



5 MIND TOOLS FOR QUICKLY TURNING A BAD DAY INTO A FANTASTIC DAY

Ever wonder where the saying, “You need to blow off steam” originated? It is a metaphor in which life is like fire, and you are the teapot. You have been specially built to withstand the constant heat that comes from the fires of life; however, if you do not occasionally remove yourself from the heat, the internal pressure can become too much.



Demands and conflicts in life can create tremendous pressure, even if you are the type who thrives on it. Even high-performance racecars designed for speed and endurance will not finish the race without a few pit stops. Therefore, when you need a quick “mental reboot,” use the following mind tools for turning a bad day into a better one.

#1 – Control Your Breathing, Control Your Life

Under stress, people hold their breath or breathe shallowly through their mouth. Mouth breathing triggers the fight-or-flight response, which leads to muscular tension and an elevated heartbeat. To counteract this, breathe in through your nose to the count of four. Then, slowly exhale to the count of eight. Breathe down to the bottom of your lungs, so your belly expands rather than your chest. “Belly breaths” stimulate the relaxation response, which in turn, helps you feel more calm, confident and resourceful in any situation. Within the 60 seconds it takes you to complete five belly breaths, you will begin to feel more settled. When you feel more settled, you regain your freedom to choose how you would like to respond to the situation, versus reacting out of prior conditioning.



#2 – Look Up & Slow Down

You cannot feel anxious in slow motion. In other words, you have to mentally speed up inside to experience unhealthy stress or anxiety. Most of your emotional duress comes from how you are interpreting situations, and not from the situations themselves. It is what you are consciously or subconsciously saying to yourself that ultimately determines how you feel in response to challenging situations. An amazing mind tool for quieting your inner chatter is to simply look up towards the ceiling or sky. When you look up for sixty seconds, it calms your inner voice and temporarily disconnects you from whatever feeling you may be experiencing in the moment. Test it out! Look up at the ceiling for one minute while trying to feel stressed. Notice how you can't quite connect with the feelings of the situation, even if you can picture the event.



#3 – Shift Your Perspective

Most believe they are appropriately responding to situations that would cause anyone to feel angry, upset or overwhelmed. Again, it's NOT the situation you're reacting to, but the subconscious meaning you have given to that event. No matter what happens, you get final say over how you emotionally respond. Shift your perspective, and it will change the interpreted meaning, while alleviating a whole lot of unnecessary frustration. You can expand your view of the situation by assuming positive intentions, focusing on desired outcomes, or embracing compassion.

If someone cuts you off in traffic, imagine they are rushed because of a sick child, a spouse in delivery, or a crucial meeting for which they cannot be late. Sadly, most assume the worst in others. If you decide to believe there is a positive intention behind another's actions, it creates space for compassion, which is the best antidote for stress. Ask yourself, "What might be going on in this person's life that's causing that behavior?" Or, "How else could I look at this situation so I feel more empowered, secure or resourceful?" Take control of your perspective, don't let it control you.



#4 – Be Proactive, Not Reactive

Decide what kind of day you are going to have before getting out of bed, and then stick to your plan! My first mentor used to ask me, “How are you feeling?” I’d say, “Fine.” He’d reply, “No! You’re fantastic!”

His lesson was that you will always believe whatever you tell yourself the most. If you want to feel FANTASTIC, you need to start telling yourself this as much as possible, because what you think about comes about! How are you feeling today?



#5 – Assemble A Stress Survival Kit

Your stress survival kit should contain items that soothe your senses. These might include a Yankee candle or lavender hand lotion. A favorite song that always makes you sing along, or a YouTube video that makes you laugh every time you watch it. Create a list of things (or people) you are grateful for so you can review it when feeling overwhelmed or unappreciated. Your kit may also include a phone number or email of someone who is always there to offer a kind word or comic relief when you need it most. As you proactively add to your stress survival kit, you will find yourself needing to use it much less.

In Review

Stress is inevitable, but suffering is optional! Unlike other animals, humans can change the meaning they give to situations, which ultimately means you have the freedom to choose how you are going to think, feel and behave in any circumstance. To shift the way you feel, take a few belly breaths and look up to quiet your mind. Then, begin asking yourself more empowering questions, being proactive, and using your stress survival kit as needed. With practice, you will be able to transform any day into a FANTASTIC day!

Special thanks to our article contributor, Tim Shurr, Award-Winning Speaker & Employee Performance Expert, for sharing his knowledge and expertise with the HelmsBriscoe Quarterly. To learn more tips for using the power of your mind to succeed, access Tim’s complimentary e-book at www.cureforselvesabotage.com.