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Recess Newsletter June 2010

Problematic Popcorn and the Struggles of the Multitasking Mind

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Be In The Know



In The News

Super Secret Fitness on

Pass the Popcorn...

and the excess saturated fat and sodium, please!

As summer approaches, with it comes the summer blockbuster. And with those oh-so intellectually stimulating dramas comes that favorite of treats, movie theater popcorn. And with that crunchy, salty goodness comes the equivalent of sitting down to three McDonald's Quarter Pounders with 12 pats of butter.

Wait, what?

According to a report from the [Center For Science in the Public Interest](#), the nutrition facts behind the popcorn at the nation's largest cinema chains read like a tear-jerker, even if the movie that accompanies them is a laugh-a-minute. We're talking 1,200 calories, 980 milligrams of sodium and 60 grams of saturated fat (that's for a large popcorn at Regal Cinemas).

If there's any good news here, it's that the culprit is not the popcorn itself, but the huge amounts of added oils and salt. That means that for movie nights at home, you can do it up right with your own flavorings (think garlic for savory and cinnamon for sweet) and turn a health food horror into a whole grain snack.

Check out Bob's Red Mill for both [white](#) and [yellow](#) popcorn varieties.

[Find a wellness plan that's more pop and less corn\(y\)>>](#)

Health Immersion Sponsor Highlight

Unwrap your lunch in style!



[Kink.fm \(.mp3\)](#)

[LiveWire on OPB \(.mp3\)](#)

[No Place Like Work. Recess Client Rose City Mortgage in Oregon Business.](#)

[Fun Wellness: Recess Client Bullivant Houser Bailey in Oregon Business Magazine](#)

[Portland Business Journal: Smoking Cessation](#)

[Recess' Blog: You'll Laugh, You'll Cry, You'll Lose Weight Just Reading It.](#)

This month, we'd like to throw a little light on one of our awesome Health Immersion sponsors: Keeper Sacks!

Founder and designer Kristine Le brow wanted to do something about the 380 billion (yup, with a "b") plastic baggies and wraps that end up in US landfills every year. In coming up with the reusable snack bags (which you can wash in the sink, dish washer, or washing machine), she drew on her love of fashion and color to create a product that's good for the earth and adds some zest to the ol' sack lunch.



Waaay cuter than Ziplocs

Kristine has generously donated Keeper Sacks of various colors and patterns to Recess' Health Immersion program this year. Every participant gets one of their own! For more updates on Keeper Sacks, check out their [Facebook page](#).

Keeper Sacks is just one of the incredible local sponsors that have gotten on board with Recess Health Immersion. Thanks to a bunch of great donations--everything from class passes, water bottles, massage discounts, socks, and t-shirts--the value of this year's goodie-filled tote bag is creeping up awfully close to the \$400 mark.

And Remember...

If you sign up with a friend or family member, and we'll take **20% off the cost of the program for both of you** and throw in two sweet Recess t-shirts!

Still not sure?

Come to a free preview class! Recess will be taking part in [Portland Sunday Parkways](#). Let us answer any questions or just come to say hi to us at [Peninsula Park](#) on Sunday, June 27th. Roads around the neighborhood will be closed to cars, so bring your bike or walking shoes. Yoga and hula hoops for all!

More questions?
Email [Kaitlin](#).

[Sign up today for your best summer yet! >>](#)

This is Your Brain on the Internet.

Can you show me again? I was too busy tweetering my face page.

The interwebz are making us go insane! Or at least it seems that way. A slew of recent articles from major newspapers have reported on the not-so-great effects all that online time can have on your ability to focus, stay concentrated, and even maintain real-life interpersonal relationships.

This bluntly-titled [Wall Street Journal article](#) outlines the work of several studies on communication and brain development. Their findings all point the same way: the division of our attention that occurs when reading and interacting online is turning us into "scattered and superficial thinkers."

In one experiment at Cornell University, *"half a class of students was allowed to use Internet-connected laptops during a lecture, while the other had to keep their computers shut. Those who browsed the Web performed much worse on a subsequent test of how well they retained the lecture's content. While it's hardly surprising that Web surfing would distract students, it should be a note of caution to schools that are wiring their classrooms in hopes of improving learning."*



And it's not just classrooms where more technology is being installed in hopes of improving the overall experience--think retail stores, offices,

cars, and there's even an airline that's going to make iPads available to rent to passengers.

Installing attention grabbing technology in seemingly as many places as possible is really just playing on our brains' development. Nicholas Carr in the WSJ article points out, *"Our predisposition is to be aware of as much of what's going on around us as possible. Our fast-paced, reflexive shifts in focus were once crucial to our survival. They reduced the odds that a predator would take us by surprise or that we'd overlook a nearby source of food."*

But when we're not longer avoiding predators or hunting and gathering our own food, this hyperawareness tries to channel itself through other ways (Facebook! Twitter! TMZ.com!), and suddenly reading a bunch of pages in one sitting without checking your email between every paragraph becomes a challenge.

OK, so maybe our thoughts aren't reaching the same depths that they used to, but what about multitasking? As we write this newsletter, we're also reconnecting with the sister of our former best friend from my cousin's summer camp and liveblogging about the completion of our online novel that was written by our Second Life avatar. That's pretty impressive, right?

Maybe not. The New York Times reports that all of this simultaneous technology is actually rewiring the way our brains gets business done. And trying to complete multiple tasks at once has its downside too.

Research shows that, *"Heavy multitaskers actually have more trouble focusing and shutting out irrelevant information, scientists say, and they experience more stress.*

And scientists are discovering that even after the multitasking ends, fractured thinking and lack of focus persist. In other words, this is also your brain off computers."



"SORRY, WE CAN'T E-MAIL YOUR PIZZA AS ATTACHMENT."

Think this doesn't apply to you? Well, here's an activity where you can put your focus to the test.

If your first thought was, "Oh, sweet! An online test that measures my

filtering abilities! That's a quasi-legit thing I can do instead of this other thing I really need to do," we know exactly how you feel. It also answers the question: Is the internet affecting the way I think and work?

For a more eloquent rumination on the topic, check out [Alain de Botton's piece](#) in this spring's *City Journal*. When discussing the obsession with current events, he hits the nail on the head: *"We are made to feel that at any point, somewhere on the globe, something may occur to sweep away old certainties-something that, if we failed to learn about it instantaneously, could leave us wholly unable to comprehend ourselves or our fellows."*

Quick--what are you doing reading this newsletter, there could be another celebrity break-up happening RIGHT NOW!

Trying to calm a wandering mind is certainly not a new problem. Chapter 6, verse 34 of the *Bhagavad Gita* reads, "The mind is restless, turbulent and strong, as difficult to curb as the wind." There's even an entire limb, or stage, or yoga dedicated to concentration: [Dharana](#). But now, those confounding winds that the mind has no problem producing on its own must also compete with the mini-tornadoes of distraction coming from your computer/cell phone/iPad.

The challenge then becomes how to find a time in your day that's just you, your mind, and a single task at hand. For some people, this is yoga. For some, it's running (possibly even sans iPod!). Others might choose to make meal preparation a cellphone-free zone. Or even reading a book. The old fashioned, papery kind. Just don't be surprised when double-tapping on a word does not automatically give you its definition.



What about you? Have you noticed a difference in the way you think or process information since you've spent more time on the computer? What suggestions do you have for unplugging when it's just so darn difficult? Share your thoughts on the Recess blog.

Give your brain some Recess! >>

**Sign up with
a friend,
save \$100!**

Sign up for Recess Health Immersion 2010 with a friend by June 15th and score t-shirts for you both! Plus, you'll both get 20% of the program cost refunded. That's \$100 back in your pocket!

Sign up online by [clicking here](#), or, call us toll-free at 1-866-578-7118. Local to Portland, OR? Call 503-282-5560.