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Your Brain Called. It Wants a Raise.

John F. Edwards, CSP

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Your Brain Called. It Wants a Raise.

It was such an awesome privilege to be the closing keynote speaker at the recent AENC event in Concord. We explored the neuroscience behind improving your day, your team, and your association relationships.

If you missed my session at the AENC conference, don't worry. Your brain won't hold it against you. Mine barely remembers where I left my coffee most mornings. The good news is that the science of better thinking doesn't require a neuroscience degree. It simply requires a few intentional habits.

Here are a few of the key takeaways from my presentation.

Protect your cognitive capacity. Your brain was never designed to process nonstop emails, endless notifications, AI updates, and back-to-back meetings without a breather. High performance isn't about squeezing more into the day. It's about protecting the mental energy you already have. It's ok to join famous Dozers like Einstein (true story) and even sneak a nap in now and then.

Start your day on purpose. The first few minutes of your morning matter more than most people realize. Before your "not-so-smart phone" hijacks your attention, choose what deserves your best thinking. Carve out deliberate time, as soon as you can, to focus on something uplifting and encouraging for your brain.

Connection beats complexity. Association professionals know this instinctively. Neuroscience confirms it. Strong relationships reduce uncertainty, increase trust, and improve collaboration. In challenging times, people don't just need more information. They need more meaningful connection. I shared the B-Plan™ as a tactical approach for doing this on a daily basis.

Purpose fuels resilience. When the pace of change accelerates, your "why" becomes your anchor. Leaders with clarity of purpose make better decisions, recover faster from setbacks, and inspire confidence in others. You do amazing work, but sometimes we need to remind our brains by articulating it out loud.

Attention is your competitive advantage. In a world competing for every second of your focus, the ability to concentrate has become a leadership superpower. Guard it fiercely. Your brain will thank you. Your members will too. Our brains function in a cyclical manner, so try to give yourself a pause every 45-60 minutes... at a minimum. Let me share a little more about this in a video that I recorded just for you! Go ahead and watch it here... I'll be here waiting when you are done with the video. 😊 [Watch here](#).

Welcome back. You can probably tell that I had fun recording that for you. If you truly want to nerd out on this stuff, you can read the research article here: [Zhuang, M., et al. \(2026\). Acute cognitive effects of interruptions to prolonged sitting with brief standing or physical activity breaks: A systematic review and three-level meta-analysis. International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity.](#)

So, this week, commit to building your best brain by protecting your attention, strengthening at least one relationship, and intentionally taking brain breaks. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of your incredible conference. It was a privilege to spend time with such dedicated association professionals who are making a difference every day.

About the Author

John F. Edwards, CSP, equips leaders and organizations to thrive in a world of uncertainty and constant change. Through the practical application of neuroscience coupled with awesome stories and humor, he helps audiences strengthen resilience, sharpen focus, improve decision-making, and build the leadership habits that create lasting success.

Association audiences appreciate John's ability to transform complex brain science into immediately actionable strategies they can use to engage members more effectively, navigate uncertainty with greater confidence, and lead with greater influence in an AI-driven world. A former Fortune 100 leader and Certified Speaking Professional (CSP), a distinction earned by fewer than 18% of professional speakers worldwide, John has inspired global audiences across corporate, government, and association sectors. His mission is simple: empower people to build a better brain today so they can achieve extraordinary results tomorrow.

His most popular book, [Build Your Best Brain](#), provides a neuroscience-based roadmap for protecting cognitive capacity and accelerating success in an increasingly demanding world. For more information on John: theedwardsgroups.com

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