

Quick Lifts for Busy People

By Suzanne Zoglio, Ph.D.

Ever feel stressed out, down in the mouth, or a bit low on motivation? If so, you might be wistfully waiting for a vacation. But what can you do if you just got *back* from vacation, or your weekends are full, or your evenings are all spoken for?

Don't worry. As a life-balance coach, I can tell you that vacations are definitely overrated...at least as far as managing stress is concerned. They are too few and too infrequent to be an effective antidote to the chronic daily stress that (according to a landmark study at the University of London) puts us more at risk for cardiovascular disease than either smoking or a high-fat diet.

Think about it as the rubber band theory. Snap it once and it snaps back. Stretch it continually and it loses its resiliency. For ongoing mental, physical, and emotional energy, it's important to refuel *before* your tank is empty. To help my coaching clients recharge on a daily basis, I knew I'd have to come up with quick-lifts that could be done anyplace, anytime. So although I think bubble baths, naps, and walks on the beach are great, you won't find any such suggestions in my new book (*Recharge in Minutes*, Tower Hill Press, 2003). Instead, you'll find 101 ways to refuel in place...in less time than it takes for a coffee break. So the next time your confidence takes a hit (how many criticisms can one person take in a day?), your portfolio tumbles (shrinking your nest egg), or your urgent to-do pile is so tall it's leaning like the Tower of Pisa (and your energy is sinking just as fast), don't wait for vacation. Try one of these quick-lifts...and recharge wherever you are.

Stop to Really Breathe. Sit quietly, inhale to the count of six as if filling a balloon just above your waist and then slowly exhale, feeling your balloon deflate and any tension subside. Repeat 3-6 times.

Keep a Commitment to Yourself. It's easy to sell off little pieces of yourself by keeping commitments to everyone but you! List 6 things you've been "meaning" to do, and take one step toward one of your intentions in the next ten minutes. Suspend all of your "shoulds" for a few minutes and see how good it feels to do one thing that's important to you.

Throw One Back. Consider one "little fish" that you caught without trying...from a friend, a boss, or family member. Now, shore up your courage, admit that you over-committed, and throw it back.

Get Physical. If your mind is in overdrive, give it a rest and let your feet take over for 5 minutes. Run up and down stairs. Go weed in the garden. Do jumping jacks, or a dozen sit-ups...or sprint to the store for a latte.

Unplug from Civilization. Turn on your voice mail and shut your door. Close your eyes and retreat to a favorite place. Hear the rain as you've heard it before, and smell the musty earth. Feel the sun caress your skin...and let it melt the tension. Stay for ten minutes; then as you leave, carry with you the serenity you experience in nature.

Get Out of the Blame Game. When life is spinning out of control, dishing out the unexpected, it's easy to get caught up in finger pointing. The problem is that until you focus on what *you* can do, you'll experience the stress of low control. Forget who's responsible and figure out what you need to do next.

Keep the Faith. What we think influences how we feel, and how we feel influences how we act. When you suffer a blow, bounce back with the encouraging words you'd offer a friend. Recite a favorite prayer, read an inspiring quote, or just repeat silently, "I can handle this" or "The universe conspires on my behalf."

Dream Your Life Forward. Bad situations are less stressful if we believe that they're temporary. Pretend it's two years from now and you are writing to a close friend. Describe where you're living, what you're doing, who brings you joy, and how you are making a difference. Dare to dream...and write it down.

Turn Complaints into Questions. When you complain, you drain your brain. It's an admission that you've hit a dead-end. Instead, turn every gripe into a question that gets your brain fired up in search of a solution. Change "My luck stinks" to "How can I turn this to my advantage?" or "What can I learn from

this?” or “ Who could help me with this challenge?” Help coworkers and friends turn their gripes into questions too. Soon you’ll be doing your part to stop global whining!

Go on a Life-Is-Great Date. When you’ve had a streak of bad luck, lift yourself up. Who needs a special treat when you’re high on success? It’s when you’re stressed that you need abundance. Make plans to meet a friend, eat at a favorite restaurant, ...or just take a noontime walk with Mother Nature!

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