

George W. Bush's administration was hailed for acquiring "The Builders," by African-American artist Jacob Lawrence, though some criticized the move because the painting depicts black men doing menial labor.

A spokeswoman for William

presidents usually redecorate their upstairs residences and the Oval Office within their first year of taking office. The spokeswoman, Lara Kline, added that Congress sets aside \$100,000 for the purpose.

Some works are likely keepers

lady brought in bold, abstract works—including Glenn Ligon's text piece about segregation, "Black Like Me #2," which departed sharply from the 19th-century still lifes and pastoral scenes in the White House's public rooms. Two years ago, Alma Thomas be-

Adler Galleries in New York sell high-end antiques and classical paintings, said Mr. Trump likely will try to set a presidential tone now by displaying works that "make him look regal and strong, something with eagles or worthy heroes like Benjamin Franklin or

preciate the originals on site. (Much of the French furniture in the White House was bought during James Monroe's administration.)

"You don't want a Koons on the wall of the Oval Office," Mr. Williams said. "You want calm and soothing."

## HEALTH

# PSYCHOLOGISTS FINE-TUNE TALK THERAPY

BY ANDREA PETERSEN

**NEW TWEAKS** are improving the age-old practice of talk therapy.

Doing therapy in the morning, taking a nap afterward or adding a medication that enhances learning are just a few of the methods scientists are investigating to make cognitive behavioral therapy work better.

CBT, which involves changing dysfunctional patterns of thoughts and behaviors, is one of the most effective treatments for anxiety disorders, depression and eating disorders.

But about a quarter to half of people with depression and anxiety don't get significant relief after a course of CBT, which usually consists of about 12 to 15 weekly sessions. Anywhere from 15% to 30% of people who begin it don't finish, says David H. Barlow, founder of the Center for Anxiety and Related Disorders at Boston University. "There's still plenty of room for improvement," he says.

A study published in September in the journal *Psychoneuroendocrinology* that involved 24 patients with anxiety disorders found that therapy appointments earlier in the day were more effective than those later in the day.

In the study, subjects—who all had panic disorder with agoraphobia (fear of situations where escape may be difficult)—were treated with exposure therapy, a common component of CBT: They repeatedly confronted situations they feared, such as being in elevators or crowds. Subjects with sessions early in the day reported less severe anxiety symptoms at their next session than those who had sessions later in the day.

The researchers found that higher levels of the stress hormone cortisol that naturally occur in the morning were responsible for at least part of the benefit of the earlier sessions. "Acute boosts of cortisol can actually facilitate learning," says Alicia E. Meuret, associate professor of psychology

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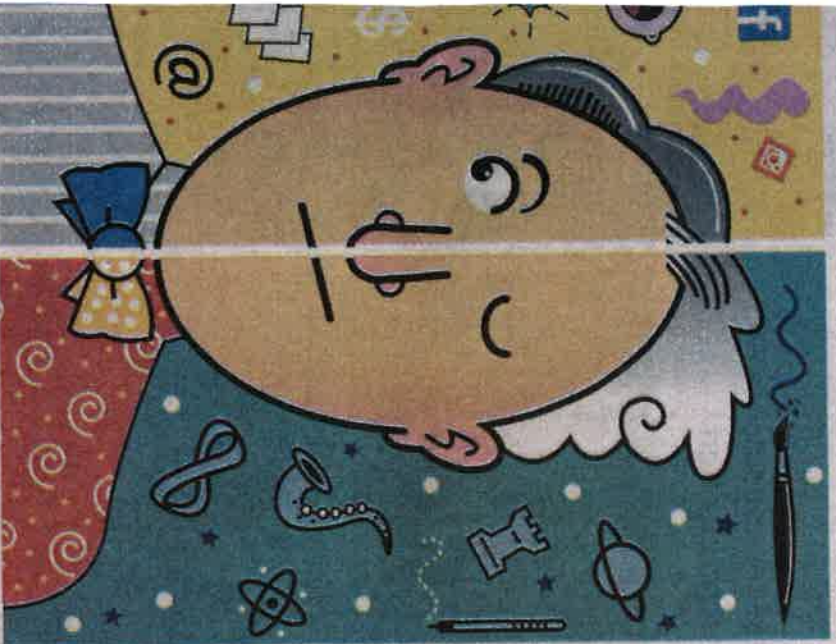


JON KRAUSE

Sumathi Reddy

# Benefits of Distracted

pur more creativity in solving problems



CHRIS REED FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

**nal Thinking**  
 a who exert less  
 e control are more  
 t thinking up novel  
 common objects, a  
 nd. Some ideas from  
 ty participants:

dryer could be used  
 o blow leaves  
 ennis racket could  
 ute as a snowshoe  
 could be broken apart  
 for firewood  
 ball bat could work as  
 a rolling pin

t really know when  
 hat is distracting in  
 will become beneficial  
 t context." Mr. Amer  
 train situations, that ir-  
 ormation can become  
 at's the case then older  
 t an advantage relative  
 adults."  
 possible benefits from  
 gnitive control isn't a  
 t, but one that has  
 d for a long time, says  
 mpson-Schill, chair-

woman of the psychology depart-  
 ment at the University of Pennsylv-  
 vania. She says the fact that the  
 brain regions important for cog-  
 nitive control develop relatively  
 late, typically when people are in  
 their early 20s, suggests that late  
 development is a good thing.  
 "And these brain regions that are  
 among the last to develop are  
 also among the first to start to  
 decline," she says.

Dr. Thompson-Schill's research  
 has shown that when people exert  
 less cognitive control, they be-  
 come better at generating ideas.  
 Using brain imaging, she found  
 that when people try to come up  
 with novel uses for a familiar ob-  
 ject, such as a baseball bat, there  
 is less blood flow to the parts of  
 the brain used in cognitive con-  
 trol. Instead, the sensory areas of  
 the brain are more engaged.

Similarly, when the frontal lobe  
 is suppressed, using a noninvasive  
 brain stimulation technique, peo-  
 ple are more adept at coming up  
 with new ways to use common ob-  
 jects, she says.

Classes and programs designed  
 to help older adults improve their  
 cognitive control are probably not  
 needed, says Dr. Hasher. "It might  
 be better to help older adults im-  
 prove cognition by using their  
 natural processing rather than  
 trying to turn them into younger  
 adults," she says.



Allcia E. Meurer, above, found that patients who did exposure therapy in the morning benefited more than those doing it later. Michelle G. Craske, below, has studied putting patients in a good mood before therapy.

## THERAPY

*Continued from page A9*  
 at Southern Methodist University  
 and lead author of the study.

Taking a nap after therapy  
 can be beneficial, too. A study  
 published in Psychological Medi-  
 cine in 2014 had 40 people with  
 spider phobias do a session of  
 exposure therapy using virtual  
 reality: They moved through sim-  
 ulated rooms containing several  
 spiders. After the session, some  
 subjects were given 90 minutes  
 to nap. (Actual sleep was re-  
 corded via EEG.) Others watched  
 a video. Then they were asked to  
 approach a live tarantula in a  
 cage. At this point, there were no  
 significant differences in anxiety  
 symptoms between the groups.

But at a follow-up appoint-  
 ment a week later, the  
 subjects were asked to  
 approach the taran-  
 tula again. This  
 time, the people  
 who had napped  
 after exposure  
 therapy had a  
 greater reduction  
 in anxiety and  
 catastrophic  
 thoughts about spi-  
 ders as they ap-  
 proached, compared with  
 those who didn't sleep after  
 the treatment. Scientists believe  
 that sleep can strengthen the  
 memories of new learning that  
 occurs during therapy.

Psychologists are also adding  
 other components to improve  
 CBT. In a study published in the  
 Journal of Consulting and Clinical  
 Psychology in September, re-  
 searchers added motivational in-  
 terviewing, an approach where  
 therapists focus strongly on ex-  
 pressing empathy and validating  
 patients' feelings, to CBT in  
 treating patients with severe  
 generalized anxiety disorder.

"Those who got the combined  
 therapy saw a greater reduction in  
 worry and distress over a one-year  
 period after the treatment ended,  
 compared with those who got tra-  
 ditional CBT. And during the treat-  
 ment, far fewer patients who had  
 the combined therapy—about half  
 as many—dropped out compared  
 with those who had CBT only."

Researchers are also experi-  
 menting with combining CBT and  
 attention bias modification, a  
 treatment that uses a simple



computer task to train patients  
 to focus their attention on more  
 benign stimuli in their environ-  
 ments and away from threaten-  
 ing things.

This is thought to combat a  
 tendency in many people with  
 anxiety disorders to pay more at-  
 tention to threats. They scan  
 their environments looking for  
 things that could potentially be  
 scary and have a harder time dis-  
 engaging from things that seem  
 threatening. Such behaviors are  
 often unconscious and are  
 thought to fuel anxiety symp-  
 toms, says Daniel S. Pine, chief of  
 the section on development and  
 affective neuroscience in the In-  
 tramural Research Program at  
 the National Institute of Mental  
 Health.

Psychologists are also finding  
 that putting people in a good  
 mood before exposure therapy  
 by having them vividly  
 imagine happy scenes  
 might actually make  
 the treatment  
 work better.

"There's some  
 evidence that  
 positive affect  
 enhances the en-  
 coding of infor-  
 mation at a  
 deeper level, which  
 may improve learning  
 during exposure," says  
 Michelle G. Craske, director of  
 the Anxiety and Depression Re-  
 search Center at the University  
 of California, Los Angeles.

Dr. Craske and colleagues are  
 also finding success in modifying  
 exposure therapy, like varying  
 where and how patients do the  
 therapy and making the sessions  
 more intense (like having a per-  
 son with a dog phobia encounter  
 two dogs at one time).

Scientists are finding that cer-  
 tain medications that enhance  
 learning may make therapy work  
 more quickly. Some studies have  
 shown that taking D-cycloserine,  
 a drug commonly used to treat  
 tuberculosis, before treatment  
 sessions can enhance and speed  
 up improvement from exposure  
 therapy. But the research is  
 mixed—some studies haven't  
 shown the effect.

Researchers are also looking  
 at yohimbine, which is derived  
 from the bark of a tree typically  
 found in parts of Africa, and hy-  
 drocortisone, better known as  
 an anti-itch cream, but used in  
 pill form.

FROM TOP: HILLSMAN S. JACKSON/SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY; REED HUTCHINSON/UCLA DEPT OF PSYCHOLOGY