



The Torch



Edition #16

Foreword from the Chairman



Dear All in St. Dunstan's

What a year this has been! In January we were looking at how we would plan a Pumula Reunion, how our lads would link up with Project Gemini 2020 in the UK.

None of this happened, instead we have been urged to stay home, to be careful as we find ways of caring both for ourselves and for one another – washing hands, learning new ways of doing things, indulging in new pastimes, such as Pieter has shown us in his garden.

It remains for me to wish each and every one in St Dunstan's a safe and happy holiday and festive season, a blessed Christmas to those who celebrate and a joyous New Year.

May 2021 be a year of especially good times for us all.

Stay safe

Dave

Project Guideline uses AI to help partially sighted runners navigate



NOVEMBER 23, 2020 7:54 AM

Google, with collaboration with nonprofit organization Guiding Eyes for the Blind, has piloted an AI system called Project Guideline, designed to help blind and partially sighted people run races independently.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in 2015, a total of 1.02 million people in the U.S. were blind and approximately 3.22 million people are visually impaired. Technologies exist to help blind and low-vision people navigate challenging everyday environments, but those who wish to run must either rely on a guide animal or a human guide who's tethered to them.

How does Project Guideline work?

Using an app on an Android smartphone that tracks the virtual race via GPS and a Google-designed harness that delivered audio prompts to indicate the location of a painted line.

Users wear an Android phone around the waist using the aforementioned harness; the Guideline app runs a machine learning model that looks for the painted line and identifies it. (The model, which emerged from a Google hackathon, accounts for variables in weather and lighting conditions.) Then, the app approximates the user's position and delivers audio feedback via bone-conducting headphones to help keep them on the guideline. If the user is to the left of the line, they'll hear audio in their left ear increase in volume and dissonance, and if the user moves to the right of the line, the same will happen in their right ear.

Is the app using the internet to navigate?

Google's Guideline app works without an internet connection and requires only a guideline painted on a pedestrian path.

Are there any other plans for Guideline after the project?

Beyond the pilot with Guiding Eyes for the Blind CEO Thomas Panek, Google plans to partner with organizations to help paint guidelines in different communities and provide additional feedback.

The launch of Guideline comes after Google debuted more in-depth spoken directions for Maps, which inform users when to turn and tell them when they're approaching an intersection so they can exercise caution when crossing. The company also continues to develop Lookout, an accessibility-focused app that can identify packaged foods using computer vision, scan documents to make it easier to review letters and mail, and more.

For the Youtube video click [here](#)

Source: [Cool Blind Tech](#)

10 Ways to Deal with Feeling Overwhelmed



Keeping up with work. Paying rent. Feeding yourself. Dealing with family issues. Maintaining relationships. Dealing with the 24-hour news cycle. These are just a few of the things that might be swirling around in your head at any given moment.

Feeling overwhelmed is one of the less enjoyable aspects of being human, but it happens to everyone at some point. And it's not unusual to occasionally find yourself thinking I can't take it anymore, especially when you can't seem to catch a break.

If you're constantly on edge or feel like your bubble's about to burst, practicing mindfulness can be a big help.

"Mindfulness itself is simply the process of paying attention in a nonjudgmental manner," says psychiatrist Pooja Lakshmin, MD. You can practice it in many ways, from focusing on your breath to walking around the block while noticing the colors and sounds around you.

Feel like practicing mindfulness is just one more thing to stress over? Try the 10 tips below for building it into your daily routine.

If you need help now

If you're considering suicide or have thoughts of harming yourself, you can call the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration at 800-662-HELP (4357).

The 24/7 hotline will connect you with mental health resources in your area. Trained specialists can also help you find your state's resources for treatment if you don't have health insurance.

1. Learn some grounding exercises

If you find yourself overwhelmed and anxious, one of the fastest ways to ground yourself is to focus on your senses, says Lakshmin. "Any activity that brings you into your body will help minimize the anxious chatter in your brain."

This can be as easy as sitting in your office chair, sliding off your shoes, and putting both feet on the floor. "Feel the ground under your toes," says Lakshmin. "What does it feel like?"

Listening to music or actively taking in all the surrounding smells on a walk can be a grounding exercise.

We've also got 30 more grounding techniques you can do just about anywhere.

2. Do a body scan meditation

A quick mindfulness exercise like a body scan can be really helpful in dealing with stress, according to licensed clinical psychologist Annie Hsueh, PhD.

"You can scan your body from head to toe, and when you notice any tension in your muscles, simply release that tension."

How to do a body scan

You can practice this exercise on the bus, at your desk, on the couch — anywhere, really.

Find a comfortable place to sit where you can have both feet firmly on the floor. Close your eyes.

Bring awareness to your feet and how they feel touching the floor.

Slowly bring that awareness all the way up, through your legs, torso, chest, and head.

As you become aware of different areas of your body, notice any places that feel tense or tight.

Release the tension if you can, but don't stress if you can't. Simply acknowledge it and move on.

Gently open your eyes.

3. Pause and take a deep breath

You've heard it a hundred times, but pausing and taking a deep breath can make a world of difference, says psychiatrist Indra Cidambi, MD. "When you feel overwhelmed, your breathing becomes shallow and anxiety spikes."

The next time you feel yourself getting overwhelmed:

Try closing your eyes. With one hand on your heart and one hand on your belly, focus on deep breaths from your diaphragm.

Count to five between each inhale and exhale.

Repeat at least 10 times, or more if needed. This will immediately slow your heart rate and provide a much-needed oxygen boost to your bloodstream.

4. Strip down your notifications

It's easy for your mind to be hijacked by constant notifications from your phone. They might not feel like much of an interruption, but over time, they can deplete your attention and emotional resources.

If possible, turn off notifications for things that aren't absolutely necessary, such as news alerts, social media notifications, and your work email (especially after business hours).

You can take it a step further by making a conscious effort to turn off your phone for a set amount of time each day.

5. Step away

Sometimes, the best thing to do when you're overwhelmed is to step away for a few moments, says Cidambi.

"There are clear links between sunshine, nature, and mood. Even a 5-minute walk around the block can help you return to your tasks more refreshed and focused," she says.

6. Avoid leaning on substances

According to Cidambi, you should also avoid leaning on substances like alcohol or drugs to help manage your feelings. "While it may provide a temporary relief, the after-effects can exacerbate anxiety, overwhelm, and stress," she explains.

Plus, these substances can both tamper with your sleeping and eating habits, which won't do your mind any favors.

The next time you're tempted to reach for a beer in a moment of stress, take a moment to go through this list and see if there's something else that would work for you.

7. Create your own method for self-soothing

Hsueh recommends self-soothing by focusing on your five senses to help reduce emotional overload. Grab something that your senses find comforting and keep it around for moments of high stress.

Find what soothes you

Consider these questions to help you find soothers for all of your senses:

Vision. What's something beautiful that you see around you? Do you have a favorite piece of art?

Hearing. What sounds are pleasant or soothing to you? This could be music, the sound of your cat purring, or anything else you find calming.

Smell. Do you have a favorite fragrance? Is there a candle you find particularly soothing?

Taste. What's your favorite taste? What food reminds you of a happy memory?

Touch. Do you have a favorite blanket or chair? Can you take a warm bath or put on a favorite sweater?

8. Write it down

Journaling is an incredibly effective tool for managing stressors. "This allows you to work through your feelings and even develop a plan for managing them by simply putting pen to paper," says Cidambi.

When you're feeling overwhelmed, it can be hard to put pen to paper. To make things easier, just pick one or two things that are on your mind or focus on a single emotion.

9. Plan ahead

Feelings of anxiety and overwhelm often stem from feeling out of control. Stay two steps ahead of yourself by identifying potentially stressful situations ahead of time.

Of course, you can't do this with everything, but if you know you have a big meeting next week, arrange for some extra support or carve out some time to de-stress afterward.

You could also:

Ask friends or family to help out with childcare when you know you have a busy day.

Pre-plan some meals to remove that burden.

Alert your partner that you might need additional support.

Tell your colleagues that you'll be busy on a specific project and aren't going to be open to taking on more work for a few days.

10. Reach out for help

Don't underestimate the power of leaning on loved ones when you're having a hard time. "Turn toward your friends or family for support," says Hsueh. "You can even let them know how best to support you — would you like them to complete a task with you, do fun activities with you, or listen to you vent?"

Working with a therapist can also help you identify what's overwhelming you and develop tools for dealing with stress and anxiety. Concerned about the cost? Our guide to therapy for every budget can help.

Source : [Health Line](#)

This braille device will control your smartphone



NOVEMBER 9, 2020 4:12 AM

This start-up from Eindhoven University of Technology (TU/e) introduces the Hable, enabling blind people to operate their smartphone with braille.

The smartphone has become an important part of our work and daily life. However, the touch interface of a smartphone can be difficult to use for some blind and visually impaired people. Hable wants to change that with a device that enables blind and visually impaired people to use their smartphone with braille.

“Many innovations in our market are still based on the braille type machine of yesteryear. We have changed that by focusing on the smartphone,” says Freek van Welsenis, co-founder of Hable.

The founders work from their passion to make the blind and visually impaired more independent. When Ayushman Talwar, co-founder, created the first prototype of the Hable One to help his blind grandfather, he never expected it to grow into a full-fledged start-up. The team has one clear mission: to make the world digitally accessible for everyone.

What exactly is the Hable?

The Hable is a separate device that is paired with the smartphone which allows the blind and visually impaired to type and navigate through it. With its six keys they can type all letters, numbers and punctuation based on braille. With the two function keys the phone can be controlled through VoiceOver and TalkBack software. This is located on every smartphone and ensures that every action is spoken to the user. The smartphone itself can stay in the user’s bag or pocket while they are calling or using an app.

What kind of feedback is the Hable receiving from the blind community?

Last summer Hable performed a test with 40 blind and visually impaired people. After two weeks, 85 percent of the participants said they would like to keep the product. Afterwards, half of the participants actually purchased it. “The test period went better than expected. Participants were immediately very enthusiastic,” says Welsenis. “This allowed us to enter the market more quickly.”

The initial ideas for the product came from the innovation community at Innovation Space at the Eindhoven University of Technology, Netherlands. Later, Hable became part of the accelerator Sparkplug. That’s where the team was able to take the final steps to the market. “Sparkplug has a lot of knowledge and experience in setting up and running a company. That’s why, for example, they help us create a strategy,” Welsenis explains.

Are there any other applications for this device?

The Hable One has only just arrived on the market, but the team is already thinking about other ways to make smartphones accessible to a larger audience. “Currently we are focusing mainly on people who are blind or very partially sighted. In the future, we also want to look at solutions for people with a milder visual impairment,” says Welsenis. “This is a completely different market where we can help many more people.”

Source: [Cool Blind Tech](#)

Beneficiary News



Jose Barnardo received his Audio Bible from St Dunstan's and he is extremely grateful. The Bible is bilingual, English and Portuguese to further support him in his goal to improve his grasp of the English language.

Jose said: "The Bible is my Book of Salvation. It contains everything I need to survive. I am very happy that I can listen to my Bible on a daily basis now. St Dunstan's granted me an opportunity I thought I might never get."



Pieter Engelbrecht found a new hobby during the lockdown period - gardening.

Pieter said: "It is very therapeutic and a good way to pass the time." He continues to experiment with different type of plants and feels very relaxed whenever he planted something.

Office Closure



Please note that our office will be closed from the 18th December 2020 and open again on the 11th January 2021. On behalf of everyone at St Dunstan's we wish you a healthy, safe and happy holiday season.