

## **Taking Care of Yourself While Taking Care of Business.**

**By Sharon L. Bowman, MA**

Professional Speaker and Corporate Trainer  
Director, The Lake Tahoe Trainers Group

P.O. Box 564, Glenbrook, NV 89413  
Phone: 775-749-5247 Fax: 775-749-1891  
E-Mail: SBowperson@aol.com Web-Site: www.Bowperson.com



It was a special sibling moment - a shared secret that now bonds us forever. Over coffee one morning, my brother, a Certified Public Accountant, confessed to me, "Sharon, no one knows this about me, and it may sound totally weird, but I LIKE crunching numbers."

I don't. My worst nightmares have to do with numbers. I get a headache just thinking about budgets and spreadsheets, forms and formulas. I delegate the budgeting details of my small business when I can. When I can't, I sweat the process each

fiscal year, vowing to do it differently next time.

The stress of it all plays havoc with my body - tight neck, shoulders, and back, upset stomach, not to mention the frequent headaches and general peevishness. And, while I know that figuring out how to do the budgeting process in a more efficient manner is important, taking care of myself while in the middle of the number-crunching is probably more important for my health and sanity. My co-workers and family would definitely agree on that point.

With that in mind, I've made a simple list of wellness reminders that I've taped to the side of my computer. Reading them daily will help me remember to be kind to myself as I navigate the numbers. Doing them daily will make my body ecstatic and my mind grateful for the care. And who knows? Maybe, just maybe, I might experience a moment of

pleasure (however brief!) in crunching numbers too!

## **WELLNESS REMINDERS**

### **REMEMBER TO BREATHE:**

Sounds simple, but interestingly enough, when we are feeling tense, we forget to breathe. Actually, we take shallow breaths or hold our breath for a few seconds - either way, we don't get enough oxygen to fuel our brain which makes for fuzzy thinking as well as "fuzzy math."

According to Jeff Davidson in his book *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Managing Stress*, "Breathing is fundamental to our ability to function optimally and maintain a feeling of ease and control."

Here's the profound secret about breathing: we can't stay tense and breathe deeply at the same time - it's a physiological impossibility. Taking a few slow, deep breaths relaxes the body as it sends more oxygen to the brain. And that's good for both the body and the mind.

So every thirty minutes, I stop working on the budget and take a momentary "breathing break." I set a timer if I have to. Or I attach a bit of string or ribbon to my wristwatch in the morning.

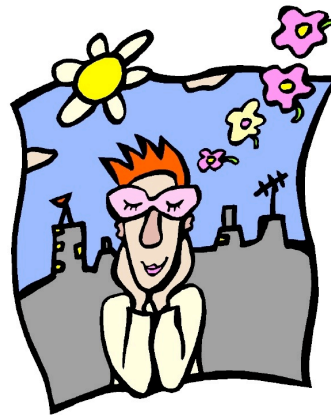
Whenever I look at it during the day, I stop and breathe - slowly, deeply, as my stomach expands and my chest rises. The momentary feeling of peace is well worth it.

*I've got to keep breathing.  
It'll be my worst  
business mistake if I don't.*

Sir Nathan Rothschild

### **REFRAME THE PICTURE:**

In the book *Going Lightly*, author Sharon Bowman tells us that "our bodies can't tell the difference between what is real and what isn't." Our physical reactions to the budgeting process are directly connected to how we perceive and interpret that situation - the pictures we hold inside our head about it. So one of the easiest ways to change stress-related symptoms is to change the mental picture. Neurolinguistic Programming (NLP) experts call this "reframing."



For example, instead of looking at balancing the books as a painful situation to be endured, I remind myself that my budget is what makes my company accountable and profitable. It is one of the tools that helps me create the financial abundance I desire. It charts my yearly course and helps keep me on track. (Thinking this way almost makes me grateful for my number-filled spreadsheet!)

***One way to get  
high blood pressure  
is to go mountain climbing  
over molehills.***

Earl Wilson

**MOVE ABOUT:** Sometimes it's hard for us to reframe the picture when we're overloaded with budget deadlines. At that point we need to DO something to change the physical and mental tension we feel.



In his book *Stress for Success*, Dr. David Lewis reminds us of the power of movement to dissipate the stress-related hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol. These hormones give us strength to move when we feel physically or psychologically threatened. If we don't use up these "fight/flight messengers," they eventually suppress the immune system and we get sick.

Every hour I take a movement break. I stand and stretch. I go get a drink of water. I wiggle my fingers and toes and scrunch up my face. I walk outside and then raise my arms to the sky and stretch my back. I bend over and let my arms dangle in front of me. I shake out my hands. I jog in place for a minute or two. I take a few slow, deep breaths. My body signals its gratitude by serving me well for the next hour of work.

***My grandmother started  
walking five miles a day  
when she was sixty.  
She's ninety-five now,  
and we don't know  
where the hell she is.***

Ellen Degenerias

**SHORTEN THE TIME:** Most stress management books point out that “work expands to fill the time available.” When we have a day to complete a certain task, we’ll probably work on it for most of that time. If, however, we only have a couple of hours to complete the same task, we work differently in order to get more done within the shorter time span.

So we trick ourselves with an imaginary deadline. We divide up the task into manageable chunks and give ourselves shorter time lines in which to complete the pieces.

I make a schedule of budgeting steps to accomplish each day and set a time limit for each task. If I’m not finished with the work by the end of the time allotted, I reschedule the rest for the next day or borrow another hour later in the day if I have to. But I stop for the moment and move onto something else. Often just doing that causes me to finish the work faster.

***I like work; it fascinates me.  
I can sit and look at it for hours.***

Jerome K. Jerome

**TAKE THIS LIGHTLY:** In *Going Lightly*, reference is made to the Ten-Year Question: “*In ten years, will I feel the same way about this? Will it really matter to me? Will I even remember it?*” The question is helpful when remembering that we can indeed lighten up on ourselves and stop taking the world and our work so very seriously. Sure, it IS serious enough, and getting the budget completed in a timely fashion IS important. But when we remember that everything fits into a larger picture called “life,” we can let go of some of the angst of the moment.



I take mini-vacations throughout the day - a moment here to smell the wildflowers, a minute there to watch the clouds race across the sky. Thirty seconds to savor a sip of tea, thirty minutes to walk to the beach and back. All these tiny things remind me that life is full of gifts to enjoy. They remind me to take myself and my world a little more lightly.

***Don't take yourself  
too seriously.  
And don't be too serious  
about not taking yourself  
too seriously.***

Howard Ogden

**POST-SCRIPT:** My day feels so different when I stop and do a few of the wellness reminders. My body relaxes, my thinking is clearer, my emotional attitude brightens. And I can report to my CPA brother that numbers are becoming my friends, and not the stuff of nightmares any longer!

***The last time I saw her,  
she was walking down  
Lover's Lane,  
holding her own hand.***

Fred Allen

---

**Resources:**

Bowman, Sharon. *Going Lightly! Terrific Tips to Lighten Your Daily Load.*

Davidson, Jeff. *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Managing Stress.*

Lewis, Dr. David. *Stress for Success.*

Greenberg, David. *Thank God It's Monday! Designing a Life You Love Beyond the Weekend.*

McGee-Cooper, Ann. *Time Management for Unmanageable People.*

Patzlaff, Sylvia. *Doing More with Less. How To Get Control of the Time You Have.*

---



Author and traveling teacher Sharon Bowman helps educators and business people “teach it quick and make it stick,” - fine-tuning their information-delivery skills and turning their passive listeners into active learners.

Sharon is the author of six popular teaching, training, and motivation books, including: “*Preventing Death by Lecture*,” “*Presenting with Pizzazz*,” “*How To Give It So They Get It*,” and “*Shake, Rattle, and Roll*.” She is a member of the National Speakers Association and the director of The Lake Tahoe Trainers Group.

She is also the “Trainer’s Coach,” helping individual teachers and trainers polish existing lessons and training programs, and creating new ones that reach all learners.

For more information about Sharon Bowman and her books and training, log onto [www.Bowperson.com](http://www.Bowperson.com), or email her at [SBowperson@aol.com](mailto:SBowperson@aol.com).

For book orders, go to [www.trainerswarehouse.com](http://www.trainerswarehouse.com), [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com), or call *Bowperson Publishing at 775-749-5247.*

---