

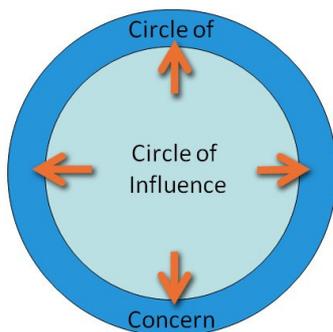
## Performing through intensity

This handout is drawn from a workshop we design and is intended to give you some ideas and options to choose from to help you maintain your performance during tough periods. Do contact me if you have any questions or are unsure of how and when to use any of the tools described below appropriately.

Please be conscious of your own personal health and only do things if you are comfortable and confident that you can do so without risk – if in doubt seek professional advice. There are many additional resources and tools available on websites if you would like to know more.

### Taking positive control

This is drawn from Stephen Covey's book "The 7 habits of highly effective people". Effective people focus their attention on things they can control and/ or influence. As they do so, often their sense of what they can control and influence expands – in my words, they have greater sense of agency. If you worry about or focus on the things that are outside your control or influence it can lead to a sense of helplessness or stuckness.



Questions to ask yourself:

What is the specific situation/ issue? – What's happening? Who with?

Do I have control/ influence over it? Do I have the power to change it?

If so, what action can I take?

If not

- What other possible interpretations of the situation/ other person's intention could I come up with?
- How could I manage my emotional response to it? What would a more positive/ constructive response be?

### Step back and take stock

Set up a short 15-minute meeting. In intense periods of crisis or change, ideally daily to step back as a team and track your progress. Some questions you can use are:

- What are the key things we need to do to maintain performance in terms of
  - Process?
  - People?
  - Systems?
- How is it going?
- What are the problems?
- What needs to be done?

## Helping each other to think well

*“The quality of everything we do depends on the quality of the thinking we do first”*  
Nancy Kline, Author of *Time to Think*



### Tips for creating space to think well

- Offer or ask for time to think
- Find a quiet place where you can give each other full attention
- Agree a duration that works for both of you and whether you both want to exchange thinking time (it could be just 5 minutes or much more)
- Settle in, focus your attention on the other person and stay curious about what they will think next. The quality of your attention will affect the quality of their thinking.
- Avoid interrupting them – you will have your turn and they will ask you if they want your thoughts. Knowing you will not be interrupted frees you truly to think for yourself.
- Expressing feelings can be helpful. Listening through the anger makes way for thorough thinking. Crying can make you smarter. After laughter thinking improves.
- Appreciation – take a minute to offer genuine acknowledgement of their qualities. The human mind thinks more rigorously and creatively in a context of specific, sincere, succinct praise

### Questions to use

- What do you want to think about, and what are your thoughts?
- What more do you think, or feel or want to say? (Said without rush. Repeat if needed – questions prompt further layers of thinking).

## Recognising your needs and seeking support

Here are some prompt questions – be specific with your answers.

- What will I need from other people?
- Of those which ones can I ask for now? (tangible, concrete)
- What can't I ask for now, but I might need in terms of things I will find supportive/unsupportive?
- How will I ask for what I need?
- What support would be most helpful from my manager/ peers/ others?
- How will I prepare? What will I take with me?

## Tools to help you relax

**Breathing** – remember deep breathing helps!



### Exercise 1

- Sit in a comfortable position – eyes open or closed (or lie with a book on your belly)
- Place one hand on your chest and one on your diaphragm just above your waist
- Breathe in slowly through your nose, allow the air to expand the lower part of your chest (you should feel your belly move more than your upper chest)
- Blow out slowly – release as much air as possible (count to 5 if you want to)

### Exercise 2

- Imagine your breath passing in and out through the centre of your chest
- Breathe in calm or balance (whatever positive feeling helps you to restore balance)
- Doing this 5 minutes or so before bed can help sleep.

### Self-massage ideas

Please pay attention to any health issues you have and only choose techniques that you feel comfortable with. Do not massage swellings, fractures, bruises, or infected skin. Seek professional advice before massage treatment if you suffer from varicose veins, back pain or thrombosis.

### Releasing tension

1. Shrug your shoulders and push them back as far as possible. Hold for 5 seconds. Release. Repeat 5x.
2. Put your hand at the top of your arm and knead the flesh firmly moving slowly towards your neck.
3. Press your fingertips gently into the back of your neck and move the fingertips in a circular motion towards the base of your skull. Repeat 5 times.
4. Holding the back of your head rotate your thumbs at the base of your skull

### Hand massage

Massage the web between your thumb and forefinger, using the opposite hand to press as close as possible to the point where the 2 bones meet. Continue for about a minute then repeat with the other hand. Do not do this if you could be, or are pregnant.

### Headaches

- Smooth the tips of your fingers over your forehead, working from the centre to the temples.
- Now place your palm on your forehead with your fingers pointing horizontally and gently move it up towards your hairline. Repeat with the other hand and continue until the tension ebbs away.

## Quick and easy meditation & relaxation

Start all of these by sitting comfortably on a chair with your spine straight and feet flat on the floor or legs crossed. Cup your hands loosely in your lap with your palms facing upwards (or resting on your knees). Close your eyes.



### Exercise 1

Look downwards, but not focusing on anything  
Let your eyelids drop to a level that feels comfy without closing them completely  
Continue to look downwards and you should notice your breathing is slower and deeper  
Return your eyes to their normal focus after a couple of minutes

### Exercise 2

Notice the connection between the bottom of your feet and the floor. Notice the weight of your bottom and thighs on the chair.  
Tense and relax each part of your body in turn. Start with your toes and feet. Then your calves. Work your way up through your body.  
Once you have done this sit quietly and notice your breathing (just notice it don't change it!).  
Notice any areas of tension in your body and allow them to release.  
Stay in a comfortable relaxed position for as long as you want to and then slowly open your eyes.

### Exercise 3

Close your eyes for a minute or so and just listen to whatever sounds are going on around you. Be "a rock with ears" - hearing sounds the way a video camera would, without any preference for one sound over another or story about what the sounds mean or where they come from.

If you become aware of any internal chatter, allow it to float through your mind. Do your best to refocus on the sounds outside your head instead.

**Getting a good night's sleep – some ideas**

- Milky drinks, bananas and wholemeal biscuits can be calming before you go to sleep
- Avoid caffeine, alcohol and nicotine which can disturb sleep
- Drink a cup of warm herbal tea (e.g. Chamomile)
- Stop work at least an hour before bedtime
- Warm bath. You could use aromatherapy bath oils such as Chamomile, Lavender, Lemon Balm and Vetiver) – always follow the instructions.
- If your thoughts are racing keep a pen and paper by your bed to note them down
- If you still can't sleep get up and read for a while until you feel sleepy
- Listening to soft quiet instrumental music or relaxation CDs can help



<b><i>Other things that help to keep you in balance and avoid/ reduce unhealthy stress levels</i></b>	<b><i>Signs to watch out for (this is not an exhaustive list and other things may cause these symptoms)</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk with others about the situation. Share worries and the burden.</li> <li>• If the situation is uncontrollable, adjust your response, adapt.</li> <li>• Pay attention to your moods and feelings - anticipate and take steps to avoid stress build-up before it becomes more serious.</li> <li>• A balanced, healthy diet. A light meal in the evening aids digestion.</li> <li>• Drink lots of water. Keep a bottle with you.</li> <li>• Make a cuppa (ideally caffeine free)</li> <li>• Reduce toxins &amp; stimulant intake (tobacco, alcohol, caffeine, chocolate, sugar).</li> <li>• Take more exercise – even if it's only a short brisk walk.</li> <li>• Singing releases tension and encourages you to breathe deeply (even if it's not in tune!)</li> <li>• Humour &amp; laughter</li> <li>• Take a power nap</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fatigue</li> <li>• Sleep difficulties</li> <li>• Changes in/ loss of appetite</li> <li>• Headaches</li> <li>• Poor concentration or poor memory retention</li> <li>• Racing thoughts</li> <li>• Performance dip</li> <li>• Uncharacteristic errors or missed deadlines</li> <li>• Anger or tantrums</li> <li>• Emotional outbursts</li> <li>• Back and neck pain/ tension</li> <li>• Alcohol or drug abuse</li> <li>• Nervous habits</li> </ul>



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