

Four Tools for Quieting Your Brain - And Finding Peace Throughout Your Day

Hello and welcome. If you're here, you're probably hoping to find a little more peace and calm in your day.

And if you're anything like many of us, you've probably experienced runaway thoughts. Those kind of moments where your brain keeps going in one direction – or in every different direction – and you can't seem to turn it off or quiet things down a bit.

You know...those times when you have an event coming up in your future – a trip somewhere, a job interview or presentation (ha!), and for the days and weeks leading up to it, you can't stop thinking about it. What to pack. What to wear. What route to take. What to say. What to do. ARGHHHHH! Your thoughts are spinning in circles.

Or maybe you've experienced those times when you should be paying attention to something... your child's performance or game, or the conference call at work and you can't stop thinking about paying the cable bill, what to do about dinner, questioning if you made that dentist appointment, trying to recall if you looked into that thing your mother asked you about.

And on and on those thoughts go. Where they'll stop, nobody knows. That can't be just me, right?

The good news, you're not alone. It happens to all of us.

Even better news, there are ways to stop all that noise and chaos and find some peace. Today, I'm going to show you four simple tools that can help you do just that. And no special equipment is needed.

But before we even get started, I'd like us to set an intention for what we'd like to get out of our time together.

This is actually a useful tool to use for getting clear about what you want. It works great for meetings – and those dreaded conference calls – or even events or parties. I actually used this tool once for my first music festival. I was stressing over making sure I would be prepared for anything and everything (especially for the porta-potty experience) and how I'd handle the crowds, and I realized that I needed to quiet my brain and find a little peace.

I took a moment to focus on what I wanted to get out of that experience. It's honestly as easy as stating what you want. I will have a fun time, listen to some great music, and relax with my husband. Boom! That's easy. You don't need to go any further with it.

Keep it short. Keep it sweet. Keep it focused.

What do you expect to get out of this gathering today? Will you learn tools to help you quiet your brain? Maybe you'll just be open to learning more. Whatever works for you.

That was our first tool. Now that that's done, we'll move on to the other three tools in our toolbox – they're not really in any particular order.

You don't have to use them all – but you can. Play around with them. Go with what works best for you, in that moment. I find that different tools work best for me at different times.

MAKING A DECISION

Next up... making a decision. We make decisions all day long. Some are important and life-altering decisions – accepting a job offer, moving across the country, choosing a college, starting a family, etc. Other decisions aren't nearly as important – which shoes to wear, where to go for lunch, which book to read next.

Think about it, you have a decision now to sit here or to walk away (please don't walk away). I have a decision to make on whether I take the next step or stand still. All day long, we make decisions.

Oftentimes, when asked a question, we reply with a casual "I don't know" or "I don't care" or even the bland, emotionless "whatever". My suggestion, is for you to make a decision. If something big is keeping you up at night, make a decision. Maybe you'll give yourself a deadline to finalize your answer. Maybe your decision is to research more. Or maybe your decision is as simple as "no".

I had a coach that taught me to give those big decisions (well, any decision, really) a thought and ask yourself, do you feel excited (Hell yes!!) or do you feel tight, constricted, grumpy, or sad (hell no!!). I've found that this technique works wonders.

But that's not all, once you get that feeling down, you need to actually MAKE that decision. Taking on that new project? Joining a new committee for PTA? Going to see Lizzo at the Palladium? Hell yes or hell no? "thank you for thinking of me. This sounds like a great project/concert/activity. I'm so bummed that I can't work on that/join you, this time around."

Think of any decision you're not making, as being an open tab in your browser. Eventually, your computer will slow down and get sluggish.

That's because, that inability to make a decision can often leave you frozen or unmoving. Any decision, is going to be better for you than no decision and being clogged or at a standstill.

TAKE A BREATH

Take a deep breath. Right now.

No, really.

Now another. And just one more.

Believe it or not, most of us spend a lot more time holding our breath than you might think.

Crazy, right? I mean we've been breathing our whole lives. Except when we're totally congested or maybe unexpectedly underwater. Yet we rarely stop and think about how we breath or even how shallow our breathing might be.

Did you know that we often hold our breath when we're in transition?

We hold our breath when we wait for someone to answer the phone. We tend to hold our breath as we change the channels. We even hold our breath as we wait for our cars to turn over. And let's not forget all those times we hold are breath as we hit "send" or "update" on all our social networks and emails.

That's a lot of time holding breath.

Here are 2 simple ways you can practice intentional breathing.

- Alternate nostril breathing
- 4-7-8 breathing

MAKE A LIST

You know what feels good, marking something off of a list. There's a sense of accomplishment. You did it. It's complete. Time to move on. Next!

I'll admit it, I'm a list maker. I have lists on my phone, on a sticky app on my computer, on the fridge, in my purse, next to where I sit on the couch. Well, pretty much anywhere and everywhere. I like lists.

But the reason list making is my favorite tool for stopping my brain from spinning circles is that it's so simple. You can do it in your head or you can write it down. Both have a time and a place.

I find that if I write up a list of to do's before I go to bed each night, I can fall asleep faster. My brain isn't working overtime to remind me to do xyz tomorrow. For others, this might not get it out of the brain, so much as giving the brain something to focus on.

Some folks like to start their day by creating a list of tasks for the day. This allows them to start their day with more clarity and focus. It allows for a way to prioritize what tasks get completed and in what order.

But ToDo lists aren't the only kind of lists out there. Many writers of fiction keep lists of everything from potential names and locations, to quotes that might show up in a book, or songs that might end up in a character's scene or on their playlist.

Still others use lists as a way to keep track of things they've accomplished. Or things they might wish to yet accomplish, like a bucket list.

One of my favorite characters in a book series I love, makes lists in his head to keep from acting out aggressively. Again, this gives his brain something else to focus on when he feels out of control.

GRATITUDE LIST

And there's the gratitude list. This is another great way that you can use a list to bring some peace into your day to day. When you're feeling overwhelmed, or maybe right before you go to sleep, take a moment and create a list of 2-3 things that you're grateful for.

Don't worry about thinking too small or repeating yourself. It's all about staying in the moment and being grateful. So if you're thankful you can breathe, go with it. Even if you're thankful for breathing each and every day. Eventually, something different will pop up for you.

Let's be honest, there is no right and wrong here.

If you really feel like this gratitude is just too much work, focus on your senses and something that brings you joy... Seeing last night's purple sunset. Hearing the sleeping, snoring sounds from your dog. The taste of dark chocolate as it melts in your mouth. Feeling the hot water wash over you in the shower after a long day. Smelling that morning coffee as you're finally waking up.

You don't need to pick something for all five sense. This is about what works for you and helps you get out of that go, go, go of your brain and quieting things down.