

Work and Your Mental G.I.F.T.S.

By Laura G. Farres, Ph.D., Ch. P.C.

Every individual can learn to use their mental GIFTS to optimize their focus and ultimately their performance. For success at work individuals need to make their mental GIFTS a part of their daily routine.

Goals

Goals give individuals something to work toward and a clear vision for the day. They can help individuals maintain focus under pressure situations and when distractions arise.

Here are some suggestions for making goals a regular part of your daily work routine:

- Set clear goals at the beginning of each day and write them down. These goals should relate to the high priority tasks as well as to your personal strategies for achieving those tasks. Be clear and specific when setting the goals and give timelines for when you want the tasks completed.
- Evaluate your goals at the midpoint of each day and after successful completion of a task. Make any necessary modifications and reset goals if they achieved ahead of schedule or delayed for whatever reason. Note any distractions or challenges that may have occurred.
- Evaluate your goals at the end of the day along with your personal strategies in achieving those goals. Note the accomplishments and what went well. Note the challenges and distractions that may have arisen. Make recommendations to your process and practice. Be sure to record your answers.

Imagery

Imagery helps individuals prepare for their day, deal with pressure situations, and instill confidence and belief.

Here are some suggestions for making imagery a regular part of your daily work routine:

- Right when you wake up in the morning and before getting out of bed, run through in your mind the days events and plans and how you would like them to unfold. Allow yourself to envision your day exactly as you would like to be.
- Before a meeting or a presentation, take a moment to run through in your mind what you would like to do and how you will go about doing it. Try and see, hear and feel yourself as if you were actually there.

Feelings

Stress and emotions are a big part of the work experience. Everyday, goals are set, expectations outlined, activities pursued and positive and negative outcomes experienced. Individuals can learn how to manage their stress and emotions during work to keep them at an optimal level and to prevent them from becoming unmanageable.

Here are some suggestions for integrating feeling management into your daily routine:

- Throughout the course of the day, be sure to have preplanned breaks or moments where you can minimize the amount of stimuli you are processing even if it is only to get out of your environment for a few minutes. For example, if you take lunch, be sure to find a

place to eat that is quiet and relatively distraction free to allow your mind a moment to be at peace.

- After a stressful event, such as business interaction or presentation, be sure to do a personal debrief regarding the positives, challenges and adjustments to your performance. Debriefing allows for an acknowledgement of thoughts or feelings around an event and a focus on your controllables as a performer. It is an important part of managing your day-to-day feelings.
- Integrate relaxation strategies into your day like listening to relaxing music as your work, taking a few deep breaths and relaxing tense areas of your body periodically throughout the day, or going for a walk or run at lunch time to stretch or get some exercise and fresh air. (Interestingly, when individuals are the most stressed, they are less likely to do the little things they need to manage stress. Making sure these elements are part of your daily routine can help ensure they are maintained regardless)

Thoughts

At work, it can be easy to get negative or frustrated or to complain about situations. Indeed about 80% of human thoughts on a day-to-day basis are negative. Negative thoughts whether about the environment or the self can take away energy and make individuals lose focus on the task at hand.

Here are some suggestions for integrating thought management into your daily routine:

- Have a clear idea of how you want to be as seen as a worker. Define specifically your key words that define you such as: trustworthy, positive, respectful, hard worker. Write these down and keep them somewhere for you to review.
- When a situation arises that challenges you, consider how you would ideally like to respond and have some reminder statements that you say to yourself to keep your performer on track.
- At the end of each day, look for your highlights for the day. Identify the positive things that happened. In order to keep your perspective on track, you sometimes need to challenge yourself to find the positives in a situation first before moving on to the things you want to change.

Support

Performance can be supported by planning, monitoring and evaluating performance. It is important to be aware of personal routines and strategies that create the best possible state for key business interactions. Awareness of performance can also be supported through others who give insight and feedback that can facilitate professional growth.

Here are some suggestions for integrating support strategies into your daily work routine:

- Prior to presentations or big meetings have a routine you follow that allows you to feel confident, comfortable and focused.
- Develop your support network. Find people that support and challenge you in a way that helps you feel like you are learning and growing. Have a few key people that you can chat with to gain perspective.
- Ask for feedback regarding your performance. Try and be specific and ask for feedback based on areas that you are working on. For example, if you are working on presenting

your ideas more clearly using three main points and summarizing at the end, then ask a colleague to pay particular attention to that aspect of your presentation.

Integrating mental strategies into the daily work routine provides opportunity to keep the “work performer” confident, focused and emotionally at the right level. There are numerous strategies that can be done both during and outside of work that can enhance performance even more. Contact drLaura@mindinmotion.ca for more information.