

Managing Your Workflow

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Management column

It's All About Controlling Your Energy

By Jacquelyn Lynn

It never seems to stop: Customers, colleagues, family, and friends are all demanding a share of your time and attention, and you just can't get everything done. It's enough to wear you out, and often does. "There's an epidemic of exhaustion in the workplace," says Judith Orloff, M.D., a psychiatrist, assistant clinical professor of psychiatry at UCLA, and author of *Positive Energy* (Harmony Books). "People go to work, they're tired, they're depressed, and they're dragged out." If that sounds familiar, Orloff says there is a way to turn things around. You can manage your workflow, reduce your stress, and eliminate fatigue by focusing on positive energy.

"When you're stressed, you lose your temper, it's harder to be nice, and it's harder to really support others in your environment and create a team that's supportive," she says. "The business owner has to learn how to emit positive energy and feel it in herself so she can inspire the same in others. If you don't embody it, there's no way you'll be able to transmit it to others." Orloff's advice goes beyond making "to do" lists and prioritizing tasks. She offers these "prescriptions" to improve your workflow:

- **Do a three-minute mini-meditation before you go to work.** "Calm yourself down so you come from a very positive place before you start work," she says. "Just spend three minutes [meditating] so you begin your day from a place of centeredness and well being."
- **Be in the now.** "Focus yourself in the here and now, instead of having your mind projected into the future," Orloff says. "If you are projecting all of your fears and concerns into the future, you can't be effective in the moment. Focus on what's right in front of you and do a good job, instead of being afraid of what might happen."
- **Protect yourself from "energy vampires."** Orloff says, "These are the people who will suck your energy dry if you let them." She says the way to know you're dealing with energy vampires is if you feel drained after a conversation with them. When you must interact with an energy vampire, don't be an enabler. Don't allow him to control the situation; instead, set your own boundaries, limit the time you spend with him, stay neutral and keep yourself centered, and create a mental shield to protect yourself from his negativity. Above all, don't try to fix his problems.
- **Think positive and use affirmations to replace negative thoughts.** "There are a million fears when you're in business, but you can't let those fears rule you," says Orloff. "Affirm that you're going to have a wonderful day and it's going to be extremely productive. Say that to yourself and also communicate it to your employees. Focus on the positive and on what's working, and encourage your employees to do the same."
- **Tap into a power larger than yourself.** "Spirituality has been shown to improve health and well being, increase the immune system, speed up recovery from illness," Orloff says. "When you have all that going for you, bring it into the workplace—it can only benefit you. Make contact with a spiritual energy; you can call it God, or spirit, or love, whatever. Feel it helping you. You don't have to push every bit of the way."

All of the time management techniques in the world won't help if there is negativity in your environment. "When you're going with positive energy, it fuels you, it allows you to move more smoothly," says Orloff. "When you know what you have to do and you do it, you're like a finely tuned machine. The benefits of managing your workflow through increasing positive energy are that you will have more clarity, you'll be calmer, and you'll have more patience. Come from a positive place and you'll be surprised at how much gets done."

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