



imex **LAS VEGAS**
america NOVEMBER 9-11, 2021



FACE-TO- -FACE FACE

TEN TIPS ON
HOW TO BUILD
FORWARD
BETTER



WITH
OUR HUMAN
NATURE »

INTRODUCTION



In our ongoing exploration of nature, and especially how it relates to our journey to a purposeful, post-pandemic recovery, we cannot underestimate the significance of our very own, human nature. Who are we? What have we learned? What "me" will I present to the world now? How do we reconnect, face-to-face, in the healthiest, happiest ways?

We're asking a lot of questions, and of course, don't claim to possess all the answers. Scientists and philosophers have been studying such deep subjects since the dawn of humanity itself!

But we have been learning something new about ourselves and each other almost every moment. Here, we'll share just some of the conversations we're having, and research we've discovered recently.



DOWNLOAD your copy of the *Nature of Space* paper here.

WATCH Janet Sperstad's popular PlanetIMEX session called "Face-to-face events: An antidote to the age of loneliness"

WATCH the inspiring session "The Power of Nature" by Daniel Fox, Wilderness Explorer and Author here



We need to think about not just feeding the body and the brain, but also feeding the soul.



CONSIDERING HUMAN NEEDS AND WELL-BEING

The IMEX Group recently published its latest instalment of the #NatureWorks research series—a paper titled *Nature of Space* by Janet Sperstad and Amanda Cecil, powered by Marriott International. We keep returning to its pages, to re-read the revelations on why the great outdoors is a place to rejuvenate and recharge, and how nature can and should be integrated into our event spaces and experiences.

Noted within is that, "Throughout COVID-19 and during times of uncertainty, we have the immediate need for comfort and calm. We tend to experience high levels of anxiety, depression, and stress as things around us continue to change or remain unknown."

Interviewee Kevin Stack, Founder and CEO of Northeast Green Building Consulting, likened event attendees to "hummingbirds—creatures that migrate with purpose, pollinate their environment before departure, and bring energy and nutrients with them into their destination." In considering this parallel, "We need to think about not just feeding the body and the brain, but also feeding the soul."

Nature is one antidote to chaos and stress, and it can help us enable attendees to go back home and to work happier and healthier. So, as we build back better with a new lens and a grateful heart, our focus must be on the event experience, the connection with nature and use of space—and, importantly, also on each other and our human needs. »



30

LIVE AND FACE-TO-FACE WILL NEVER BE REPLACED

Without doubt, the pandemic forever changed us and the industry. Among the many tricky challenges, of course, was the demand to push ourselves to evolve more rapidly and expansively in the virtual, tech-driven space than we'd ever thought possible.

Fortunately, that whirlwind experiment ultimately resulted in our individual and collective professional advancement. All their strengths and shortcomings considered, virtual and hybrid events are here to stay. The pandemic simply accelerated a trend that was already in place.

Yet on the flip side, probably another of our biggest, hard-earned lessons was just how essential it is to be together—live, in person and in living colour. We really missed that kinetic connection with each other; that multi-sensory feeling of being in the same place!

Perhaps that should come as no surprise. Proving the business case for face-to-face events has long been an industry-wide crusade, and study upon study verifies that virtual communications cannot fully or adequately replace in-person experiences.

Way, way back in 1st century BC, a Roman poet gave us the earliest-known form of the proverb familiarised again in 1832 as "absence makes the heart grow fonder." Could it be that our prolonged absence from each other has increased our need to see each other, face-to-face, more than ever before? A desire borne of more than business obligations—and rooted in human nature?



IT SEEMS THAT
RECONNECTING WITH
EACH OTHER IS ALSO A
WAY TO RECONNECT WITH
OURSELVES; TO REMEMBER
WHO WE ARE AND WHAT
WE'RE MADE OF.



4

IT'S BIOLOGICAL...

Turns out, we are hardwired to be together. During our first Buzz Day, we heard from Radha Agrawal, the Co-Founder, CEO and Chief Community Architect of Day-breaker, the global morning dance, music and wellness "movement." She led the session "How to create deep belonging and joy for yourself and others," in which she discussed her D.O.S.E. method.

In short, humans have four "happy" neurochemicals, called dopamine, oxytocin, serotonin and endorphins. By designing experiences that "tickle" D.O.S.E. for every single attendee, we unlock joy and forge connections and a loyal sense of community.

Doing that can be most effective when we are physically side by side, moving together in unison, more creative and intelligent and prone to finding flow state. And these days, after so long apart, gathering in real life is especially vital! It seems that reconnecting with each other is also a way to reconnect with ourselves; to remember who we are and what we're made of.

Hear more from Radha and experience her D.O.S.E. method IRL at IMEX America, where she'll be joining us as one of MPI's daily keynotes!

Meet Radha here »

50

...& PSYCHOLOGICAL

Our industry colleague Jonathan Bradshaw, a behavioural researcher and social skills trainer and coach, as well as the creator of **Meetology**[®], recently launched the website **#WeLoveLive**.

He presents a series of video “nuggets” examining the psychology of face-to-face and the behavioural science supporting live business events. Each addresses different reasons why and ways in which they are superior, and his aim is that event professionals will share these insights with their customers.

“In a business context, meeting face-to-face outperforms meeting virtually in so many different areas,” he says. “It’s time to let the world know. Humans need to meet as a species...(and) we need to start meeting face-to-face when it’s safe to do so.”

The first five videos, titled Trust, Mirroring, Negotiation, Decision-Making and Connecting, are backed by a tremendous amount of research on the biological and psychological factors he’s uncovered.

We are fascinated by the concept of “skin hunger” discussed in Episode 1, and how “not physically being able to touch someone—shake hands, hug, kiss—had a real impact.”

“Touch builds trust,” he says, and oxytocin—one of those neurochemicals Radha mentioned—comes into play. Often called the “love hormone,” higher levels of oxytocin also affect trust, friendship, relationships and warmth. Additionally, oxytocin is released when we physically touch.

He notes, “It’s really interesting to know that, yes, we say we’re social creatures as humans. We’re also physical creatures, too. And that’s not just being around other people. It’s being able to touch them, too.”

WATCH Jonathan’s #WeLoveLive videos here.
welovelive.tv »



In a business context, meeting face-to-face outperforms meeting virtually in so many different areas



BACK TO NORMAL WITH A MULTI-FACETED APPROACH TO SAFETY

COVID-19 restrictions are loosening in an ever-changing scenario. Our calendars are filling up once again, with major, in-person events increasingly resuming. The excitement for the return of IMEX America to Las Vegas this November intensifies. A growing list of exhibitors from around the world has been confirmed, and attendees are already registering, with both parties preparing to do business face-to-face. Our entire industry, of course, looks forward to things coming back bigger and better than before. This show will be a much-anticipated restart for the whole industry.

Being a big trade show, hosted in the US capital of conventions, means we take especially serious responsibility for our thousands of participants. And that simply begs the question: How can we ensure not just the physical safety of everyone, but their emotional and psychological well-being, too?

We have been through so much. But while humans share many characteristics, we also differ in personalities and preferences. Most of us have changed—some of us a lot—while others remain unaltered. Many can't wait to throw their arms around friends. Others now find it strange, even unsettling or scary, just to be mixing and mingling closely with only a few people, much less crowds of them. Some will continue to shy away from being touched, which may or may not have been their preference all along!

How do we avoid settling into old habits easily, deal with and manage our energy and emotions appropriately and make allowances for everyone in our planning? »



HOW CAN WE ENSURE NOT JUST THE PHYSICAL SAFETY OF EVERYONE, BUT THEIR EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING, TOO?





INTERACTING AND LEADING FROM A PLACE OF EMPATHY

NAVIGATING A WORLD OF INTROVERTS AND EXTROVERTS

As an industry that crafts events, we should always be mindful and respectful of each other's personalities, needs and boundaries, and accommodate them, particularly in the coming months. Even if you feel comfortable, recognise that others—your colleagues, clients, attendees, suppliers—might not.

On the surface, it would seem we are an industry and a community populated by "people persons." In fact, human beings encompass different personality types, across several dimensions. We're starting to hear more and more about them lately, as we re-emerge and navigate this new landscape.

In essence, Carl Jung introduced the terms extraversion (also spelled "extroversion") and introversion into psychology, and they have since become the central traits in some human personality theories. According to the Myers & Briggs Foundation:

» Extraverts receive energy from active involvement, are seen as outgoing, and tend to like working in groups, know many people and be excited around them, have a variety of friends, prefer talking about things out loud, jump into activities quickly without thinking things through, and sometimes forget to clarify their purpose before starting projects.

» Introverts receive energy from their "inner world," like the ideas, pictures, memories and reactions inside their heads. They tend to prefer doing things alone and knowing just a few people well, are seen as reserved, take time to reflect before acting, and sometimes don't act quickly enough or check to see if their ideas truly fit the outside-world experience.

Learn more about Myers and Briggs research: myersbriggs.org

Perhaps, like us, you've also been hearing the terms "empathy" and "empath" more frequently. The American Psychological Association defines "empathy" as "understanding a person from his or her frame of reference rather than one's own, or vicariously experiencing that person's feelings, perceptions, and thoughts."

Your empathy can "turn into sympathy or personal distress, which may result in action" to be of assistance. Not everyone who experiences empathy is an actual empath, though. One Psychology Today article describes the extra-sensitive empath as "an emotional sponge who absorbs both the positivity and the stress of people and the world. Empaths need to learn strategies to keep their energy high and stop taking on other people's distress."

Earlier this year, we caught a great "Dare to Interrupt" podcast by Meetings Today, featuring an interview with Megan Henshall, CMP, DES, Google's Global Events Account Manager. When asked to describe herself in one positive word, we were intrigued to hear her choose "sensitive."

"I'm an empath," she says. "I've always been a pretty emotionally sensitive person."

For most of her life, she considered it a personality flaw. Now, though, having "flexed that resiliency, confidence muscle a lot," she sees it as "an incredible strength."

It makes her sensitive and open to possibilities—and other human beings. She can strategise with a human-centered approach, because she feels what other people feel and can put herself in other people's shoes.

While that doesn't always feel good, she says, "I think it's a superpower in a way and really helps me come from an empathetic place."

Learn more about the American Psychological Association www.apa.org

Take the "Are You an Empath?" Self-Assessment Test psychologytoday.com/us/blog

Hear Megan's podcast interview meetingstoday.com/podcasts »

AS AN INDUSTRY THAT CRAFTS EVENTS, WE SHOULD ALWAYS BE MINDFUL AND RESPECTFUL OF EACH OTHER'S PERSONALITIES, NEEDS AND BOUNDARIES, AND ACCOMMODATE THEM, PARTICULARLY IN THE COMING MONTHS.



9

RE-ENTRY ANXIETY AND TIPS ON HANDLING IT

With your own empathy fully engaged, you might recognise that while some people are ecstatic to come back to in-person events, others feel off balance and disoriented.

The pandemic has been a fearful, stress-inducing time, and now we're confronting what's being called "re-entry anxiety." It ranges in severity, and in causes, from managing vaccination anxiety, to figuring out how to remain physically protected, to getting comfortable with going mask-less and to adjusting to being in social situations after avoiding them for so long.

In case you missed it, we shared this eye-opening Smart Meetings article in a recent edition of our newsletter **IMEXfiles**. There's interesting food for thought here, which can benefit our industry as we figure out ideas for understanding and accommodating each other:

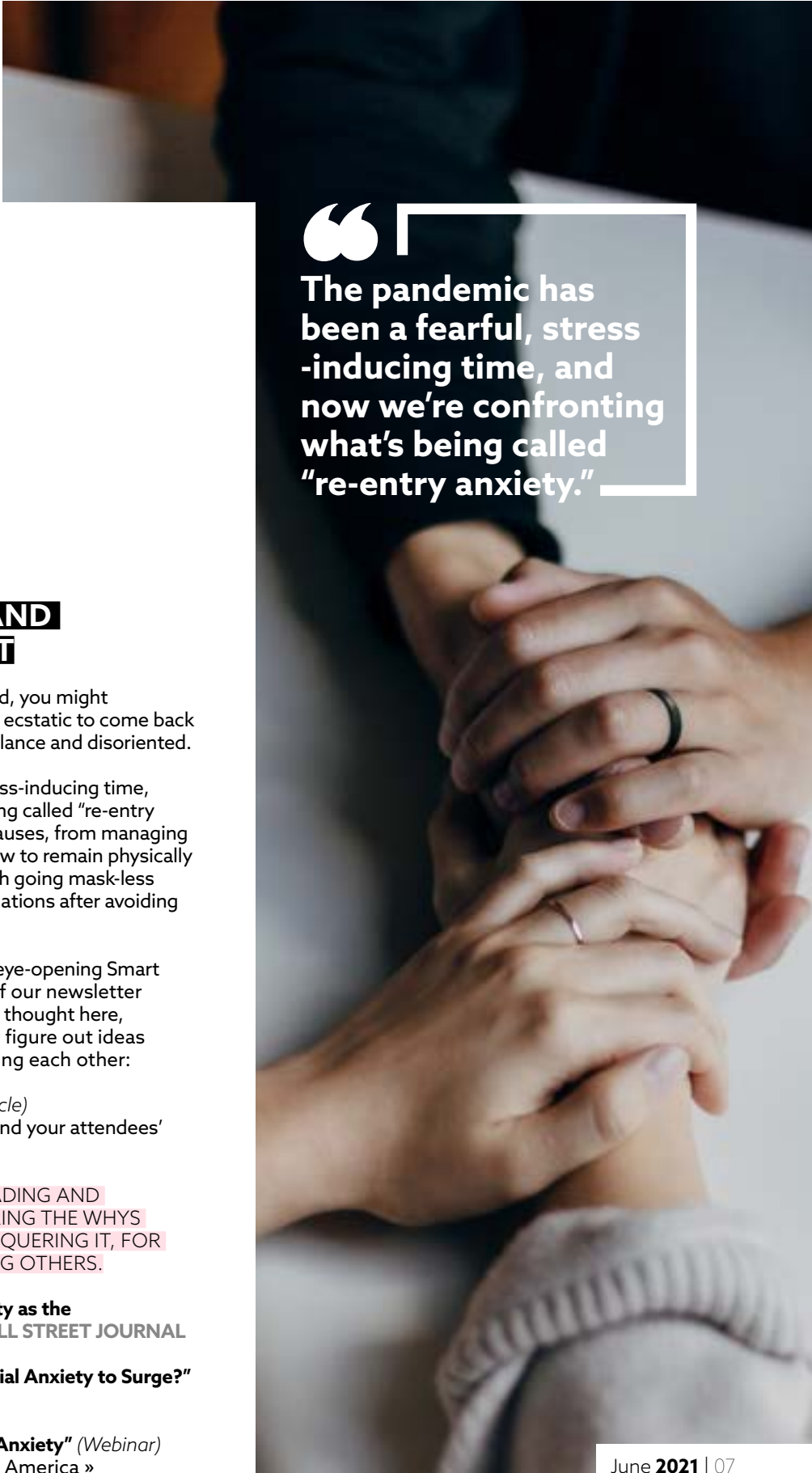
"How to Overcome Covid Brain" (Article)
Tips for calming yourself, your team and your attendees' meeting jitters. **SMART MEETINGS**

HERE'S MORE RECOMMENDED READING AND WATCHING ON THIS TOPIC, COVERING THE WHYS BEHIND IT AND THE HOWS IN CONQUERING IT, FOR YOURSELF AND/OR IN SUPPORTING OTHERS.

"How to Handle Your Re-Entry Anxiety as the Pandemic Recedes" (Article) **THE WALL STREET JOURNAL**

"Is COVID Re-Entry Causing Your Social Anxiety to Surge?" (Article) **PSYCHOLOGY TODAY**

"How to Overcome COVID Re-Entry Anxiety" (Webinar)
Anxiety & Depression Association of America »



“
The pandemic has been a fearful, stress-inducing time, and now we're confronting what's being called "re-entry anxiety.”

10

JUST BREATHING CAN HELP

"We breathe on average 20,000 times a day, yet most of us are unaware of its incredible ability to transform the way we feel," says Stuart Sandeman from Breathpod. "Most assume the autonomic action of everyday breathing is sufficient. The truth is many people breathe in shallow and constricted patterns."

One way to change our reaction to modern stress is to learn how to belly breathe instead of chest breathe. According to a Harvard Health blog post, "Belly breathing stimulates the vagus nerve. This activates your relaxation response, reducing your heart rate and blood pressure and lowering stress levels." An additional post also states that, "deep abdominal breathing encourages full oxygen exchange—that is, the beneficial trade of incoming oxygen for outgoing carbon dioxide. Not surprisingly, it can slow the heartbeat and lower or stabilise blood pressure."

We suggest checking out the videos of Andrew D. Huberman, Ph.D. He's Principal Investigator/Lab Head of the Huberman Lab, part of the Department of Neurology at Stanford University in California. The videos feature the lab's research on how the human brain works, how it can change through experience, and even how to repair brain circuits damaged by injury or disease.

But if you or someone else can benefit from a method for feeling calm in real time, without having to leave or disengage from the stress-inducing activity, watch the one called "Reduce Anxiety & Stress with the Physiological Sigh."

In that video, he shares a pattern of breathing that involves two inhales, followed by an extended exhale. This incredible tool was discovered in the 1930s, and he explains the fascinating science and how-to steps behind it. »



WE BREATHE ON
AVERAGE 20,000 TIMES A DAY,
YET MOST OF US ARE UNAWARE
OF ITS INCREDIBLE ABILITY
TO TRANSFORM THE
WAY WE FEEL"



VISIT Stuart Sandeman's
Breathpod site

**BREATH CONTROL HELPS
quell errant stress response**
(article)

**EASE ANXIETY AND
STRESS: Take a (belly)
breather** *(article)*

VIEW the Huberman Lab
video.



How to be a good human.

Before we sign off, let's promise ourselves that we'll remember and treasure our humanity—those qualities of empathy, understanding, kindness, compassion and generosity—as we meet our fellow humans face-to-face again.

In “building forward better”, let's share and integrate what we've now learned into how we manage ourselves and our events, balancing both to leave everyone healthier and happier than before.

We can't wait to see you face-to-face at IMEX America. Register here.

