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Office Meditation to Increase Focus

The following office meditation techniques can be slipped inconspicuously into your day in short intervals. Just a minute or two of meditation out of each hour can build a profound momentum toward peace of mind in daily life.

The Inner Smile Meditation

The Inner Smile is used in both Buddhist and Taoist circles. Some Taoists use it to relax before meditation. Close your eyes and smile at your forehead in the same way that you would smile to another person. It may not feel genuine at first but, with practice, your ability to do this will increase. Smile at your jaw and feel it relax. Repeat the process for other parts of your body.

Breath Meditation

Meditation is the art of concentrating on one thing as well as the art of being present with experience, emotions and thoughts as they occur. Take some deep breaths without worrying about how you are breathing. Take note of how you are breathing. Close your eyes or keep them partially open so that they are looking into the body space and focusing on nothing in particular in the external world.

Take note whether your breath is calm, erratic, shallow, deep, etc. Relax into the breath. Do not worry about how well you are concentrating. You are training the mind to concentrate with no expectations. When the mind wanders and thoughts or emotions come up, take note of them. Let them be. Give them the space to be what they are. Then, gently guide your attention back to the breath.

Diaphragmatic Breathing

Diaphragmatic breathing has a calming effect on the mind and the body. It can be integrated into meditation with great results.



Notice that when you are stressed or in an uncomfortable situation, your breath becomes naturally restricted. This is the ego's way of shutting down feeling and experience. Proper diaphragmatic breathing tends to reverse this trend. Letting go of stress becomes much easier when it becomes a habit.

Breathe through the nose. Imagine your abdomen as a

balloon. You should feel like the balloon is pushing out in all directions – into your spine in back of the navel, into your groin and toward the rib cage. Let your balloon fill. Exhale deeply. If you have troubles breathing this way, then focus on completely emptying your lungs on the exhale. The next inhale will naturally be deeper. If you make diaphragmatic breathing your normal breathing habit, you will reap wonderful results.

Body Scan Meditation

The body scan is another great office meditation. Eyes can be open or closed just like in the breath meditation. Instead of the breath, the object of focus here is the sensation in various portions of your body. You can start with the feet and work your way up or you can start with the head. We will begin with the feet.

Relax and take a few deep breaths. The only thing that exists are the sensations in your feet. Do this for a full minute. Relax into the sensations of the feet. You will notice sensations you are not normally used to experiencing as well as a deep relaxation.

Just like in the breath office meditation, take note of thoughts and emotions as the mind wanders. Then, go back to the feet. Repeat the process for calves, knees, thighs, groin, butt, belly, chest, shoulders, arms, hands, jaw, back of head and forehead. As an office meditation, you may just have to pick one or two body parts.



Do You Need an Attitude Adjustment?



Have you ever noticed how the exact same situation can stress one person out, while it might not affect another person at all? This difference can usually be explained by the way each individual thinks about the situation. Changing the way you think can help you manage stressors in your life.

Are the messages that you send yourself causing distress? Listed below are ten self-defeating thought patterns, which can cause specific kinds of negative emotions. Do any of these seem familiar to you?

All-or-Nothing Thinking

Things are either black or white, good or bad. If a situation falls short of being perfect, it is total failure. Remember that there is middle ground; rarely will situations be perfect. If everything short of being perfect is considered a failure, how can one enjoy what is good?

Over Generalizations

You come to a general conclusion about something or someone based on one negative event. Because one bad thing happens you over generalize and say that these things "always" happen or that good things "never" happen. This negative self-talk becomes a script for self-defeat.

Mental Filtering

When you examine a situation, the negative details receive the most attention. They are magnified disproportionately while the positive are filtered out. There are many ways of looking at every situation. Sometimes tragedies occur which do not have many positive aspects. However, when one repeatedly dwells on the negative, reality can become distorted, and things seem much worse than they truly are.

Discounting the Positive

You have difficulty accepting praise or enjoying positive experiences. You reject positive experiences as if they "don't count." If you do a good job, you may tell yourself that anyone could have done it as well. This leaves you with an inadequate and unrewarded feeling, even when things are going well.

Personalization

You see yourself as being personally responsible for the pain and happiness of everyone around you, even when you are not. Everything that people do or say is some kind of reaction to you. Personalization leads to negative emotions of guilt, shame and feelings of failure.

Blaming

You unrealistically hold other people or circumstances responsible for your pain, while ignoring aspects that you are responsible for. This usually does not go very well with others, who will resent being the scapegoat and pass the blame right back.

Should

You have a list of ironclad rules about the way that things "should" be and how you and other people "should" act. This can lead to feelings of guilt and frustration when situations do not live up to high expectations.

Being Right

You feel as though you are continually on trial to prove that your opinions and actions are correct. Being wrong is unthinkable and you will go to any lengths to prove that you are right.

Catastrophizing

When a problem or new situation is encountered, you expect disaster. "What if" statements dominate your thoughts about situations. This is emotional reasoning and is not based on realistic appraisal of the situation.

Mind Reading

Without their saying so, you know what people are feeling and why they act the way they do. In particular, you are able to divine how people are feeling towards you. These assumptions are a sign of poor communication skills and can lead to unwarranted negative feelings and interpersonal conflict.

If you want help with changing your thinking, give your EAP a call!

6 Strategies for EFFECTIVE Office Communication

We all desire to be understood as the unique beings we are, not just personally by our family and close friends, but professionally as well. The way we are perceived by our co-workers is in their eyes a reflection of who we are as individuals. With that in mind, it is best to make a lasting impression not just on the very first day of one's job, but going forward into one's respective careers.

1. Get to know your coworkers in a realistic light - It is impossible to know every individual's personality type at your workplace. However, what is possible is in the interim to gauge what may "tick" someone off, and what, on the contrary may please them. Adjust yourself and your personality accordingly. The general rule of thumb is not to probe too much into why they are behaving a certain way towards you or others, because the more you overanalyze the more you will internalize the situation, and perceive them as acting in a hostile manner towards you. This can lead to a vicious cycle of you acting similarly, which of course can lead to an unpleasant work environment.



2. Avoid becoming the gossipmonger - The more you become entangled in other people's business, the more you may be jeopardizing your position. Chances are if someone is talking to you about someone else, they are doing the exact same thing behind your back about you. If someone has got the gift of gab, just listen, and smile, but then proceed back to accomplishing your work. This rule applies to all of your colleagues, but most importantly, and undoubtedly when talking about your boss behind his/her back, or to someone who is "higher" up than you on the hierarchical ladder. People in your organization may get the wrong impression of you, because you are the content of what you say, and with whom you associate yourself.

3. Better sooner rather than later - If you feel that something was misunderstood between you and your colleague, or if you feel that something is just not quite right, it is best to address the issue earlier rather than later. If one waits too long, more issues could fester in the interim and corrode your working relationships. It is best to approach and tackle the situation directly, however uncomfortable it may be, so that you seek clarity and resolve the issue immediately. One must remember the old adage which states: "It is not what you say, but how you say it." Any dilemma can be resolved if two people are willing to communicate properly, and play their respective parts. Simply being straightforward, diplomatic and polite is the key. This also applies regarding miscommunication with upper management.

4. Respect individual differences while avoiding controversial topics - This may seem overly trite, but it is true nonetheless. Your coworkers may have different belief and value systems, and respecting their core values while avoiding topics such as race, religion and/or politics will keep your professional record squeaky clean.

5. Avoid getting personal on the job - Your workplace is not your therapist office. Beware of disclosing too much personal information about your personal life, or job related issues to others. This does not necessarily mean you should remain aloof. It is not a paradoxical notion to remain friendly, yet professional. Controlling your emotions in the workplace is also very crucial. You do not want to be perceived by upper management or your colleagues as the one who constantly "loses control."

6. MASTER the art of listening, and observing - Listening is far from a passive skill. Become an observer by speaking less, and by listening to others most, if not all of the time. Not only will you be a more productive individual at work, and your advice sought, but you will also stay out of trouble.

Getting along with co-workers and effectively communicating with your colleagues seems like a sensible task to accomplish, yet more often than not it is underestimated, or even worse ignored. Employing these strategies can enhance your quality of life at work, so that you will become a winning and shining star not just in the eyes of your colleagues, but in the eyes of your employer as well.

Stress	For free and confidential assistance, call your	Marital Problems
Financial	Employee Assistance Program and speak with a Care Coordinator:	Family Problems
Legal	(713) 781-3364	Alcohol/Drug Problems
Depression	(800) 324-4327	Other Referrals
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