

Energy 101 Continued

by Kathie Hightower and Holly Scherer

Welcome back to Energy 101. If you've been drinking your water the past two weeks, you might already be feeling more energetic. One last thought on the water thing. I heard a doctor describe it this way: Adding water to your body is as essential as putting oil in your car. It helps lubricate your joints, it helps carry oxygen to your brain, it helps with blood transmission (in fact, dehydration is often a factor in strokes). More reasons to keep at it (and maybe an analogy that will work for the guys reading this who are skeptical.)

Now let's look at some other ways to add energy.

- **Breathe.** Seems pretty basic. We all breathe. However, most of us spend our lives using only a small capacity of our breath. We do shallow chest breathing. Do a quick experiment. For a few seconds start taking really short quick breaths, like you do when you are scared or really stressed. How do you feel? Anxious, stressed, tense? Now, do the opposite. Consciously slow down and take deep long breaths in and out. Count to five as you breathe in and five as you breathe out. Breathe deep into your belly, which, yes, does mean that your belly extends as you inhale. You should feel your ribs move out too. To really feel the full effect of this, do it lying on your back or standing up. It's a bit harder at first when you are sitting down. How do you feel? Relaxed?

Deep belly breathing does make a difference in your energy level (and in your creativity and problem-solving ability, by the way). It carries more oxygen to your brain. The problem in our society — especially with women — is that we've been trained to hold our stomachs in.. I see a lot of men doing that too once they hit a certain age and gut level. You can't get full breaths when you do that. You are cheating yourself of that "breath of life" — of energy.

Breathing correctly is not an easy thing to learn to do. The other way is so ingrained. It takes practice and consciously thinking to do it. I highly recommend taking a yoga or Pilates class where deep breathing is encouraged and practiced. A great reference is *Conscious Breathing* by

To help you start the habit, tie it to a trigger. For example, each time the phone rings and each time you stop at a red light, use that as a trigger to consciously take deep breaths. I guarantee it will help your stress level AND your energy level.

- **Exercise.** Yes, I'm going to use the E word. You know this by now. Regular exercise does increase your energy level, not only during and right after exercise, but throughout your day. So how do you add it into an overbooked life? Here are some ideas.
 - Stop saying "I need to work out." What does that sound like? Work! Say instead "I want to play" or "I'm going to energize myself." Find a mix of things that are fun for you that still give you the benefits of exercise. Play Frisbee with your dog. Play catch with your kids. Hula Hoop (I guarantee you this works and is fun — many of our seminar audience members can attest to it.) There are even fitness center programs now called things like Recess for Adults — adding fun to fitness.
 - Be prepared. Have toys in the trunk of your car. When you pick up your kids, stop for a 10 or 15 minute play break. Take advantage of the many classes offered free on post. Or pay for those at your local YMCA or fitness center if that will keep you more committed to attend. Find the class that is fun for you so you'll stick with it.
 - Use the Earth Gym. I read about this concept in the *Simple Living Journal*. Adopt the daily habit of adding exercise into your life and look for opportunities. They are all around. I purposely park in the farther parking spaces (and am always amused that I often enter the store before that person circling and circling looking for a spot close in). When I run errands near each other, I park in one spot and then walk the few blocks each way to the Post Office, library, and dry cleaner. Poor time management you say? Well, getting a walk out in fresh air is one of my priorities so it's part of my time management. Stretch consciously when you unload the dryer or dishwasher. Do squats while you dry your hair. You get the idea. It's important to realize that you don't have to do a half hour of exercise to benefit — 30 minutes a day in 10 minute increments will do the trick.
 - Get a buddy. I was most consistent with my running when I met a friend every morning at 6 am when we lived at Ft. Lee. We both would say when we met, "I was hoping you'd call to cancel," but by the end of the run we felt fabulous!

Okay, you have two weeks to start adding deep breathing and exercise into your life. Then we'll look at a few more simple ways to increase your daily energy before we dive into the rest of the Follow Your Dream plan.

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