Productivity and Happiness Under Sustained Disaster Conditions

As the coronavirus crisis deepens, I find myself thinking more and more about how to foster happiness and productivity in the midst of a protracted disaster. The idea of work and productivity usually gets stymied by the anxieties in the moment. But these days, there are no clear boundaries between work and life, and the line between productivity and happiness is a particularly blurry one. While everyone must find their own way, this transformative process is not optional. Right priorities at the outset of this disaster will result in faster adaptation and better productivity in the long run.

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One simple way to ensure that productivity and happiness are both on your sides is to focus on gratitude. A regular practice of gratitude can help keep you in good humor, even under prolonged disaster conditions. If you're new to this practice, a few simple tools can help prevent a downward spiral and derails survival adaptation, but may also harm students in the process.

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At the outset of this disaster, you need to prioritize the physical and psychological security of yourself and your family. Front-line workers and those working from home should be supported with facilities and benefits that respect their effort and sacrifice. Front-line workers and others should be given the emotional support they need to work in disaster conditions in other contexts, I can assure those of you new to crises that you all—no matter your age, rank, or role—suffered in the same manner from the pandemic. This reaction is perfectly normal and appropriate. Your magnificent brain is currently working overtime, juggling trash and treasure, and trying to find a way to live in the world as it is. Embracing this fact with humility, open-mindedness, and good humor is the only strategy for keeping your mental health in check. By now, many people are slowly coming to terms with the idea that the Covid-19 crisis is not a short-term event. The projected timeline of this global disaster is simply too long for this strategy to work. I know from experience how draining it can be to work in disaster conditions. These things provide an essential foundation of psychological relief and stability.

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Of course, none of these mental exercises can be done perfectly. If you lose a day or two of concentration, that's fine. If you can't write or think for a bit, it's fine. It's okay to take breaks. It's okay to turn your brain off. It's okay to take all of these mental exercises with a pinch of salt.

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