

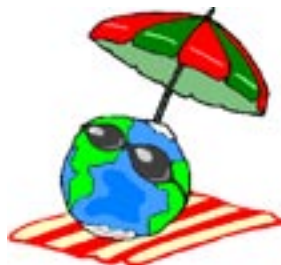
THE EXCHANGE

This issue's featured subject is "Relaxation."

VISUALIZE WITH YOUR EYES

Vincent Ivan Phipps, B.S.

Remember the last time you had a daydream? Remember your last pleasant dream? Remember the last time you relived an enjoyable memory? A visualization is an amazing mental tool that can be used at almost any time to elicit numerous positive emotions including excitement, courage, or even relaxation.



Want an instant vacation?

Want to go back to a time and a place where you were on top of the world? Would you like to give yourself an immediate "push here to relax" button? Visualizing can help. Let's discuss how it works.

The right hemisphere of our brains (the emotional creative side) has a distinctive characteristic; it believes anything we tell it. Quite simply, it is gullible. Whenever you want to relax, think about something and someplace relaxing. A visualization is more than just "thinking", it is mentally placing yourself into your own "mind-movie."

This exercise works best when you incorporate all of the five senses: sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell. Picture yourself in an actual place where you have either been relaxed or where you feel you could relax. This can work whether it is a special room in your home or a far away place you've only heard about. It does not matter how extravagant or conceivable this visualization may be because to the part of your brain you are talking to, you are really there!

Prevent the logical analytical part of your brain from saying, "Are you crazy!?! You've got a ton of work to do, you are tired, hungry, stressed out, and entirely over worked. Stop that silly day dreaming and get back to reality where you can worry and be frustrated without interruptions!" To get the benefits of a relaxing visualization, remember these five steps:

1. Choose a place within your space.

Pick a time and place where you can be still and silent for several minutes. Your desk at the office might not be the best place.

2. Select a destination. Choose a real or fictional place where you can play your mental movie and create the perfect place to relax.

3. Incorporate all of your senses. See colors, shapes, or depths you would see at that place. Hear the sounds of your environment (other people, nature, music...). Feel the texture of what you are walking, sitting, or lying on, and feel the texture of the clothing you are wearing. Taste your favorite foods and consume your favorite beverages. Smell any flowers, beaches, grass, foods, or other favorite aromas.

4. Leave the negativity behind. After doing this exercise at a group workshop, a member of the audience asked, "You know, I feel a lot better, but this is just a goofy exercise to make yourself feel better when you are stressed out, right?" After confirming he felt better, I confidently answered, "Yes it is." Keep your visualization positive. This tool will not erase stress or your responsibilities. It can have a positive impact on how you feel, and therefore how you handle them.

5. Lead with a new attitude! The more you allow yourself to become engulfed in your visualization, the more effective the results. Your body will get a rush of endorphins giving you an "I can handle anything" mentality. Use that positive energy to go forward and tackle the burdens of the moment or day with a relaxed and more controlled disposition.

When feeling overwhelmed, remember to relax and visualize with your eyes.

What Our Clients Are Saying

"You are the first person to give credence to this information. I've heard it before, but never like this!"
Mitch Adams, Dallas TX

"It's the little tidbits of knowledge I'll be remembering and repeating."
Anonymous, Atlanta GA



December 2003

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LOOKING AHEAD:

◆ **TLC has an entire new year of topics ready for you in 2004. Get ready for some exciting learning.**

LOOKING BACK:

- ◆ **For previous editions of The Exchange, go to our [back issues](#).**
- ◆ **Re-read the [08/2002](#) edition: Good Stress.**

Sometimes the most important thing in a whole day is the rest we take between two deep breaths.

Etty Hillesum



Helpful Hints:

- When you make a "to do" list, immediately schedule the activities into your calendar.
- When driving, carefully select the music that you listen to in order to aid in relaxation.

Some of the secret joys of living are not found by rushing from point A to point B, but by inventing some imaginary letters along the way.

Douglas Pagels



To learn more about it, click here!

SMALL TALK IS NOT CHEAP!

"Small talk" is defined in the American Heritage Dictionary as "casual or trivial conversation." Because "casual or trivial" conversation is generally non-work focused in nature, there is the common misconception that it is unimportant or harmful. This can be true when small talk is used to delay (procrastinate) important work or is used to spread negative rumors (gossip). Furthermore, task-oriented people (32% of the population) tend to see small talk as unnecessary, whereas more people-oriented people (68% of the population) see it as an important part of building workplace rapport.

In How to be GREAT in Conversation, published by W. Paul Barton Associates, a Stanford University study is outlined that found that the ability to make conversation was a more important predictor of success for business school graduate students over a twenty year period than grade point averages. Conversational ability is obviously a key professional skill.

What are the benefits of conversational small talk in the workplace? Conversational small talk:

- **Builds rapport.**
- **Increases interpersonal investment** in the value of workplace relationships.
- **Reduces the likelihood of misunderstandings.**
- **Sets the stage for more flexibility and working through potential conflicts.**
- **Gives positive impressions** and builds perceptions of likability and approachability.
- **Allows workers to acknowledge others around them.**

How can you be a better conversationalist? Remember to:

- **Smile.** Smiling at the beginning of an exchange creates an expectation of a relaxed interaction. This will affect what the other person is feeling and likely to share.
- **Use a positive tone.** Remaining positive in verbal and vocal emotional tone affects the other person's perceptions of the kind of person you are; it makes you more likable. It also increases perceptions of your general approachability, something very helpful for managers.
- **Listen with your eyes and ears.** Become an expert when it comes to knowing what is important to the other person by watching body language and listening for their emotional tone.
- **Identify what is most important to the other person.** Discussing topics that

interest the other person most will give them a more gratifying experience when they talk with you. Remember things about their kids, hobbies, and other interests.

- **Reflect/acknowledge the other person's conversational content and emotions.** This is especially important if the other person is upset or frustrated. You do not have to identify with them or agree, simply reflecting an understanding of what the other person is experiencing can allow them to get past their feelings and engage in a more neutral conversation.

- **Take turns.** Avoid interrupting the other person. It is important for each person to have their turn to say what they want. They are more likely to let you have a full turn to talk if they get their's first.

- **Silence is golden.** Avoid "shoe in the mouth disease." It is acceptable for conversations to have a lull. Speaking too quickly may lead to you saying things that reveal too much or offend the other person. Remember that some people are more comfortable with pauses in conversation than others.

- **Follow the other person's topic.** Avoid sudden topic changes from what they are talking about. Sudden topic changes signal that what they are interested in is unimportant to you or that you are not listening.

- **Use bridges to change topics** (see "Building Bridges for Relaxation," on page 3). Ask questions to transition smoothly without making a withdrawal.

- **Never put others down.** Look for positive things to say about those who are not present. While it may sometimes be fun to talk about someone else's shortcomings or missteps, know that the other person in this conversation will assume that you will say similar things about them when they are not around. Build trust by being positive.

Conversational small talk is NOT cheap. Find a good balance for it in the workplace. Use it to build rapport that builds value in your work relationships and is transferable to work-related topics. Enjoy a more productive work experience. Your career success may depend upon it!



CHILL OUT!

This advice may have been given to you when you needed it most! If you want someone to quickly calm down and be more relaxed, "Chill Out!" is an expression you may say. This idiom that originated in the 1970's is commonly used today throughout American culture. But, why do we say it?

Our bodies are chemically designed to stay at a constant temperature of approximately 98.6 degrees. When we exercise and get too hot, we sweat to cool ourselves off. Our body temperature also rises when we are emotional. Think about the last time you were upset and experienced anger, fear, nervousness, confusion or any other strong emotion. When referring to your experience, you may have used expressions such as: "My blood was boiling", "I was boiling mad", or "I was steamed!"

The opposite of heating up is cooling down. Whenever a person demonstrates anger or another "hot" emotion, the quick suggestion is to "calm down" or "cool down." As time passed, expressions meaning to relax, or the opposite of the "heated" expressions became incorporated into our culture. These include: "Cool it", "Take a chill pill", "Stay cool", and "Chill Out!"

During this holiday season, there will be plenty of opportunities to "loose your cool". While traveling, shopping, meeting with others, and partaking in holiday festivities, stay relaxed and remember to just chill out!

CLAIM IT AND RENAME IT

This time of year is filled with obligations that have high expectations. Striving to do more in less time can be stressful. Can be. Does not have to be. Sometimes the stress comes from how the activities are framed and claimed.



For instance, do you hear yourself saying, "I have to find Pat a present"? Or, are you more likely to say, "I get to find Pat a present"? Word choices can have an impact on how we approach a task. For instance, if you say, "I need to go to this party," your attitude may include some reluctance and stress. Choose more positive words and say, "I am invited to this party and I am going to attend." Claim what you are going to do and then re-name it.

While it may seem like small stuff to change a few words here and there, those small things add up. A bundle of small sticks are tougher and harder to break than a solid board of wood. This holiday season, do not allow the little things to add up to big stresses in your life. Listen to yourself and others and claim to be positive. You'll be glad you

BUILDING BRIDGES FOR RELAXATION

By Ben Cairns, M.A.

One of the most relaxing and enjoyable aspects of having conversations with other people is finding out new and interesting things from and about them. A technique outlined in Beverly Inman-Ebel's book, *Talk Is NOT Cheap*, is the BridgeProbe®, a method of getting another person to talk about things that are important to them.

The benefits of getting another person to talk about things that interest them include making a deposit with them, learning new things, understanding more about the other person, avoiding negative topics, knowing what motivates and persuades them, building rapport, and letting the other person do the bulk of the talking in a conversation. In addition to these benefits, the long-term effects include creating more value for the relationship, plus it is fun.

The way to use BridgeProbes® is to ask a question that begins with "What" or "How." Make sure that the question:

1. Uses their topic
2. Uses their phrasing or words, or
3. Is closely related to what they are talking about

Let's say that you are talking with Janis, and she says "I really enjoy travel, especially with my daughters. These are all photos from different places that we have gone together. Here's one on the beach in Greece, and this one is from the Vatican in Rome. I guess you can see that I like taking pictures!" You have a lot of material that you can use for a BridgeProbe® here.

You can ask a question about travel, her daughters, the beach in Greece, Greece in general, Rome, or photography. Feel free to add a comment or otherwise set up your question. The conversation can go in different directions depending on what you decide to use in your BridgeProbe®. Here are some examples of ways you could use BridgeProbes® in this conversation:

- "I am looking forward to travelling with my daughters when they get older. How often do you travel?"
- "That's a beautiful beach in Greece! What can you tell me about the Greek beaches?"
- "I have always wanted to go to Greece. What was it like to travel in Greece?"
- "What did you see at the Vatican?"
- "What kind of camera and film do you use?"

The next BridgeProbe® will use something from her response. If you run out of things to ask about,

Continued on page 4



Remember to...

- **Take a deep breath to increase relaxation. Inhale for 2 seconds; hold for 4 seconds; and release slowly for 8 seconds.**
- **Plan some downtime. Actually schedule an evening with nothing to do.**

Conversation is a meeting of minds with different memories and habits. When minds meet, they don't just exchange facts: they transform them, reshape them, draw different implications from them, engage in new trains of thought. Conversation doesn't just reshuffle the cards; it creates new cards.

Theodore Zeldin

There is more to life than increasing its speed.
Mohandas K. Gandhi



Tension is who you think you should be. Relaxation is who you are.

Chinese Proverb

FEATURED SERVICE: Success Is A Decision of the Mind

Beverly's newest book, *Success Is A Decision of the Mind*, that she co-authored, is scheduled to be shipped to TLC and bookstores by the end of this month. For an autographed copy of this hardback (\$20.95) just call us at 1-888-BECAUSE to order.

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CEO CORNER: Relax Your Way

By Beverly Inman-Ebel, MA CCC-SLP

Do you ever feel like a hypocrite? That was my first thought when I realized I had to contribute to this month's edition devoted to relaxation. This week alone, I have slept in five different states. I programmed my new cell phone as I strolled down airport terminals, purchased Christmas presents through airline magazines, ate some pretty strange meals served at luncheons while striving to maintain my diet, and worked diligently to be a long-distance CEO, wife, and mother.

While I fully understand the necessity for taking time to relax the body, soul, and mind, I questioned whether I was applying that knowledge. How could I expect others to listen to my advice if I was not willing to accept it myself? This gave me reason to pause and reflect upon my last two weeks.

While in Manhattan, I took in a Broadway musical with a dear old friend and mentor. When I became ill, I cancelled a day of meetings to fly home and see my physician. I spent a day with my younger son touring my alma mater and reliving my youth. In a twenty-four-hour weekend, I watched my favorite team win a big game, went to an apple orchard with my father on his 81st birthday, and stood out under the stars surrounded by my beloved family watching the lunar eclipse.

After a closer look, I realized that I relaxed my way. I packed my family and social time into my busy schedule. In just a few days, I will travel to Ohio to visit my family while visiting more colleges with my son. I'll also take some time to hug some nieces and nephews, have a heart-to-heart talk with my sister, and find reasons to laugh. When life gets busy, I get busy relaxing. That may not be your style, nor does it need to be. Relax your way. Cram in some fun or chill out by a crackling fire. Keep your balance by varying your activities. Keep your options open and whenever possible, plan ahead. Relax regularly...your way. Live your dreams!



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ASK THE EXPERTS



Dear TLC,

I am not sleeping at night because I think I have too much to do at my job. My productivity is slipping and I am afraid this is going to negatively affect my work.

Help!

Dear Help,

One cause of not sleeping is that the left hemisphere of the brain does not shut down. One technique is to imagine that you are standing in front of a white board and you draw a big circle. Write the number 100 inside the circle making sure you do not touch the sides of the circle. Then write "I am sleepy" over the top of the circle. Next, erase the number and replace it with the number 99. Continue this process. This will totally bore your left hemisphere and it will shut off...and that is when you fall asleep.

BUILDING BRIDGES FOR RELAXATION, continued from page 3

you can always use something mentioned earlier. "You said that you use a Nikon EM. What do you suggest someone look for in a camera?"

Remember to be genuine with your attention and be a good listener. Use Neutral Comments (for example, "Uh-huh," "Wow!", "OK," "That's interesting," "I didn't know that!"). I had a client who turned a negative relationship around in one conversation using BridgeProbes®. This can be a powerful tool. Perhaps the biggest benefit is that using bridges to bond with another person can be one of the most relaxing and enjoyable interpersonal experiences that you can have!