Want to be more productive? Stop working.

Not permanently, of course. As little as 10 minutes a day will do, but during that time, you need to “break the train of everyday thinking,” according to Herbert Benson, MD, founder of The Benson-Henry Institute for Mind Body Medicine (BHI). He will explain how during “The Relaxation Response: How to Counteract the Harmful Effects of Stress,” a Special Webinar Series webinar to be held at 12:30 p.m. on April 8, 2015. To register, click here.

Stress is a physiological response to change that alerts the “fight-or-flight” response in the brain. It can be unhealthy and, in fact, is responsible for scores of illnesses, costing the economy hundreds of billions of dollars a year, according to Benson.

But stress can also be good. Athletes, artists, and other top performers learn to channel “eustress,” or positive stress, which helps them perform to their best potential, to think more clearly, and to be more creative.

The seemingly contradictory impact of stress was discovered more than a century ago by Robert Yerkes and John Dodson, who found that as stress increases, so does performance and proficiency, but only to a certain point, and beyond that point it has a negative impact. They created the Yerkes-Dodson curve to illustrate the impact of stress.

The key to suppressing bad stress is what he calls the “relaxation response,” which can be used to prevent stress from affecting a person’s health. While it will not be covered in his presentation, Benson also developed the “breakout principle,” which converts stress into a positive force, improving a person’s ability to think and perform to his or her best ability.
The Robert A. Foisie School of Business is rooted in WPI’s strengths in technology, engineering, and science, and is known for developing innovative and entrepreneurial leaders for a global technological world. The part-time MBA program at the Foisie School of Business has been ranked number one in the northeast by Businessweek since 2007. The undergraduate programs for entrepreneurship and information systems were ranked number one in the country, and the operations management program was ranked number four by Businessweek in 2013.