

lifelines



WINTER ISSUE

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MONITORING YOUR ENERGY TO BE YOUR BEST AT WORK



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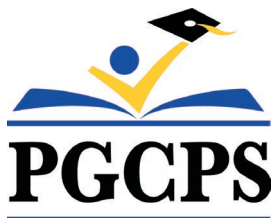
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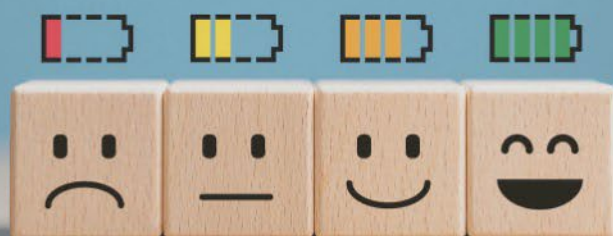
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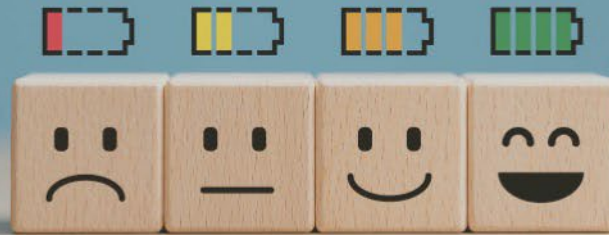


MONITORING YOUR ENERGY TO BE YOUR BEST AT WORK

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

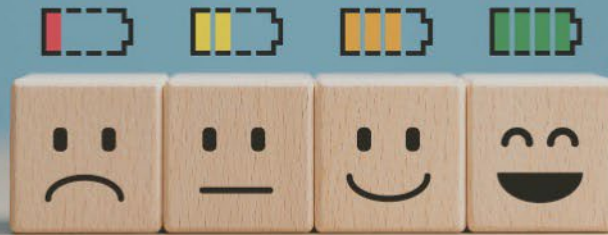
- **Physical energy** activates the body's movements and actions. The amount of physical energy is dictated by one's health, diet, and physical activity.
- **Mental energy** activates the brain to perform cognitive functions. The brain, while only accounting for 2 percent of the body's mass, demands 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.



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.



- **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.

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.



- **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.

Morgan, H. (2023, March 31). Embracing change (B. Schuette & E. Morton, Eds.). Raleigh, NC: Workplace Options (WPO).