Breathing For Relaxation or Energy Boost

**Relaxation Breathing**
The 4-7-8 Breath (also known as the Relaxing Breath) was developed by Dr. Andrew Weil as a technique to quickly put you in a relaxed state. It can be done anywhere but many people use it to help themselves fall asleep.

Although you can do the exercise in any position, sit with your back straight while learning the exercise. Place the tip of your tongue against the ridge of tissue just behind your upper front teeth, and keep it there through the entire exercise. You will be exhaling through your mouth around your tongue; try pursing your lips slightly if this seems awkward.

1) Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound.
2) Close your mouth and inhale quietly through your nose to a mental count of four.
3) Hold your breath for a count of seven.
4) Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound to a count of eight.
5) This is one breath. Now inhale again and repeat the cycle three more times for a total of four breaths.

Note that you always inhale quietly through your nose and exhale audibly through your mouth. The tip of your tongue stays in position the whole time. Exhalation takes twice as long as inhalation.

The absolute time you spend on each phase is not important; the ratio of 4:7:8 is important. If you have trouble holding your breath, speed the exercise up but keep to the ratio 4:7:8 for the three phases. With practice you can slow it down and get used to inhaling and exhaling more and more deeply.

**Energy Breathing**
Energy Breathing is adapted from yogic breathing techniques. It aims to boost energy and increase alertness.

1) Inhale and exhale rapidly through your nose, keeping your mouth closed but relaxed. Your breaths in and out should be equal in duration, but as short as possible.
2) Try for three in-and-out breath cycles per second. This produces a quick movement of the diaphragm. Breathe normally after each cycle.

Do not do for more than 15 seconds on your first try. Each time you practice the Energy Breath, you can increase your time by five seconds or so, until you reach a full minute.

If done properly, you may feel invigorated. You should feel the effort at the back of the neck, the diaphragm, the chest and the abdomen. Try this diaphragmatic breathing exercise the next time you need an energy boost.
The Little Voice in Our Heads

Whether we are conscious of it or not, we go around all day talking to ourselves. We interpret everything we experience and encounter. Our perception is due to that little voice in our heads. It tells us why something happened, how we should respond, and what to think of ourselves and others. This internal conversation is called “self-talk.”

Self-talk assigns labels to everything: This is great, irritating, awesome, terrible, boring etc. So what’s the problem with that? Well, self-talk can sometimes be inaccurate, too harsh or jump to conclusions. When this happens, it is called negative self-talk.

We all have negative self-talk sometimes. The problem is that our thoughts directly lead to how we feel. Negative self-talk = negative feelings. We get into a pattern of thinking it and believing it without stepping back to examine the evidence or look at it from a different perspective.

Being able to catch negative self-talk is critical. The good news is that all negative self-talk has the same pattern. The words themselves box you and others in, leaving no room for possibilities or solutions. Negative self-talk exaggerates, are inaccurate or focus solely on the negative aspects.

- There is no use
- I can’t do it
- People won’t like me
- I’m not enough
- I must be perfect
- People always let me down
- I’ll never be enough

- Should be this way

Challenging self-talk means testing it for accuracy.

**Reality testing**
- What is the evidence for and against my thinking?
- Is it a fact or an interpretation?
- Am I jumping to conclusions?
- How can I find out if my thought is true?

**Alternative explanations**
- What are the other ways to look at this?
- What else could this mean?

**Perspective**
- Is this situation as bad as it feels?
- What is the worst that can happen?...how likely will it occur?
- What is the best that can happen?
- What is likely to happen? Will this matter in five years?

**Goal Directed thinking**
- Is thinking this way helpful?
- What can I do to solve the problem?
- What can I learn from this situation for next time?

Learning to challenge negative self-talk takes some practice but the pay off is big in that it will positively impact your mood and conflict management skills.

Recognize it when we hear it, “Oh, that is negative self-talk”, and work to not simply accept it at face value. Pay attention to what you are telling yourself, because after all, you are listening!

Build Assertiveness

Assertiveness is a way of thinking and behaving that allows you to “stand up” for yourself without disrespecting others. It is in essence, advocating for yourself. Assertiveness is the middle ground between passivity and aggressiveness.

Passive thoughts and behavior down play or ignore what we want and need. We end up bottling up our emotions and often this leads to feeling anger, guilt, and shame. We may not “rock the boat” for fear of not being liked or accepted. In the end, this leaves us feeling pretty helpless and negatively impacts self-image and self confidence.

Aggressive thoughts and behavior disregard and disrespect others in an attempt to achieve personal gains. This often leads to defensiveness and blaming others.

**Building Assertiveness**

1. Value your opinion as much as those of others.
2. Know your needs and wants. Practice expressing them without infringing on the rights of others. Be specific.
3. Be open to feedback. Accept compliments! If a mistake is made, own it and think about how to improve next time.
4. Practice saying “no”. Set limits and identify alternatives. Try Empathic Assertion: “I know you’ve been overwhelmed planning this party but I can’t help you today. What I can do is run some errands for you this weekend.”
What makes change so difficult in an organization? Usually, we are pretty good about identifying and quickly addressing the structural side of changes. We move walls, efficiently change a process, procedure or task. Change consultant William Bridges wrote a book titled “Managing Transitions” that argued people don’t simply change on the spot, rather, people go through a psychological transition:

**Ending/Loss Phase**

Changes, even positive ones are difficult for people. We “grieve” changes like any other loss:

- Denial
- Anxiety
- Anger
- Sadness

A helpful management strategy is to expect these feelings, acknowledge, identify and label them. Don’t try to talk people out of their emotions. There may be a lot of comfort, attachment, and identification with the “old way.” Instead, know that grief is part of the process, and communicate AGAIN and AGAIN. As soon as possible, communicate the big picture goal(s) and overall vision. Set clear expectations and make your leadership visible. Walk around and talk with staff.

People experiencing a change often feel “robbed”, “cheated” or that something has been taken away. Look for how to balance this sense of loss, “what can I give to balance what has been taken way?” Focus on low hanging fruit, easy wins, and benchmarks to build some momentum. Be careful not to overly criticize the old way or the past. Instead, emphasize continuity and how the past laid the foundation for the future.

**Transition/Neutral Phase**

In this phase people flounder between holding on to the old, exploring, and testing the new. This phase is characterized by skepticism, confusion, and resistance. One may expect a decrease in productivity. However, if managed positively, this phase may lead to new innovation and creativity.

Positive management strategies in the “Transition/Neutral Phase” center on involving staff. Encourage and invite feedback, collaboration and have peers share their areas of success. Along the way provide concrete direction and guidance to questions and concerns. Allow for the withdrawal and return of those that are still resistant (approach/avoidance).

**New Beginning Phase**

Individuals in this phase are embracing the change more readily. They are building new skills and seeing some success. Energy is high and there is a new commitment in their role or group.

Helpful management strategies involves building upon the Transition/Neutral Phase. Incorporate feedback received from employees in the change as much as possible. Tweak and customize as you continue to paint a picture of what the future will look like. Identify and verbalize how the employee, workgroup or department has gained from the change.

No matter where you’re at in the transition phase, check-in often with staff. Ask, how are you doing? What are you thinking? What are you feeling? How can I help?

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**Managing Change: New Beginning Phase**

- **Uncertainty**
- **Excitement**
- **Creativity**
- **Innovation**
- **New Beginning**

- **Confusion**
- **Anticipation**
- **Resignation**
- **Frustration**
- **Disbelief**

- **Skepticism**
- **Exploration**

Adapted from Managing Transitions, William Bridges
EAP Mission Statement

It is the mission of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to assist employees who develop behavioral/emotional problems that may directly affect their work performance, and to provide Key Personnel with policy and procedural guidelines for the management of these problems.

Change Questions

Whether you are trying to stop using alcohol/drugs, end an unhealthy relationship or lose a few extra pounds, forethought and planning will increase your success. Answer these questions before getting started:

- What change do I want to make?
- How important is it (1-10 scale)? A high rating indicates change readiness
- How confident am I (1-10 scale)? A low rating may mean extra thought on identifying obstacles and resources to help
- What are the most important reasons I want to make this change?
- The steps I plan to take toward the change?
- Who can help me (be specific)? What kind of help can they give?
- I’ll know my plan is working when?
- Things that can interfere with my plan are?

City of Milwaukee Events and Reminders

- Not feeling well? Visit the Workplace Clinic (841 N. Broadway, Milwaukee, WI. 53202 (Zeidler Municipal Building) for no cost onsite health care services. Call 414-777-3413 for information or to schedule an appointment.
- Free screening, consultation, and education services to prevent and treat potential musculoskeletal injuries. Schedule an appointment with a physical therapist at the Early Intervention PT Clinic. Call 414-777-3413 to schedule an appointment.
- Health4Me™ is a United Health Care (UHC) mobile app that provides instant access to your family’s critical health information, anytime/anywhere. Find a physician, check the status of a claim or speak directly with a healthcare professional.

How To Give Difficult Advice

Someone you care about is blind to the consequences they’re experiencing. You are concerned that if it continues things will get worse. You want to give some advice but are unsure how it will be received, especially since it isn’t being asked for.

The Integrated Model of Advice-Giving (IMA) offers three steps that are followed in order:

1. Show emotional support and empathy
2. Provide justification/evidence for the advice (be specific)
3. Offer the advice

"Jim, I know you’ve been working hard interviewing for jobs. Making a positive first impression is critical and it’s easy for interviewers to dismiss candidates that arrive in gym shoes. My advice would be to dress business casual.”

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