



Linda's T'ai Chi

Weekly Handout June 29, 2020

## I Got Rhythm

A great song for sure, written by George Gershwin and his brother, Ira in 1930, and became a jazz standard. It still stands the test of time. The song was included in the Gershwin brothers' 1931 Broadway musical, "Of Thee I Sing." You may remember the song as it was featured in the 1951 musical film [An American in Paris](#). [Gene Kelly](#) sang the song and [tap-danced](#), while French-speaking children whom he had just taught a few words of English shouted the words "I got" each time they appeared in the lyrics. This version finished at #32 in [the American Film Institute 100 Years...100 Songs](#) survey of top tunes in American cinema. (Do you know the #1 song?)

But, I am not writing about that kind of rhythm. I am writing about the rhythm that occurs naturally in our body. The first is the circadian rhythm. Circadian rhythms are those physical, mental, and behavioral changes that follow a daily cycle. They respond primarily to light and darkness in an organism's environment. Sleeping at night and being awake during the day is an example of a light-related circadian rhythm. Circadian comes from the **Latin** circa, "about," and Diem, "day." Think about it like a master internal clock.

There is another naturally occurring rhythm called the ultradian rhythm, pronounced "Ult- trei- dee- um). We may not be aware of these rhythms because they occur like a heartbeat or an eye blink. Being aware of these, however, will help us feel better and stay better.

Ultradian rhythms are biological patterns hardwired into our very fabric and function like an internal clock. They can be measured and quantified. So, ultradian means "many times a day" and oscillate at various intervals over a 24 hour period.

Here is a chart that demonstrates this rhythm:

# Ultradian Performance Rhythm

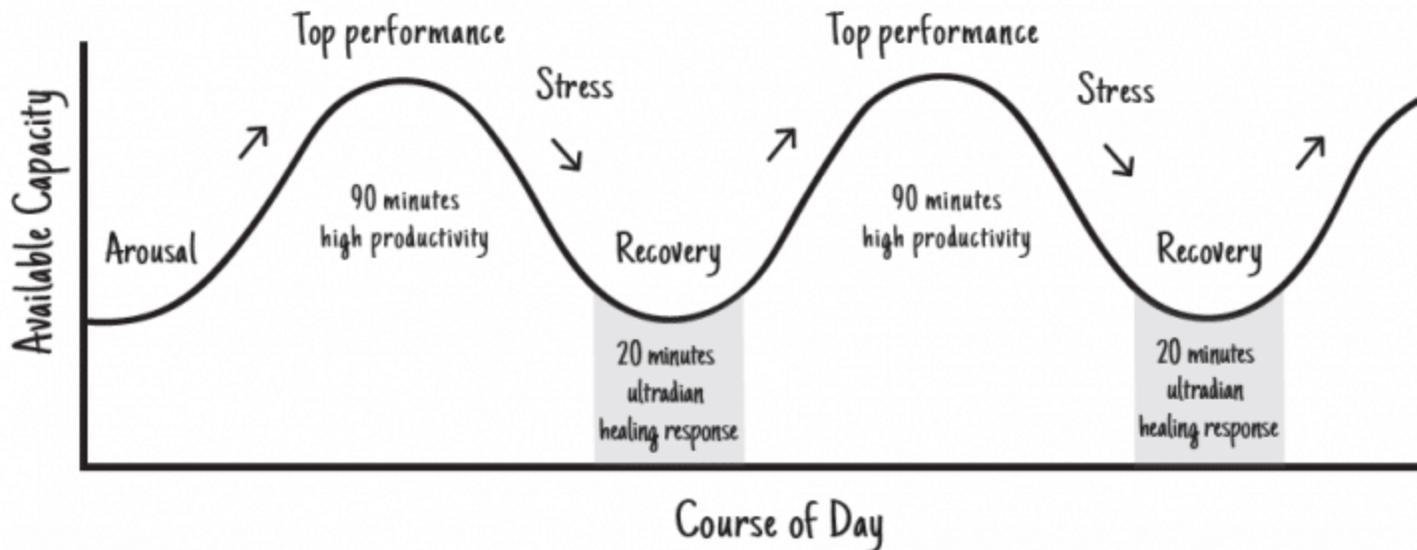


Illustration adapted from *The 20-Minute Break* by Ernest L. Rossi, PhD (Tarcher Putnam, 1991)

This chart suggests that during a 24 hour period we will experience peaks and troughs. During a trough you may feel fatigued, spacey, groggy, irritable, distracted, hungry or antsy. You may feel unfocused or droopy; a good time for a coffee break or chocolate. Did someone say chocolate? It is also a good time for a little T'ai Chi, but that will come later. This chart also suggests we need to unplug about every 90 minutes.

Your brain needs a break to sort through the vast amount of data and information that you are taking in. It sorts, and catalogues the information in various places in your brain. Your brain then creates long term and short term memories. It may send data to the limbic system to become part of your danger alert system.

Most of us ignore this cycle and try to power through or chastise ourselves for being lazy or unproductive. We become far less creative and our problem solving skills deteriorate. This leads to myriad physical and mental problems. So, we need to recognize these phases and take care of our body and brain during these cycles.

Here are some ideas for you to begin to notice and honor this natural and important cycle of your body

1. Notice when you tend to have peaks of energy and creativity and when your energy drops. You will recognize the trough by foggy thinking, difficulty focusing and perhaps clumsiness.
2. Appreciate that the low- energy trough is your friend and has a purpose. Your body and brain is signaling the need to replenish and repair.
3. Give your body and mind a chance to shift gears. If you have been sitting, move. If you have been moving, sit still.

Performing T'ai Chi is a great way to restore and relax your mind, body and spirit. I tend to practice in the late morning. I am more focused and more relaxed. But, that is up to each of you as to when the best time for this type of activity is best.

Some other ideas for “stopping the world” and giving your brain a break: (From The Blue Zone Study)

- Get a drink of water or cup of tea and enjoy drinking it slowly.
- Grab a healthy snack (avoid refined carbs and sugars)
- Get outside and walk calmly (looking around you, not at your smartphone).
- Try a walking exercise.
- Stare into space or out the window, seeing if you notice an interesting shape, color, or scene.
- Close your eyes and meditate or do deep T'ai Chi breathing.
- Sit on a curb or bench and let your mind wander for a while.
- Walk around your home looking for things you never noticed before.
- Visit with a colleague or friend, expressing interest or positive feelings.
- Listen to a guided meditation or piece of calming music; take a quick cat nap.
- Do a mindless task, like refilling your stapler or cleaning out your purse or a drawer.
- Run a simple or pleasant errand (e.g., picking up flowers, shopping for a gift).
- Rub some lotion or balm into your hands, cuticles, and elbows.
- Waft some aromatherapy oils or flower essences around your space.
- Call a loved one to say hi or to express love and appreciation.
- Visualize how you want the rest of your day or evening to go.
- Make a quick list of things you are grateful for.
- Reflect on a list of your core values and notice which ones have been in play today.

Stay SANE

Take the virus Seriously and be Safe (Now is not the time to be less vigilant)

Be Active

Be Neighborly

Be Engaged



Peace, Linda