

Community and Individual Strategies to improve Mental Health

Check in on yourself

How to take this break

Checking in on yourself during a break can help you relax. Take 5 minutes to think about how you feel without any judgement. Use these questions to guide you through the process of checking in on yourself:

- How am I feeling right now?
- How has the day been so far?
- What will I do today to take care of myself?
- How to take this break
- Share something your co-workers will find funny (but not offensive) such as a cartoon, short video clip, a joke or a movie.
- Why this counts
- In addition to making us feel good, sharing a laugh has several health benefits including lowering blood pressure, reducing stress hormones, increasing memory and learning, and improving alertness and creativity.
- This can make work feel happier, lessen stress, and make you feel more connected and closer to your coworkers.

Ideas for this activity were contributed by:

- Judy Hills, The Psychology Foundation

Set a reminder to breathe deep

How to take this break

Set a reminder/chime on your computer or phone. When the reminder sounds, stop what you're doing, sit still for two minutes and focus on your breathing. Focus on the words 'breathe in' and 'breathe out' to reduce other thoughts going through your mind. Arrange for another reminder to sound after the two minutes.

1. Count to 4 while breathing in deeply through your nose.
2. Count to 7 while holding that deep breath.

3. Count to 8 slowly while exhaling through your mouth.
4. Repeat 4 more times.

Why this counts

Deep breathing is one of the best ways to lower stress in the body because when you breathe deeply, it sends a message to your brain to calm down and relax.

Ideas for this activity were contributed by:

- Janice MacInnis, Coordinator, Organizational Health, Dalhousie University
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- Kathy Nolan, Health & Benefits Consultant, Kwantlen Polytechnic University
- Anyaa Rose, EAP Counselor
- Carla Hanna, Health Promoter, Halton Region Health Dept.
- Dianna Conley, Director, Human Resources, George Derby Centre
- Mary Beth Doyle, EAP Coordinator, Public Service Commission, Gov NL
- Charlene Mo, Workplace Health Consultant, Alberta Health Services
- Juliette Fraser, Return to Work and Wellness Coordinator, District of West Vancouver

Get artsy and crafty

How to take this break

Set aside some space at work for arts and crafts. Start a craft or painting and let everyone add on to it for a surprising result.

Have a coloring activity for other people who may find it easier to do this activity.

Why this counts

We can be energized by activities that make us think of something else beyond work and challenge our capacity for thought and creativity.

Ideas for this activity were contributed by:

- Dr. Owen Garrett, Psychologist, Active Insights Health Care
- Anne Winters, Manager, Interior Health
- Ashley Nichols, Human Resources Advisor, Coastal Community Credit Union

The world loves a smile

How to take this break

Take a break from being focused exclusively on the task at hand. Greet your coworkers with a big smile or send a smiling emoji in your group chat. A smile gives positive emotions to you and the person you are smiling at.

Why this counts

Smiling feels good, can lift your mood and is sure to help lift the spirits of others as well. There is also some evidence that smiling can provide several health benefits including relieving stress, lowering blood pressure and even improving the immune system.

Ideas for this activity were contributed by:

- Kelly Seymour, Director of Human Resources, New Path Youth & Family Services
- Andrea Frustaci, GIS Analyst II, Teck Resources Limited

Start a game reaction

How to take this break

Set aside some space at work for a game such as Scrabble. Let everyone contribute by adding a word to the board. Keep this going until the board is full and start the game again. Other game suggestions are brain teasers, chess and crossword puzzles.

Why this counts

Taking time away from your desk to relax and enjoy a game or creative activity is a great, productive way of releasing stress.

Ideas for this activity were contributed by:

- Dr. Owen Garrett, Psychologist, Active Insights Health Care

- Anne Winters, Manager, Interior Health
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