

YOUR MIND AT REST?

Workshop Proposal

Abstract

Have you ever feel that is impossible to put your mind to rest? Have you found yourself immersed in mind wandering and completely forgotten how you got home? Do you sometimes come up with ideas or solve problems when looking out of the window of the train? Do you go over your whole day after going to bed or plan what will you be doing the next day? All of these experiences have a reason and a neural network dedicated to it. In this workshop you will be able to experience and understand the differences between a wandering mind and an attentive one.

Duration

50 minutes

Target audience

Any adult or elder between who has a slight sensibility and curiosity in mindfulness or is concerned about not being able to quiet down their mind.

Learning objective

Recognize the neural activity of the Default Mode Network.

Learning outcome

The attendants will create awareness of how their minds cycle through the attention and resting states. Build the tools to gain a tiny bit of control over your mind to use for improving attention and therefore mental health.

Syllabus

Recent studies in cognitive neuroscience have discovered a complex neural network that activates when not performing a task. Every time the mind wanders and an inner conversation takes place, a series of brain regions work together to achieve some very important mental processes. These regions conform the default mode network (DMN), and its study has become critical for understanding how consciousness operates. This network can be described as

mind-wandering, i.e. using past experiences to plan for the future, navigate social interactions, and maximize the utility of moments when we are not otherwise engaged by the external world[*]. Now we know that in order to understand how the brain works depends critically on the study of its intrinsic activity and how it gets us closer to the understanding of consciousness [*]. In this workshop I will present the main principles of this neural network and how it can help us on our daily lives. Everyone has experienced some kind of mind wandering, but not all of them are aware that it corresponds to a specific neural network.

Timeline

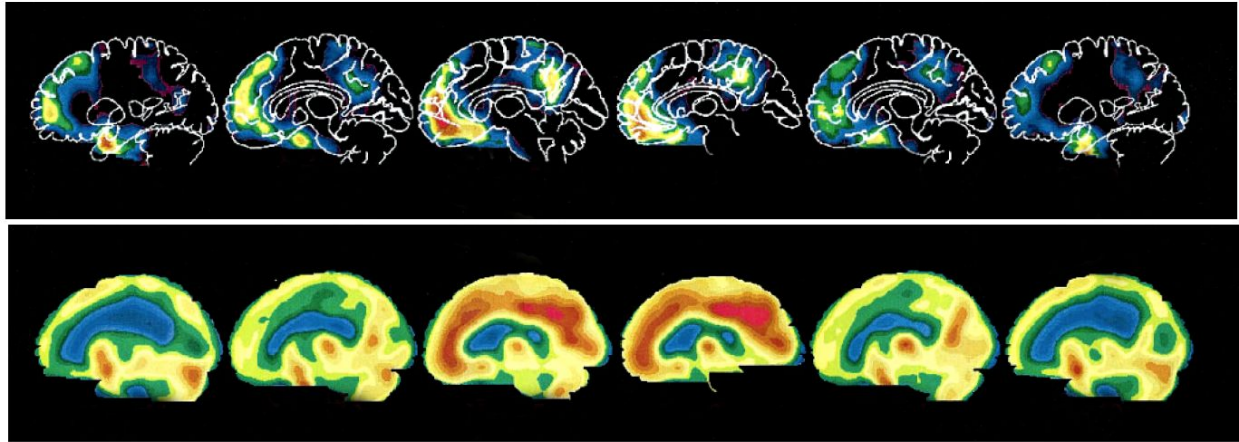
20 min.

Ask the participants to perform a quite difficult task that will force them to pay attention. After completing this, allow them to freely explore what they just did and allow time to continue the task without any specific directions. Do this exercise twice (10 min. each).

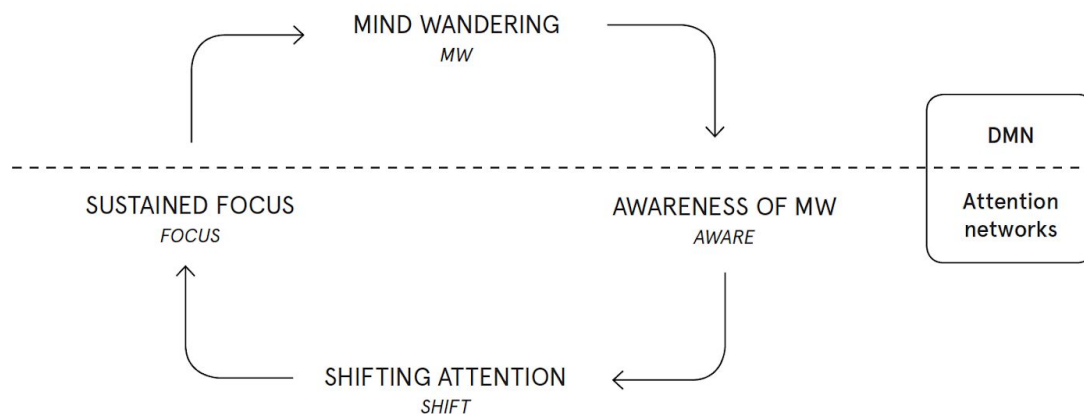
1. Present an image of a grid with some random dots on it. Show it for a complete minute and then turn off the screen. Ask them to remember where the dots were and mark them on a paper (with the same grid as the screen printed). When they feel ready, connect the dots and draw something that comes out of that connection.
2. Hand the most difficult pair of needle and thread and ask the participants to spin it. When they are done, they can pass it through a piece of fabric in whatever shape or way they want to. Allow some time for them to do this exercise repeatedly; pass the needle through the fabric in and out.

20 min.

Ask with the following image which of the brain states do they think refers to each of the states through the activity.



Explain the difference between the contents that the mind goes through when the default mode network is active. Show the following diagram of the cycle and acknowledge each step as important as the other.



(Hasenkamp et al, 2011, p. 751)

10 min.

Present how we can use this cycle on our daily lives and ways of actually resting the mind. Ask the personal experiences about this day-to-day situations asked in the abstract. Gather comments, questions and feedback about the theories presented and the way of experiencing both states of the mind.