

# From Slump to Spunk - Seven Stellar Strategies

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While creating the life of our dreams sounds great, many of us would be happy just making it through the day with a bit of energy left over for enjoyment. Here are seven stellar strategies for revving up your energy level and avoiding mid-day slumps. Remember the key is to replenish your energy reserves before total exhaustion takes over. By integrating three to four energy breaks into your workday and adopting a few new perspectives, you will be amazed at the amount of spunk you have.

## Relax Your Body and Mind

Nothing wears us out like being in high gear all day long. If you find your day is one blur of rushed activity from the third time your alarm rings (you barely noticed hitting the snooze button the first two times) until your heads hits the pillow at day's end, it is time to gear down. I know this is easier said than done in our technology-rich world where many people are plugged into their networks 24x7. With today's communication 'conveniences' like email, PDAs, and cellular phones, leaving the office is no longer a reason to stop responding to business emergencies (and everything is an emergency). And let's admit it, there are those among us who are a little addicted to that frenetic pace – at least until we crash and burn. To bring some sanity back to your days, take time to relax your body and mind. Sit in a quiet place. Close your eyes. Take a deep breath in through your nose filling up your lungs. Breathe out through your mouth. Repeat ten times, holding the last breath as long as you comfortably can. As you breathe, feel the energy flowing into your body. Imagine it reaching all the way down your legs, your arms, through your vital organs, and refreshing your mind. Other great ways to take a five minute relaxation break is to put on a mini-meditation CD or listen to soothing music. The few minutes you spend reconnecting with your body and calming your mind will pay you huge dividends in productivity, creativity, and overall wellbeing.

## Take a Nap

I love naps so I just couldn't leave this off the list. The best part is that the latest research on sleep tells us that napping is beneficial to our physical and mental health (I knew it!). Sara Mednick, a sleep researcher and author of the new book, *Take a Nap! Change Your Life* (Workman Publishing) says napping can enhance productivity. Sleep deprivation impairs our

ability to think, to handle stress, to maintain a healthy immune system, and to moderate our emotions. According to Mednick, the optimal napping formula is a 20-minute nap in the afternoon, between 1 p.m. and 3 p.m., right after lunch. This nap will allow you to be as productive right after the nap as you were before. If you want a longer nap but not the groggy feeling, you can sleep about 60 minutes, to get out of deep sleep and into the REM stage of your sleep cycle. A mid-day nap can result in more patience, less stress, better reaction time, increased learning, more efficiency, better health, and, of course, more energy.

## Switch Activities

As my mother always says, “a change is just as good as a rest.” If you have been working on one task for an extended period of time and find your energy waning, try switching to another activity. Ideally shift to an activity that uses your body or mind differently. For example, if you have been working on the computer for an hour, take a quick energy break by walking down the hall to photocopy that report or drop off your outgoing mail to the mail room. If you are working on your computer at home, this is a great time to spend ten minutes tending to the laundry or tidying the living room. To use your mind differently, change to a task that stimulates the opposite side of your brain. Analyzing, memorizing, organizing, and reasoning tasks predominately use the left side of the brain while creative, intuitive, inventive, and visual tasks use the right side of the brain. If you have been analyzing this quarter’s sales figures, try switching to an activity such as selecting the colour scheme and graphics for the presentation you are giving at next week’s staff meeting.

## Get Physical

Before you groan, think beyond typical exercise. You can do a few jumping jacks or sit-ups if that appeals to you, but if just thinking about them leaves you bored and tired, then think to something a little more exciting. Put on zippy music and dance (like no one is watching). Take a walk with your dog or co-worker. Play a game of tag or Dance Dance Revolution with your children. Stretch. Even a few minutes of physical activity will get more oxygen into your blood, burn off the stress toxins that may have been building up, and increase your metabolism. Keep some props at the ready for times when you can’t break away from the desk – like during long conference calls – but need an energy boost. To engage not only physical but also mental energy, try juggling, playing with a yoyo, or shooting hoops with an office-sized sponge basketball and hoop.

## Reframe the Drudgery

In any job there are tasks that we enjoy and tasks that we dislike or outright dread doing. Some of our required tasks, whether at home or at the office, are just plain boring. Luckily, there are strategies we can use to turn these energy-depleting tasks into energizing, even fun, activities. Notice your mental chatter related to these tasks. Instead of focusing on how painful the work will be, congratulate yourself for choosing to complete the task with skill and care. Remind yourself of the beneficial results for you and others of completing the task in a timely and accurate manner. Before beginning the task, take a few deep breaths and imagine completing the task effortlessly and achieving positive results. This retrains your subconscious mind to think of the task in positive terms and eliminates the habitual dread that has been associated with it. Use this visualization before beginning the task, part ways through if things are getting stressful or boring, and at the end of the tasks to cement the positive association. Keep up this practice until your natural association with the previously painful tasks is positive and energizing.

## Make It a Choice

If you are like most people, you don't like being told what to do (I got a double serving of this trait). That is why if we look at our work as a series of tasks we *should do* or *have to do*, our energy depletes and our instinctive resistance sets in. Instead of approaching aspects of your work thinking *should* or *have to*, approach them as *could*, *choose to*, *get to*, or even *want to*. Don't think, "I should call the client who sent in that complaint." Instead say to yourself (and others), "I am looking forward to speaking with the client to resolve their concern." By switching the words we use, we switch the energy that accompanies them. The catch is first you switch the words, and then you switch the emotions behind them. When you say you are looking forward to speaking with the customer, believe it. Look for the opportunity or fun in every situation. Remember that we always have a choice of what we do – yes, choices come with real consequences – but they are choices none the less. Choices are empowering and energizing – don't relinquish your belief in your freedom to choose.

## Practice Honesty

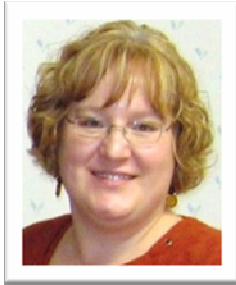
A critical part of managing our energy levels is removing as many energy drains as we can. When we feel compelled to keep our opinions and feelings trapped inside, our energy plummets. In the workplace, and at home, practice expressing yourself in a genuine and respectful way. If this is a departure from your previous behaviour, it may take people a little while to adjust. However, if your true motivation is mutual understanding and cooperation,

most people come around. Any co-worker or boss committed to personal and organizational success will appreciate the honest input. Aside from removing the energy drain, learning how to express yourself clearly and lovingly can be incredibly exhilarating and powerful. Finally, remember the person we need to be most honest with is ourselves. If you find your head chatter being unfairly critical, replace it with honest praise and appreciation for your strengths and accomplishments.

By practicing these tips, you will be able to keep your energy high, have enough steam to get your work done, and enjoy life along the way. As a bonus, these tips also apply to keeping yourself motivated, releasing tension, overcoming procrastination, and breaking through mental block.



## About the Author



Sheila Betker is a success coach who brings energy, expertise, and experience to her coaching, workshops, and teleseminars. With over 14 years of experience in the personal development and organization development fields, she has helped people as they explored career paths, enhanced their personal excellence, and achieved their dreams.

*“Like many people, I have spent the better part of my adult life searching. This has provided me with a strong foundation of beliefs, strategies, and tools that helped me along the way. I am so excited to be able to share those with you.”*

As a habitual life-long learner, Sheila has completed a Master in Business Administration, a Master of Arts, a Certificate in Adult and Continuing Education, and the CTA Certified Coach Training Program.

*“I am perpetually looking for new books, great articles, and the latest tools or techniques. One of the fringe benefits of this search is that I can provide an ever increasing resource section on my website. As I find a resource I love, I will share it with you.”*

Through Freedom to Dream Success Services, Sheila draws from her personal exploration, professional expertise, and formal learning to assist her clients in building the life of their dreams. If you believe her strengths match the support you are looking for, contact Sheila for a free 30-minute coaching consultation.

*“It is my mission to help you connect with your dream of living a purposeful life. Let me support you on the journey to your dreams.”*