

## 7 THINGS YOU CAN DO DURING THE DAY TO REDUCE STRESS AND INCREASE OVERALL ENERGY

Working long hours, having a phone glued to your ear, sitting hunched over a computer desk, skipping lunch and rarely taking a break can and will take a toll on your overall well-being and mental health. Make time for yourself during the day! You are never too busy to take proper care of yourself. When you are taking better care of yourself you will notice you naturally have more energy, you will feel less stressed out, will generally feel happier and you will find you are more present for those in your life! I am a 200 h RYT (registered yoga teacher) and I believe a body in motion stays in motion. You should try to take at least 30 minutes a day to stretch, move and breathe properly. Here are 7 things I do during the day to keep myself moving, healthy and happy!

### **Here are my seven quick tips to feeling better during the day:**

1. **STRETCH:** Moving your body and connecting with your breath during the day is a great way to kick-start your mind to future tasks. Stretching during the day will keep you positive, build confidence, strengthen your body, relive headaches, neck and back strain, improve posture, decrease the risk of carpal tunnel syndrome and decrease work related injuries from repetitive motion. If you have the time maybe think of getting to a yoga class before or after work. If you don't have the time here are 5 stretches you can do at your desk (standing or sitting).
  - (a) **Palms up stretch** - Reach your arms up with interlaced hands, palms to the sky, hold for 30 seconds or more. Then reach over to the right side and then the left side for approximately 15 seconds or more.
  - (b) **Seated forward bend** - Keep both feet on the ground and fold forward in your chair, belly thighs and let your head and neck hang. Keep your breath long and deep.
  - (c) **Thoracic Spinal movement** - Make robot arms with your arms and repeatedly turn to one side and then the other.
  - (d) **Seated Cat/Cows** - Squeeze your shoulder blades together on an inhale and on an exhale press your chest forward and then round the back for seated cat/cows.
  - (e) **Seated Hip Stretch** – Start with both feet flat on the floor, cross one leg over the other (the top of your ankle should be on the top of your knee, so your legs look like the number 4) if you need more of a stretch for the hips begin to fold forward, belly to thighs.
  
2. **BREATHE:** Proper breathing is vital to our overall health and well-being. You likely don't pay much attention to your breath, you do it all day long and it has become completely automatic. It is the only thing we cannot live without for 2 minutes. When we become stressed our breath tends to become shorter and we begin to breathe only into the chest, which can send our bodies into a fight or flight response and create more stress hormones in the body by decreasing the oxygen levels in our brains and in our blood stream. Deep breathing is the most powerful stress reduction technique we can use. There are many different breathing techniques you can use to slow the body down,

increase the supply of oxygen in the blood and to the brain and promote a state of calmness. Here is an example of my favourite breath exercise:

(a) Sit up nice and tall with both feet flat on the floor. You can take the hands into the lap or palms facing up beside the body. Close the eyes and deeply inhale for a slow count of 5 and exhale for a slow count of 8. I recommend taking about 10 to 20 rounds or more if you feel comfortable. I am very visual so I like to picture the ocean. On my inhale I picture the waves coming into the shore and on the exhale I picture the waves moving outwards into the ocean. This can also be done in the car when you are in traffic, but with the eyes open and no visualizations.

3. **MEDIATION:** The most common thing I hear when I tell people to try mediation is resistance - ``but I can't turn off my brain or my thoughts``. Perfect! Either can!! Your mind will never be completely quiet, but allowing space to move between the thoughts will allow you think more clearly, improve memory function and help you to become less distracted during the day. If you are newer to mediation there is an app you can download called Headspace. It starts you off with just 10 minutes of guided mediation. I have found this to be very helpful and easier to incorporate into my life. It is very beneficial to your well-being to take the time to slow down, focus on deep breathing and induce relaxation. Mediation induces relaxation by increasing the compound of nitric oxide that causes blood vessels to open up and subsequently, blood pressure to drop. You will notice how things flow much more naturally when you slow down and enjoy each present moment.

“You should sit in meditation for twenty minutes every day — unless you're too busy. Then you should sit for an hour.” -Zen proverb

4. **LAUGH:** It is true what they say, laughter really is the best medicine. Keep something in your desk that makes you laugh, buy a joke a day calendar, talk to a co-worker with a hearty sense of humour. A willingness to laugh at yourself sometimes can also serve as a good reminder not to take life so seriously, which can do wonders for your stress level. Laughing reduces your stress hormone level, helps to lower blood pressure, a good belly laugh will work your abs, improve cardiac health and trigger the release of endorphins.
5. **BUILD A POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT:** The next time you notice your thoughts moving towards negativity, think of three positive things that have to do with your environment, job, yourself or someone in your life. If the negativity is towards yourself – drop the negative self-talk! Build and create a positive environment by leaving the gossip to E-Talk. Give your co-worker a complement about his or her recent accomplishments!
6. **TAKE A WALK** - One thing I like to do is plan a healthy lunch with a co-worker or two and begin afternoon with something positive. After a healthy lunch move your body, take a walk outside, or if your office has stairs take the stairs. Breaking up your day with a

healthy snack, a walk, and some movement will help you come back to the second part of the day feeling relaxed and ready to take on all the new challenges the day can bring. If the weather is nice get outside. It is proven that natural sunlight, blue sky and green grass naturally cheer you up! This is why 75% of the population favor the colours green and blue.

7. **DRINK MORE WATER:** Kick that afternoon sugar craving – Get your blood flowing out of your stomach and into your brain! Drink more water. Mild dehydration (fluid loss of 1-3%) can impair energy levels and mood, and lead to major reductions in memory and brain performance. Drinking water can actually help you to lose weight too. It is actually best to drink cold water, because then the body will use additional energy (calories) to heat the water to body temperature. Stay hydrated!

## **GIVE YOURSELF TIME**

Relaxation exercises take time, patience and practice. Don't be discouraged if you don't get immediate results. Incorporating a new routine into your day can take about a month (approx. 30 days) before it becomes a habit. With continued practice you will train your brain and body to react to stress differently so you can prevent stress and anxiety from hindering your daily performance.