularly secreted by the nucleus accumbens, you'll gradually slip into depression, losing your desire to work toward meaningful goals and rewards. That's why it's important to engage in new and interesting activities throughout your life.

However, if your brain releases too much dopamine when it perceives a potentially rewarding object or activity, it can cause you to become destructively addicted to it. Too much pleasure can lead to risky behavior that undermines your brain's ability to make wise decisions in work, relationships, and recreational activities.

Every human brain is different, and the more you become aware of the activities that turn on your desire and motivation circuits, the more pleasure you'll receive by choosing those goals that will bring you the greatest rewards. Just the anticipation of future success releases dopamine, which then stimulates the next neurological process in your brain: conscious decision making.

## **PILLAR #2: DECISION MAKING**

Once you have been motivated to acquire something or engage in a pleasurable activity, the dopamine that was released by your ancient brain travels to your frontal lobe, where it gives you the ability to plan out strategies to help you reach your goals.\* During this process, in which the brain turns

desire into action, you learn new skills, develop new habits, gain greater control over your emotions, and form belief systems that allow you to better understand the world. Here, in a very small part of your frontal lobe (figure 1, above), is where you begin to consciously decide what to do and how to do it.

The frontal lobe helps you analyze any problem or obstacle that stands between you and your desired goal. First, your brain will sort through thousands of stored memories, searching for solutions that worked for you in the past. This process only takes a few seconds, and even though we're not aware of it, most of our actions come from this reservoir of learned habits and behaviors.

If those unconscious memories do not help you move toward your goal, then your frontal lobe begins to search for new options. The right side tends to focus on possible problems and dangers while the left side envisions positive solutions. These two sides literally communicate to each other through words, arguments, and intense subconscious dialogues. The process is known as "inner speech," and it begins in the first few years of life, as children internalize the language styles of the culture they are raised in. The right side of your prefrontal cortex generates negative thoughts and feelings, and the left side uses logic to maintain a sense of optimism as it formulates strategies to help you get what you want. If the right side becomes overly active, you'll find yourself worrying, procrastinating, and slowly slipping into depression. However, new research, which we will fully document in chapter 4, confirms that you can consciously

teach your brain to lower neural activity that generates negativity and fear, and also to increase neural activity that generates greater confidence and positive decision making.

### **PILLAR #3: CREATIVITY**

Staying focused on a specific task or goal, or solving a difficult problem, uses up a lot of neural energy, and the harder you work, the more quickly the brain tires. In fact, mental fatigue begins to set in after only a few minutes of concentration. Clarity and productivity decline as your mind begins to wander, which is your brain's way of taking a relaxation break. If you want to maintain peak performance, you should deliberately take a 30-second break once or twice an hour to do something pleasurable and relaxing.

You can try it right now: just take a few moments to yawn and slowly stretch your body. You'll immediately feel more focused and relaxed as your brain begins to shift into a more creative state of consciousness. When you get into the habit of deepening your relaxation while you work, you'll significantly increase the dopamine levels needed to keep you focused and fully engaged.

When mental fatigue kicks in, your brain does something similar to daydreaming, as your mind begins to wander in a seemingly random way. Researchers believe that mind-wandering is essential for problem solving and decision making, and if you don't allow your brain to enter this highly imaginative state of neural activity before a challenging task, your

memory, performance, and mental health will be compromised.

Daydreaming and mind-wandering are necessary for neurocognitive development in childhood, and in adulthood, they give you direct access to creative talents that are unique to human beings. In fact, as brain researchers at the University of California, Santa Barbara demonstrated, scheduling positive daydreaming time into the workday will improve these four core processes that build long-term satisfaction and contentment:

- You'll increase your learning capacity
- You'll enhance your creative problem-solving skills
- You'll make better plans for the future
- Your work will become more personally meaningful

The science of mind-wandering is a delicate art: too much and you'll feel disorganized, but too little can lead to work burnout, mood disorders, and other health risks. But by consciously shifting back and forth between focused attention and constructive daydreaming, you harness the power of your creative imagination. Your motivation will increase while your stress level remains low.

### **PILLAR#4: AWARENESS**

For the first few years of life, your brain is concerned primarily with outer goals that bring immediate pleasure and satisfaction: the acquisition of toys, food, pleasure, comfort, and security. These pursuits are largely self-

centered, with only minimal attention given to other people's needs. In fact, the neural circuits involved in self-awareness and social awareness, the insula and anterior cingulate (figure 1, above), won't become fully functional until a person is well into his or her third decade of life. This explains why many young adults are oblivious to how their actions influence others. They have weak organizational skills and take greater risks, and since they have not fully developed the neurological capacity for empathy and moral reasoning, they often make costly mistakes when it comes to relationships and work.

However, there is a way to speed up the development of self-awareness (the conscious knowledge of your character, personality, and everything else about you) and social awareness (the conscious knowledge of how your actions emotionally influence others) through a very simple process known as mindfulness, a form of brief meditation that strengthens the areas in your brain involved with confidence, optimism, emotional regulation, happiness, self-love, and compassion for others. Mindfulness is an awareness-enhancement strategy, and all you have to do to practice it is remain deeply relaxed, bringing your attention into the present moment as you notice the creative dreamlike processes that quietly go on in the background of your mind.

Try it right now. Close your eyes and sit quietly for a few minutes. Is your mind completely silent, or do you find that thoughts and feelings seem to automatically jump into your consciousness? The longer you sit there

and allow your mind to wander, the more you'll realize there is a seemingly endless stream of thoughts and feelings flowing in and out of your consciousness. But if you are patient, observing the feelings, thoughts, and sensations without judging them—just allowing them to be present and allowing yourself to remain present as you observe—you'll slowly begin to experience a growing sense of clarity and serenity.

Researchers at Wake Forest University School of Medicine found that just three or four days of practicing mindfulness improves cognition and reduces anxiety, depression, pain, and fatigue. It also allows you to discern different hierarchical levels of awareness that influence nearly every aspect of your life:

1. Awareness of bodily sensations
2. Awareness of positive and negative thoughts
3. Awareness of positive and negative feelings
4. Awareness of old habits and behaviors
5. Awareness of your own self-image and self-esteem
6. Awareness of your belief systems
7. Awareness of your purpose and values
8. Awareness of other people's thoughts and feelings
9. Awareness of the social consequences of your actions
10. And finally, awareness of awareness itself

Beginning in the next chapter, and throughout this book, we'll introduce you to many

variations of mindfulness, showing you how to take brief moments throughout the workday to remain calm, relaxed, and highly focused on achieving more goals with little stress. We'll show you how to use mindfulness to turn a tedious activity into a pleasurable experience, and we'll take you through a variety of mindfulness-based NeuroWisdom exercises that will transform negativity into optimism as you rapidly increase your confidence, self-esteem, and empathy toward others. In chapter 10, we'll guide you through a series of formal exercises to prepare you for the most challenging—and rewarding—of all the Neuro Wisdom strategies: social mindfulness.

Mindfulness makes you more consciously aware of all four of the Pillars of Wealth and how they shape your life.

The more you practice mindfulness, the more you begin to realize that you are not your thoughts. At that moment, you become aware that there is a different you that constantly remains observant, non-judgmental, and calm. In this heightened state of awareness, you'll begin to have small “aha” experiences that give you sudden insights into different aspects of your life. These experiences transcend everyday logic and reason, and with each insight, your brain will actually reorganize itself, becoming more functional, productive, and efficient.

Mindfulness is one of the few strategies that will give you access to the intuitive powers of your brain. Intuition is very different from the type of thinking you use when analyzing problems and making everyday decisions

(Pillar Two, and the process is controlled by unique neurons found in the insula and anterior cingulate, the same areas that process social dilemmas and spiritual concerns. Intuitive reasoning is one of the most powerful wealth-building skills you can develop, and mindfulness appears to be the most effective way to access it.

Self-awareness opens the door to social awareness, and as you mindfully observe other people, you'll begin to intuitively grasp what they need and want. Empathy and tolerance for others will increase, but if you fail to develop these social skills, others will perceive you as selfish and will often take steps to get in the way of, or sabotage, your efforts to succeed. It's a neurological process called altruistic punishment, a quality that is genetically rooted in every human brain, making sure that we, as fellow human beings, are biologically motivated to treat other people fairly.

Mindfulness can also be used to help you discover what your deepest values are, and thus what gives your life more meaning, purpose, and satisfaction. When your values are not aligned with your goals and work, neural stress increases, happiness fades away, and burnout is more likely to occur.

In the past, this form of awareness was considered a spiritual quality, but because mindfulness is theologically neutral it can be easily integrated into formal education, as we do in our Executive MBA NeuroLeadership course at Loyola Marymount University. Today mindfulness exercises are being taught

in many psychology and business schools, and the benefits have been so robust that programs have been created for every level of education. For example, when a five-week mindfulness-based awareness program was introduced to children in kindergarten and elementary school, classroom behaviors dramatically improved.

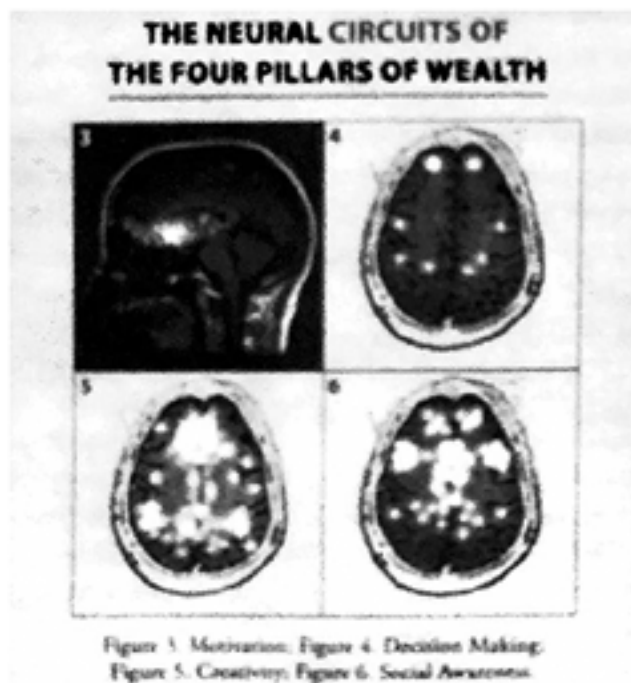
Students increased their ability to pay attention, exhibited greater self-control, and demonstrated more care and respect for others. Because these same improvements are seen in adults, many educators consider mindfulness to be one of the most important skills that busy professionals need to learn. Even the founders of Google created their own mindfulness-based meditation program, which includes many of the exercises that we will begin teaching you in chapter 3.

In a comprehensive overview of the research on mindfulness, the following benefits are cited:

- Decreased stress
- Improved self-esteem
- Increased well-being
- Decreased reactivity to negative thoughts, feelings, and experiences
- Enhanced immune and health functions
- Improved cognition and decision-making skills
- Enhanced attentiveness and less distractibility
- Increased self-awareness and body awareness

- Compassion, empathy, and understanding of others

Mindfulness brings you into the present moment so you can fully experience this astonishing world and the amazing people you share it with. When you develop this unique awareness tool and apply it to your work and personal life, your motivation increases, you'll make better decisions, and your creativity will soar. That is the formula for creating inner and outer wealth.



These illustrations will help give you a vital sense of what parts of your brain you use for each of the Four Pillars of Wealth. Every hour, throughout the day, these neural circuits interact with each other, turning on and off as you pursue different goals, activities, and interactions with others. But remember, each person's brain is different, and each circuit can



strengthen or weaken its connections with other parts of the brain.

### **MOTIVATION: The First Pillar of Wealth.**

It is controlled by the nucleus accumbens, located below the neocortex in both hemispheres of the brain (figure 3). When activated by something that is potentially desirable or pleasurable, dopamine is released, which then travels to the lower part of the frontal lobe, preparing your brain to consciously find ways to satiate that desire. For example, when you see something or someone who is pleasantly attractive, you will feel a biological urge to approach that person or object.

### **DECISION MAKING: The Second Pillar of Wealth.**

Figure 4 (looking down through the skull at the neocortex) shows the areas that are most active as you make plans to achieve a specific goal. Many areas of the brain become inactive as the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (the two white circles at the top of the picture) become more active. This is the center of your conscious awareness. Small areas in the motor cortex also begin to be activated (the small white areas in the middle of the picture), preparing your body to take action. Several areas in the parietal lobe are also active, helping you to orient yourself with the world (the four white areas in the lower part of the brain image). For example, after you initially find yourself drawn to an attractive

person or object, your brain begins to imagine different ways of "acquiring" the object of desire, or solving a problem that interferes with you getting it, and the more you become conscious of these inner fantasies, the better you can consciously choose which action to take.

### **CREATIVITY: The Third Pillar of Wealth.**

When your brain needs to rest, your mind begins to wander and daydream. The decision-making centers in figure 4 turn off, and many other areas throughout your brain become more active, especially in the frontal, parietal, and visual cortex (the white areas at the top and bottom of figure 5). Also known as the default mode network, this is where imagination and creative problem solving takes place.

Most people are unaware of this inner process, but if you relax and mindfully observe those seemingly chaotic thoughts and feelings, you'll often discover new ways to pursue your desires and goals. The more you consciously interact with these inner creative processes, the more you'll enjoy the challenges of creating inner and outer wealth.

### **AWARENESS: The Fourth Pillar of Wealth.**

Self-knowledge and social awareness (empathy, fairness, self-acceptance, kindness toward others, etc.) are regulated by two key structures in your social brain: the insula (the white outer areas in the upper middle portion

of figure 6) and the anterior cingulate (the large white area between the two lobes of the insula). The connections between the insula and anterior cingulate extend into the frontal lobe areas of consciousness and into the emotional centers deep within your brain (the white areas in the lower half of figure 5). This is the circuitry of your social brain that takes decades to fully mature. As we'll explain in the last chapter of this book, taking a few minutes every day to reflect on how your actions influence others will insure that you and the people you engage with experience more satisfaction in life.

The practice of mindfulness is one of the best ways to become aware of your creativity and the social impact you have on others. Mindfulness strengthens the neural connectivity between Pillars Two, Three, and Four. The result: you'll begin to take greater interest in the welfare of others.

### **Brain-Based Experiential Learning and Living (BELL)**

Despite the enormous advances made in science and psychology, society's approach to education hasn't changed much in the last 200 years. At the elementary and high school levels, people traditionally rely on what we call the four R's of reading, writing, arithmetic, and repetition, where teachers often overwhelm a child's brain with information that often has no personal meaning or immediate relevance to their life.

Yes, we are preparing these young minds to tackle the complexities of an adult world, but what about creativity, imagination, and intuition? Other than an occasional art or literature class, these core skills are rarely addressed until you enter college, where professors sometimes demand innovation and original thinking. Even at the university level, knowledge is fractured into individual subjects (psychology, business, engineering, etc.), with few models to help students integrate these disparate parts into their lives. Nobody teaches them how to reflect on their inner processes of awareness, or how to tap into the intuitive and creative processes of their brain.

Recent neuroscientific evidence suggests that there are at least eight core strategies that will enhance every work environment. We call this new education model Brain-Based Experiential Learning and Living, or BELL, and we recommend that you incorporate these principles into your daily life and work routine. Each will help sharpen your decision-making and problem-solving skills. They will also deepen your awareness and enhance your satisfaction while working. BELL begins with conscious relaxation, a strategy that is rarely brought into the classroom or work environment:

#### **BELL PRINCIPLE #1: RELAX!**

To maintain the highest levels of productivity and performance, you must briefly pause to deeply relax— even for just a few seconds—several times an hour. As we explained before, the brain loses concentration quickly, and any form of stress will disrupt the normal

functioning of your brain. As stress levels go down, neurological pleasure and motivation increase.

There are two basic forms of stress—physical and mental—but surprisingly very few people know how to effectively relax their bodies or brains. In the next chapter, we'll show you how to do this in under 60 seconds, and briefly explain the neuroscience behind these two unusual strategies: yawning and superslow stretching. If you can remember to do just these two things several times an hour, you'll significantly enhance your capacity to work. That's why relaxation is the most important factor for managing any form of stress.

Relaxation is a core strategy for increasing motivation—the First Pillar of Wealth—and it also triggers the creative circuits in your brain, the Third Pillar of Wealth.

### **BELL PRINCIPLE #2: VISUALIZE YOUR GOAL, OBSTACLES, AND SOLUTIONS**

In order to carry out specific plans and move toward specific goals in the world, the brain heavily depends on visual cues to guide you toward pleasure and away from pain. The more you develop your ability to visualize what you desire, the easier it becomes to reach that goal, and the more you visualize obstacles that stand in your way, the easier it becomes to develop strategies to reach your intended goal. Most people have discovered that writing their thoughts down (e.g. goals, obstacles, solutions, etc.) helps greatly to visualize them.

Visualizing goals and obstacles will improve your academic performance, will give you more energy and stamina, will help you manage difficult emotions, and will facilitate concentration, problem solving, and positive changes in behavior. In other words, visualization is a core strategy for decision making, the Second Pillar of Wealth.

### **BELL PRINCIPLE #3: CONCENTRATE ON YOUR TASK**

After visualizing your goal and the steps you'll need to take to achieve it, you'll need to fully concentrate on your task. Many of the sensory and emotional processing centers in your brain become inactive and any form of distraction—or too much stress—will interfere with your performance and productivity.

Anxiety and procrastination will also undermine your ability to stay focused on your work. In the next chapter, we'll show you how to intensify your concentration in under a minute by focusing on a specific sound, object, or body sensation. Then, when you throw yourself back into work, your clarity and decision-making skills will be enhanced.

### **BELL PRINCIPLE #4: DAYDREAM**

Daydreaming is part of the brain's creative process, the Third Pillar of Wealth, but most children are criticized by teachers when their minds begin to wander in class.

These teachers don't know that this is a natural process that occurs every few minutes, one that is essential for learning new information. As researchers at the University of Edinburgh discovered, just a couple minutes of restful daydreaming after learning something new will boost your memory.

Mind-wandering has such a bad reputation that most people resist the impulse to daydream, especially when they are at work. Rather than fight this impulse, we encourage you to deliberately daydream for very brief periods whenever you feel stressed or are struggling with a difficult problem or emotional issue. Not only will it improve your mood, when you return to your work, you'll remain focused for a longer period of time.

Mind-wandering facilitates introspection—a form of awareness associated with the Fourth Pillar of Wealth—and it's also a necessary component for problem solving because it allows your brain to imagine new ways to improve future outcomes. When you set aside a minute or two once an hour to consciously daydream, you'll learn quicker, you'll do better on tests, you'll solve problems better, and your overall work performance will be enhanced. But don't overdo it. Research shows that too much mind-wandering impairs sleep quality and cognitive performance.

### **BELL PRINCIPLE #5: INTUIT**

Logic and reason are important elements in education, problem solving, and goal

achievement, but there are additional cognitive processes that are needed to build inner and outer wealth. They involve nonverbal levels of awareness, and the only way to access this level of consciousness is to interrupt the normal way you think and feel. The neurological doorway to your intuition, as we explained earlier, is through increased awareness of yourself and others, which is the Fourth Pillar of Wealth.

Intuition is not a language-based process but more of what psychologists call a “felt sense”—an impressionistic or gut-level feeling that helps the brain solve problems in a highly efficient way. Whereas most decision-making processes of our Second Pillar of Wealth involve the language centers of the frontal lobe, intuition engages many neurological processes that happen “behind the curtain” of everyday consciousness.

However, when you deliberately turn your attention to these subconscious whispers, you'll just seem to instantly know the right answer or action—which often turns out to be the best thing to do. Intuition transcends logic and reason, and the more you use mindfulness as a way to tap into these creative processes of the brain, the more you'll enhance all your decision-making skills.

### **BELL PRINCIPLE #6: ANCHOR YOURSELF**

Relaxing, visualizing, concentrating, daydreaming, and intuitively reflecting on the creative processes of your mind are four

core learning strategies that will improve your work performance. But if you don't have an external reminder and an internal cue to engage these new tools, your brain can easily ignore the subtle symptoms of stress. The most effective external reminder is an unexpected or unfamiliar sound, like a bell. For this reason, we recommend that you use one of the following websites where you can program a mindfulness clock that will ring a bell at regular intervals throughout the day:

- [www.fungie.info](http://www.fungie.info)
- [www.dejal.com/timeout](http://www.dejal.com/timeout)
- [www.mindfulnessdc.org/bell](http://www.mindfulnessdc.org/bell)

There are also dozens of similar apps that you can load onto your phone, or you can simply use the phone's timer. However, the more pleasant the sound, the more quickly you can train your brain to automatically refresh itself when you are concentrating intensely while hard at work.

The mindfulness clock is your anchor—a reminder to regularly pause, relax, and refocus on your goal. We recommend that you download the clock as soon as possible and begin experimenting with different settings. Try this one first: Have the bell ring one or two times an hour. The first two times you hear it, just pause for 10 seconds to yawn and slowly stretch.

On the third ring, take 60 seconds to daydream or do something pleasurable. Then throw yourself back into work. Our Executive MBA students have found this to be one of the most useful tools for keeping their stress levels low,

and a recent study confirms that focusing on the sound of a resonant bell enhances the relaxation process of your body and your brain.

After using the bell for 60-90 days, these BELL strategies will become an automatic behavior deeply embedded into the memory circuits of your brain. Taking these brief, restful pauses while learning and working will enable your brain to embed information in your long-term memory and solve problems with greater ease.

In chapter 2, we'll show you other anchoring strategies using inner values, power words, and focusing on the sensation of your breathing. These will become inner cues that will stimulate the neural circuits described in the Four Pillars of Wealth.

### **BELL PRINCIPLE #7: ENJOY**

It may seem obvious, but without enjoyment, life loses most of its purpose and meaning. Pleasure and enjoyment are the intrinsic rewards you reap whenever you accomplish something or reach a specific goal, and if you frequently reward yourself—physically, emotionally, socially, or verbally through expressions of self-appreciation—throughout the workday, your brain will be more motivated to work harder and pursue bigger goals. Even the anticipation of a reward improves mood, motivation, and decision-making skills.

Here's an exercise you can do right now that will immediately boost your mood. Create a "Pleasure Board" by listing 20-30 simple

activities that give you immediate pleasure. For example: rinsing your face with cool water, dancing to a favorite tune, massaging your scalp, thinking about someone or something you love, etc. Include activities that pleasurablely stimulate as many of your senses as possible, including your mind. Separately, write down 10 of the most enjoyable experiences you've had in your life.

By the time you've completed the lists, you should feel the pleasurable effects of dopamine being released into your brain, and if you keep your Pleasure Board posted by your workstation, with the internal promise that you will allow yourself to enjoy several of them throughout the day, you'll see a discernable improvement in the quality of your work. So whenever you are feeling tired or stressed out, give yourself a pleasure break and immerse yourself in one of your enjoyable activities. It takes less than a minute to refresh your brain and increase your desire to work, and if you choose rewards that bring pleasure to others as well, brain-scan research shows you'll be building long-term satisfaction and happiness.

**BELL PRINCIPLE #8: MAINTAIN UNWAVERING OPTIMISM**

No matter what obstacle you face, the more optimistic you feel, the more motivated you'll become. There are many solutions to any problem that will bring you comfort or peace of mind (including surrender and acceptance). We will teach you how to alter the naturally pessimistic tendencies of cognitive awareness

and literally build stronger neural circuits of optimism. There are over 100 published studies showing that optimism is essential for physical and emotional health. For example, optimists have been found to live two years longer than pessimists.

So when negative thoughts creep into your consciousness, just write them down on a sheet of paper. Then take a minute to deeply relax as you mindfully gaze at the negative words on the page. Don't react; just observe. Within minutes the worrisome feelings will subside. You'll see that most of them aren't real—they're not actually happening in the present moment—and for the few that are, you'll be able to use your imagination, creativity, and daydreaming skills to find intuitive solutions to problems that would normally be difficult for you to resolve. That's the power of using these simple BELL principles.

*Motivation begins in the nucleus accumbens (NA) which releases dopamine to wake up your frontal lobe (FL) in preparation for conscious decision-making. When your brain gets tired, concentration fades and creative processes take over, stimulating hundreds of additional areas throughout the brain. If you train yourself to mindfully observe your creative imagination, the insula and anterior cingulate become activated (I/AC). Your self-awareness increases, selfishness decreases, and social empathy is enhanced.*

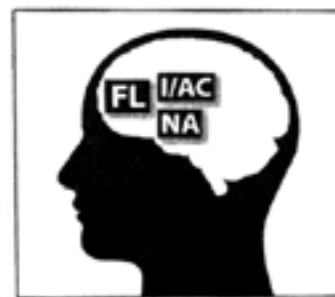


Figure 7.

*Stress levels drop, productivity increases, and others are more likely to trust you. Cooperation increases as mutually beneficial goals are more easily achieved.*

## **CHAPTER SUMMARY**

To achieve any important goal in life, you need to master four neurological processes: motivation, decision making, creativity, and awareness—awareness of yourself and your ability to be compassionately aware of the needs of others.

If you do not exercise these four qualities or “pillars” of wealth-building on a daily basis, you will limit your ability to turn your goals, wishes, and dreams into reality.

**Pillar #1: Motivation** is your brain's instinctual drive to survive and acquire anything that is new, different, and potentially valuable. When this occurs, the brain releases dopamine, a pleasure chemical that increases your conscious ability to take action and achieve your goal.

**Pillar #2: Decision Making** happens in your frontal lobe. It involves habitual behaviors, it regulates mood, and it helps to keep you focused on your desired goal. Because decision making can be disrupted by stress, worry, and doubt, you need to train your brain to stay focused, confident, and optimistic.

**Pillar #3: Creativity** involves a unique state of consciousness that prevents mental exhaustion and burnout through daydreaming, mind-wandering, and the use of intuitive imagination to solve problems.

**Pillar #4: Awareness** takes advantage of the newest parts of your brain. When you mindfully engage in self-reflection, you stimulate the circuits of empathy, compassion, and self-love. You become more self-aware, more socially aware, and more spiritually aware of your values, allowing you to meet the needs of others as well as your own. Mutual trust and cooperation grow, and work becomes more meaningful, purposeful, and satisfying, enabling you to achieve true happiness, success, and wealth (both inner and outer).

The Eight Principles of Brain-Based Experiential Learning and Living (BELL) are part of a new educational model used in the NeuroLeadership course at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. These strategies have been shown to reduce stress and improve performance at home and work.

1. Relax your mind and body several times an hour while learning or working.
2. Visualize your goals, obstacles, and solutions throughout your workday.
3. Learn how to deeply concentrate and maintain focus on your task.

4. Daydream once or twice an hour for 60 seconds to enhance memory and problem-solving abilities.
5. Integrate your intuition with logic and reason.
6. Every hour, anchor mindfulness in your mind and body with sensory cues and value-based words.
7. Integrate pleasure and enjoyable activity breaks into your work schedule.
8. Maintain unwavering optimism, no matter what.





# Anáhuac

México