

lifelines

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MONITORING YOUR
ENERGY TO BE
YOUR BEST AT
WORK



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CHANGE YOUR
MINDSET
AND GROW

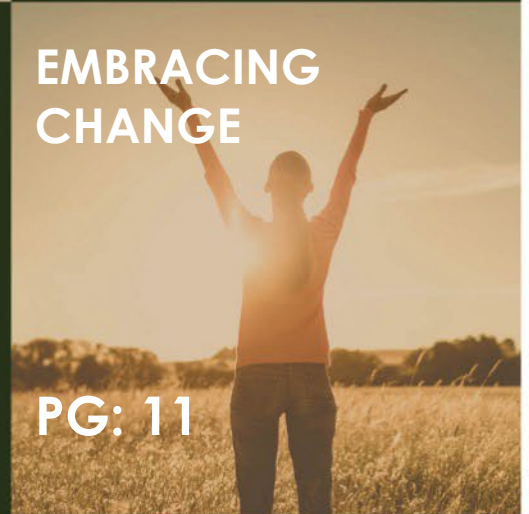
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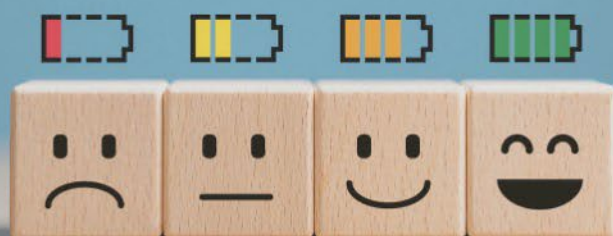
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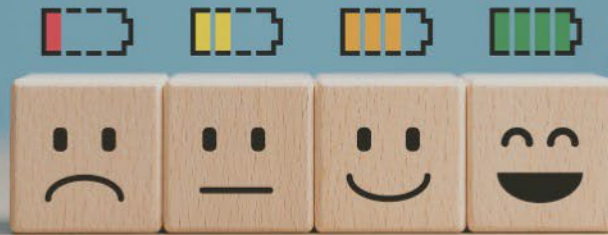
MONITORING YOUR ENERGY TO BE YOUR BEST AT WORK

Work demands can drain your energy at times. You need to deal with work pressure, face change with an open mind, and be a supportive member of your team. You can only do all of that if you attend to your own physical and emotional needs. Here are some suggestions for monitoring your energy so that you can be your best at work.

The Three Types of Energy

- **Physical energy** activates the body's movements and actions. The amount of physical energy is dictated by one's health, diet, and physical activity.
- **Mental energy** activates the brain to perform cognitive functions. The brain, while only accounting for 2 percent of the body's mass, demands 20 percent of the body's total energy budget. Mental energy is required for decision-making, analyzing, focus, and problem-solving.
- **Emotional energy** is what fuels human emotions. Emotions can be categorized as high energy or low energy. Not only do high-energy, negative emotions affect energy resources, but positive, high-energy emotions, like excitement and elation, do as well.

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MONITORING YOUR ENERGY TO BE YOUR BEST AT WORK

Energy Gains and Drains

The key to managing your energy is identifying your *energy gains* and *drains*. Energy gains are those activities that you do for yourself that recharge your batteries. The interesting thing is that not everyone shares the same energy gains and drains. For example, socializing may boost your energy level, but completely diminish someone else's.

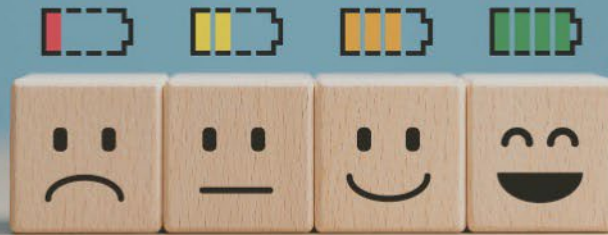
Examples of potential energy-gaining activities include

- Spending time with a friend
- Working on a hobby
- Being in nature
- Exercising
- Meditating

***Energy drains* are the opposite of energy gains. It's those activities that require a high amount of mental or emotional energy. Some examples of potential energy-draining activities include**

- Dealing with conflict
- A difficult commute
- Working with a difficult person
- Completing projects at the last minute
- Responding to other people's emotions

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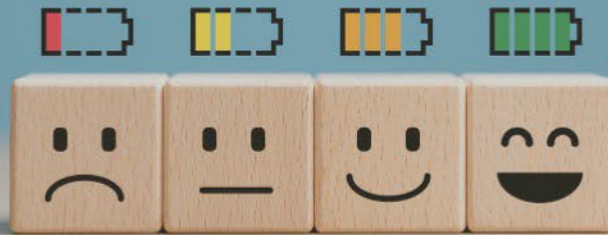
MONITORING YOUR ENERGY TO BE YOUR BEST AT WORK

Once you identify those actions that give you an energy boost, prioritize some of them as part of your weekly routine. Often, when people get busy or overwhelmed, they start canceling things they consider low priority. However, activities that restore energy levels should not be considered low priority. If you want to be at your best, they are essential.

Ways to Recharge Your Energy

- **Attend to your health.** Exercise regularly. Eat a healthy diet. Get the sleep you need.
- **Pay attention to your emotions.** Recognize the physical signs of stress before they reveal themselves in unhelpful behavior. Know the triggers that provoke you to anger or withdrawal. Don't allow yourself to become stuck in anger or negative rumination. Instead, practice positive reframing, looking for opportunities in obstacles and setbacks.
- **Take breaks to recharge.** Take short breaks during the workday to pause and relax, and breaks before or after work to calm yourself. Listen to soothing music. Meditate or use breathing techniques. Take a walk or go to the gym to release energy and regain focus.
- **Use your vacation time to get away from work and recharge.**
- **Make time for the people and activities you care about outside of work.** Carve out both "me" and "we" time—time by yourself to recharge, and time with friends and family to connect and share.

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MONITORING YOUR ENERGY TO BE YOUR BEST AT WORK

- **Reach out to your manager when you are feeling overwhelmed.** Talk with your manager when your list of priorities gets overwhelming. Together, figure out which are most critical, which can wait, and whether there's another way to get them done.
- **Cultivate friendships at work** with energizing and uplifting colleagues and with people you can be yourself with. In a good relationship, providing and accepting support is energizing, not draining. Good friends can make you laugh and see the bright side of a challenging situation.
- **Seek variety and learning opportunities in your work.** Variety is energizing. Try new ways of doing your work. Talk with your manager about options to learn new skills and take on new tasks.

This was adapted from the article "Leaders: Managing Your Energy Level" and from the chapter "Monitoring Your Energy to Manage" (pp. 9–10) in A Manager's Guide to the Employee Support Program.

Morgan, H. (2021, November). *Monitoring your energy to be your best at work.* Raleigh, NC: Workplace Options.

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CHANGE YOUR MINDSET AND GROW

When psychologist Carol Dweck was studying how children respond to new challenges, she noticed something interesting. Some hung back or gave up easily while others appeared to enjoy the experience, persisting even after repeated failures. She and her research colleagues came up with a model to explain the differences they were observing: *fixed* and *growth mindsets*.

Dweck's mindset model has proved to be a valuable tool for understanding adult behavior, too. You can use it in your own life to learn, stretch your abilities, and grow for greater success.

What is a fixed mindset?

A *fixed mindset* is the belief that your intelligence, abilities, and other qualities are set, or have limits that can't be overcome, even with effort. A fixed mindset can be reinforced in school or through life experiences when someone tells you that you're either good at or not good at something. That might be math, writing, singing, sports, social relationships, or anything else.

When you have a fixed mindset and are faced with a new task, you have a tendency to either prove that you can do it well—demonstrating your ability—or avoid it—to hide a possible weakness. When you try and fail, you're not likely to persist. Your inner voice tells you that this is one of those things you're just not good at and are unlikely to master no matter how hard you try. With a fixed mindset, it's more comfortable to give up in the face of failure than to keep trying.

With a fixed mindset, your goal is to show off your natural strengths and hide your natural deficiencies. That can limit you and keep you from trying new things, learning, and growing. It can be a real obstacle when you're faced with a significant change.

What is a growth mindset?

A *growth mindset* is the belief that you can hone your intelligence, abilities, and other qualities with practice, training, and help from others. With a growth mindset, you understand that people have different talents and

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CHANGE YOUR MINDSET AND GROW

can be built on and improved. They are the floor rather than the ceiling. When you have a growth mindset, you welcome new challenges as opportunities to learn and grow. Trying and failing is not discouraging enough to stop you. Rather, each attempt is a learning experience, informing your next effort. When you can't overcome a problem, you don't hide your failure. Instead, you examine what went wrong and try again with a different approach. You might ask for help and guidance from someone with more experience or expertise. With a growth mindset, you're less concerned with what others might think of your failed attempts than with what you can learn from those failures as you try again.

Everyone moves between fixed and growth mindsets.

A key to benefiting from the concept of fixed and growth mindsets is to understand that people are not all one or the other. As Dweck explained in a 2016 interview in *The Atlantic*, "...nobody has a growth mindset in everything all the time."¹

You might have a growth mindset when engaged in some activities, but a fixed mindset in others. You might have a growth mindset when you're calm and well rested, and a fixed mindset when you're tense

or exhausted. Think how you might behave under extreme time pressure compared to when you're working with more time. Think, too, about how you might approach different activities, such as public speaking, playing a musical instrument, solving a business problem using higher levels of math, or looking at the programming code behind a website. In some activities and at some times, your curiosity and drive to learn might have the upper hand—a growth mindset. In other situations, your fixed mindset might take charge.

How Adopting a Growth Mindset Can Help You Succeed

Adopting a growth mindset in more areas of your life—whether it's work, relationships, creative endeavors, or anything else—can lead you to new knowledge and new skills while deepening your understanding of who you are and all you can be. Recognizing the situations and triggers that tend to push you into a fixed mindset can help you be more self-aware and better able to consciously change for the better.

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CHANGE YOUR MINDSET AND GROW

The more you approach life with a growth mindset, the better you'll be at overcoming obstacles, navigating change, and seizing new opportunities. In short, cultivating a growth mindset can help you thrive in all aspects of your life, especially when faced with new challenges.

Charles Kettering, one of the most successful inventors of all time (his 186 patents include the electric starter for cars, an incubator for premature infants, and ways to harness solar energy), wrote this: "Every great improvement has come after repeated failures. Virtually nothing comes out right the first time. One fails forward toward success."²

Ways to Get Into a Growth Mindset

Accepting that you operate in both fixed and growth mindsets is the first step in using this concept to your advantage. The next is to notice when you shift between the two mindsets. Even if you are a person who is naturally curious, open to new experiences, and driven to learn, you're bound to face situations or have times when you feel insecure and defensive. Those might include criticism, conflict, or failed efforts. These are the triggers that push you into a fixed mindset. Pay attention to your fixed-mindset triggers. When you catch yourself giving up too easily or trying too hard to show off known abilities, make a conscious effort to

get yourself into a growth mindset—experimenting, taking risks, and learning from your attempts and failures.

Moving to a growth mindset is a journey that takes time and requires self-examination. Here are some ways to help yourself along that path:

- When faced with an obstacle or a setback, pause and consider the opportunities it might present.
- When you try something and it doesn't work out as expected, examine what went wrong. Adjust your approach and try again.
- When you find yourself focusing narrowly on the negatives of a situation, expand your view to look at other possibilities. Is this a roadblock, or just new information that gives you a clearer picture of reality? How might you respond creatively to make progress?
- When fear of failure keeps you from trying something new, consider how you might benefit from learning a new skill. Think, too, about the worst outcome, should you try and fail. It's usually not such a big deal, even if it takes a few failed attempts to make progress.

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CHANGE YOUR MINDSET AND GROW

- If everything you do comes easily, you're probably avoiding important challenges and opportunities. Seek out assignments and activities that stretch you and make you a bit uncomfortable.
- Commit yourself to lifelong learning. Learning doesn't stop when you leave school. Cultivate your curiosity, too. Learning can be fun.
- If you're stuck, ask for help. It's not an admission of failure. It's a sign that you're committed to succeeding.
- Be tenacious. The important successes in life take hard work. They often require that you overcome obstacles and make many failed attempts, sometimes a great many, before you succeed.

"How Praise Became a Consolation Prize," *The Atlantic* (Interview with Carol Dweck. By C. Gross-Loh, December 16, 2016).
<https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/12/how-praise-became-a-consolation-prize/510845>

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For More Information

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FRIENDSHIPS AND SOCIAL CONNECTIONS: BENEFITS

Friendships are the social connections that enrich your life with conversation, comfort, laughter, support, and encouragement. While friendships can also come with disappointment and conflict, good ones help to buffer the effects of setbacks and stress and help you navigate life's challenges.

Some friendships seem to endure with ease. Some fall away as circumstances change—as people move, change jobs, start families, divorce, or shift priorities. Most take some effort to maintain. Making new friends, especially as an adult, can be difficult; however, maintaining good friendships and making new ones is worth the effort—for your quality of life, happiness, and health.

How do friendships and social connections improve your life?

Many of the benefits of friendships and supportive social connections are obvious. They make you feel good and help you through life's ups and downs. Other benefits, especially the powerful effect of social connections on people's physical health, have been discovered through research. Below are some of the ways friendships help to improve your quality of life.

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FRIENDSHIPS AND SOCIAL CONNECTIONS: BENEFITS

Life Satisfaction and Enjoyment

- Friendships fill a basic human need for company and companionship—for a sense of belonging. Friends are people who talk with one another, share thoughts and experiences, and have meals or coffee together. Without these social connections, people are susceptible to feelings of loneliness and isolation.
- Good friends make you happier. Friends who listen to, validate the feelings of, and enjoy each other's company are happier. That's true when they are together, but it also carries over as an emotional lift and buffer when they are apart.
- Friendships improve your self-confidence and sense of self-worth. Having friends who appreciate you for who you are and offer praise and reassurance when you're feeling unsure of yourself, strengthens your self-esteem and confidence. Friends like these help you value yourself as a unique individual and remind you how much you have to offer.

Support and Resilience

- Friends offer emotional support. They listen, show empathy, and tell you they care. This is especially important when you are feeling down or lonely.
- Friends challenge negative thinking with different perspectives. They can help you see things from different angles and steer you away from unrealistic and unhelpful patterns of thought.
- Friends provide guidance and help you make decisions in ways that are true to your best self.
- Friends help you cope with tough times—with loss, illness, and hardship. They strengthen your resilience, helping you weather the inevitable down times in life and bounce back.
- Good friends push you to be your best. They encourage you, challenge you, and remind you of your strengths.

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FRIENDSHIPS AND SOCIAL CONNECTIONS: BENEFITS

- Friends give you the opportunity to help and be compassionate. Caring about other people and demonstrating that care not only helps your friends, it helps you. It contributes to your emotional strength and resilience and helps you keep your own worries in perspective.

Help and Information

- Friends provide practical help. That might include help with a move, backup child care, or a home-cooked meal when you're sick or overwhelmed.
- Friends share information. They alert you to job and learning opportunities, share tips from their own experience, and help you navigate new challenges.

Physical and Mental Health

- People with supportive social networks have less stress. That may be because they don't feel lonely as often or because of the calming, reassuring influence friends have.

- Friends encourage healthy behavior. If you have friends who have healthy eating, exercise, and spending habits, you're more likely to adopt those habits as well. It can work the other way, too, though. If you're trying to lose weight, quit smoking, or address a drinking problem, you'll have a better chance of success if you spend time with people who share those goals.
- Having friends can reduce your risk of depression. Several studies have found that the strength of friendships and social networks is linked to lower incidence of depressive symptoms.
- Supportive social connections can improve heart health. People with strong social connections are significantly less likely to experience heart attacks or die from heart disease, according to separate, long-term studies. One reason may be the association of friendships and social support with lower levels of stress.

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FRIENDSHIPS AND SOCIAL CONNECTIONS: BENEFITS

- The strength of a person's social networks has been linked with other positive health outcomes, too. These include reduced risks of diabetes, high blood pressure, and stroke. It can also lead to a longer life. Having friends and a strong social support network has been found to be as powerful an influence on longevity as exercise and not smoking.

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EMBRACING CHANGE



It's natural to view change with some caution. The human brain is primed to be wary of the unknown, which can hold danger, and to conserve energy by sticking to established routines. Change pushes you to venture into the unknown and try out new patterns of thought and behavior. While change can be uncomfortable at times, it can also offer valuable opportunities for growth. With change can come new ways to find happiness and personal fulfillment.

Here are some ideas for overcoming a natural fear of change and shifting to an approach where you do more than just accept change; you embrace it and act on the opportunities that it presents:

- **Acknowledge the change.** The first step in dealing with a change is to recognize and face it. When you're afraid of a change, it's tempting to ignore it or hide from it. Instead, take a cold, hard look at what is happening around you. Identify and learn about the changes that are affecting you or might affect you.
- **Notice and accept your feelings about the change.** It's normal to feel fear, sadness, anger, or other uncomfortable emotions when facing a change. There's nothing wrong with having those feelings. Notice them, name them, and accept them. Living with your feelings helps you face the change openly and move through it.
- **Do a reality check on your fears.** Identifying your fears gives you a chance to test their validity. How likely is the outcome you fear? What could you do to influence a different outcome?
- **Consider the positive possibilities in the change.** Change can disrupt your routine and the patterns of your life, but it can also bring new opportunities. Look at the change as an adventure, and think about the positives it could bring. Is this a chance to learn new skills, meet new people, or shift to more interesting and rewarding work?
- **Visualize positive outcomes from the change.** Imagine what the positive possibilities in the change could mean for you. Visualize how your life might be better and how you might feel if those positive outcomes become real. By making those positive outcomes real in your mind, you can gain confidence to act in ways that make them more likely.

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EMBRACING CHANGE



- **Focus on what you can control.** You can waste a lot of emotional energy worrying about things you can't control. Step back, and break the change you're facing into parts. What parts can you control or at least influence? You can learn about the change, for example, acquire new skills, and control your reactions to events. You probably can't stop the change from happening. Focus your thinking and your actions on the things that are within your sphere of influence. Accept and let go of the rest.
- **Talk with supportive people.** Social support can be a huge help when facing any challenge in life. Talk with people you trust and know to be supportive about the change you're facing, your feelings about it, and your thoughts on how you might respond. Friends and family can offer support and an audience to test your ideas. A professional therapist can help you deal with difficult emotions. A life coach or career coach can help you imagine new paths forward and take steps toward them.
- **Take action, starting with small steps.** All big changes start with a first step, and you're more likely to succeed if you start with a small one. Decide on one action you can take in response to the change and take a small step in that direction.
- **Learn from mistakes and setbacks.** When you enter unfamiliar territory during change, you're bound to make mistakes and run into roadblocks. Don't let those setbacks discourage you and cause you to give up. Look at them as learning opportunities. Welcome the new information they give you. What might you differently on your next try? Is there a different path you might take?
- **Celebrate progress.** Allow yourself to feel good about the first small steps you take. Feel your pride in making progress and learning something new. Feel the excitement of having new experiences. Share your accomplishments with friends. Celebrate when you reach milestones.

By facing change rather than avoiding it, looking for the positive opportunities it might offer, and taking small steps, even the most cautious people can learn to embrace change. Look at the next change you face as a chance to grow and to learn from new experiences.

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