

7 steps to boost your energy & productivity

Follow the easy guide and I promise you will get results



LOTTE KLARSKOV
EXECUTIVE COACH

My path

If you wish success and fulfilment to continue, you need to thrive and to deepen your relations in your professional work as well as your private life. You have opened the right door to getting the support you need. I will help you learn and grow with these gratifying ways of working.

After years in management jobs in corporate businesses and consultant businesses I happened to be offered an exciting opportunity to start up a new business area as an offshoot of a mature business.

I knew from experience how important it is to gain acceptance and be able to collaborate with existing managing partners in the business.

My team and I became involved with the business to understand it better. And we trained and inspired the existing business employees and partners.

At the same time, I was working hard to get people on board, to set up procedures, and to find a way for our new business area to gain momentum.

I knew that to earn the respect of the managing partners, what I needed most was quick financial results. And I tried to provide these by doing hours and hours of executive coaching, often all day and several days in a row.

The collaboration and support from the other partners were nearly absent.

They were polite, but reluctant, and failed to act. I was frustrated with our situation. I felt left to fend for myself, with almost no support, and I started to wonder if I belonged there at all. I started to feel insecure.

I worked harder and longer to be accepted by the managing partners. I was convinced that I could solve the unspoken problem by overperforming. But instead I got more and more insecure and frustrated. I felt like I was being sidetracked.

I didn't really see *the signs* until late in the process, because I was so keen to become an accepted partner and I wanted to succeed. As a consequence, I was far too slow *to take action* and confront the managing partners with the unhealthy situation of their missing action.

As you may yourself have tried, I kept trying to fix the problem by working more and more.

After a year I was exhausted and devastated. I had worked so hard, but the situation hadn't changed. It was like being part of a team on paper, but not in real life. I decided to stop and back down from the business.

Now I stood alone, and I decided to keep working with what I enjoyed most, but to do it in a way that recharged instead of draining my energy. I wanted work to be rewarding and joyful, to have energy to thrive while also having mutually supporting and rewarding business relations. I decided to start on my own.

I knew that I had some personal development to do. The hard lesson learnt from my previous job was that I needed to be more aware of my needs and I needed to act when my boundaries were violated. I embarked on a journey to learn from that experience and made an even deeper shift in my focus, which I would summarise as; *from ambition to meaning*.

I have merged experience and knowledge from my previous management jobs and my years as a consultant and executive coach into a way of coaching and consulting that brings a sustainable and successful advantage for my customers.

I have added my best learning from more than 900 hours of studying psychology, social science, neuroscience and leadership, thereby creating a method that keeps my clients in tune with themselves and sustainably engaged in business goals and strategy. They learn how to positively influence their team, peers and their superiors in a way that makes them stand out as authentic and inspiring senior leaders.

One advantage of using this method is its power to keep you engaged and thriving even though the top managers aren't aligned or are giving you diverse signs or information. You won't feel insecure or frustrated but can learn to thrive and to keep your momentum, even in chaotic or uncertain situations.

When you use this method, it's easy to keep sight of the meaning of your work and sustain your commitment. To make your job fulfilling and full of meaning you must take care of yourself, and you need to deepen your relations in your professional and private life.

I have tuned the method to ensure your sustained leadership success, while at the same time making a meaningful and fulfilling career.

It's made as a mastermind setup to give you support and opportunities for networking with other experienced leaders. If you are more interested in the Mastermind or individual coaching, you can read about my coaching [here](#) or contact me at mail@leaderswhoinspire.com

Start today and get some of the benefits from neuroscience which will help you make better decisions and solve complex problems. Start implementing the 7 activities described in this guide, do it today.

When you have implemented the 7 activities, you will find it easy to choose a state of joyful calmness, even when business is chaotic.

You will be in better contact with your intuition and your unconscious mind, making faster and better decisions, and you will feel more energized all-day long.

Leaders WHO Inspire

Should you have questions or want to contact with me please don't hesitate. Wishing you a meaningful and fulfilling career.

Best regards

Lotte Klarskov

Founder & Executive Coach

mail@leadersWHOinspire.com

7 steps to boost your energy and productivity

A step by step guide to optimising your brain and mind

As a senior leader you have a lot of attention towards you. You may have complex situations to manage and many, often diverse, decisions to take. At the same time, you have people who are depending on you.

You, on the other hand, depend on your brain's ability to keep focus, to recharge its energy, and to ensure optimal mental capacity.

Taking decisions and delivering high performance all day long, week after week, draws heavily on your energy. What may be even harder is to stay on top of the game while being able to take good care of yourself and your loved ones.

Social neuroscience has found that we can improve our mind and keep it healthy by managing seven daily activities. The seven activities as well as how to implement each of them are described in this guide.

Many find it hard to focus as the incoming "noise" is overwhelming.

In our busy world, with new challenges arriving faster and faster, more complex situations needing to be handled, and a steady growth of the number of emails, employees, peers, stakeholders, and social media to respond to, it's easy to get overwhelmed or feel fatigue.

If this is your situation from time to time, you know how difficult it is to get the right things done. It's easy to end up prioritising the most urgent tasks instead of the most important tasks.

When you incorporate the seven essential activities in your daily plan you will boost your energy and your productivity. You will also have more influence, as you will be better at connecting with people around you.

Advantages directly transferred to your leadership role:

- your ability to concentrate and focus gets better
- you will make better decisions
- your productivity will increase
- it will be easier to find solutions to complex problems
- your ability to connect and have healthy relationships will improve
- you will thrive on allowing your mind to recharge
- you will feel more energised and will be better at handling stress
- when you become aware of the difference this makes for your well-being, you will most likely be motivated to inspire and influence others to do the same.

What are the 7 proven activities that optimise your mind?

To make our brain and mind work effectively and stay healthy we can learn from social neuroscience. Dr Daniel J. Siegel, Clinical Professor at UCLA and Dr David Rock, Executive Director of the NeuroLeadership Institute, have formulated the seven daily essential activities that will fuel the brain and make the healthy mind function at its best.

The seven daily activities help the brain to better regulate and optimise brain matter and reinforce the brain's circuits. When the brain is better able to integrate different brain areas as well as strengthen connections to the remaining body, it will work better.

A healthy mind includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices.

The seven daily activities for a healthy and effective mind

Below is a figure showing the seven activities that need to be incorporated into your daily practise to get the benefits from a healthy and effective mind.

To help you get a realistic picture of your current situation and knowledge about what happens when you introduce the 7 activities I have made some easy to fill in sheets for you. Get the observation [sheets](#).

Focus time

Connecting
time

Play time

Down time

Time in

Sleep time

Physical time

Most people don't think they can optimise their brain

In contrast to what most people think about their brain, the brain is a part of your body that really gives you credit when you take good care of it.

And into the bargain, the seven essential activities give you many positive side effects.

These positive side effects include your emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel and act.

Being in a leader position, you have a lot of attention towards you and from time to time you probably experience tension and pressure. You are confronted with complex situations where people trust that not only can you handle it, but you can handle it well.

That's one of the reasons why it's so important that you commit to do these seven activities each and every day. Another important reason is the ripple effect. When a leader takes up new activities people around her will take notice. When the new activities have a positive impact, people around you get curious.

You can then have a ripple effect. People around you will start asking you what you are doing to be so effective. Then more of your colleagues, peers and employees can be introduced to the idea and get started as well. It may make a

very positive impact to the overall well-being and performance of your department, section or even company.

Don't do like most people, instead commit to be a role model and get all the positive effects by implementing the seven essential activities into your daily routines.

Implement the seven activities in easy steps. Start with one activity every second day and you will have yourself up and running in 2 weeks.

When you implement the essential activities and turn them into routines, it can become as natural to do them every day as brushing your teeth.

In the figure below, you will find a description of each of the seven activities:

Type of Activity:	Description of the Activity
Focus time	When we closely focus on tasks in a goal-oriented way, we take on challenges that make deep connections in the brain.
Connecting time	When we connect with other people, ideally in person, and when we take time to appreciate our connection to the natural world around us, we activate and reinforce the brains circuits.
Play time	When we allow ourselves to be spontaneous or creative, playfully enjoying novel experiences, we help make new connections in the brain.
Down time	When we are non-focused with no specific goal, and let our mind wander or simply relax, we help the brain recharge.
Time in	When we quietly reflect internally, focusing on sensations, images, feelings and thoughts, we help to better integrate brain areas.
Sleep time	When we give the brain the rest it needs, we consolidate learning and recover from experiences of the day.
Physical time	When we move our bodies, aerobically if medically possible, we strengthen the brain in many ways.

You can double your productivity, reduce your stress level significantly, improve your overall well-being and strengthen your influence, just by doing the seven essential activities every day. Don't hesitate, start now!

You can download an easy to use form to see how well you are doing at the moment in each activity, make a gap analysis and plan for your implementation of activities. Download the easy to use form [here](#)

When you do these activities every day you strengthen your brain's internal connections and you strengthen connections with other people and the world around you as well.

Leaders WHO Inspire

How to implement the seven activities to optimise your mind's capacity

The way to benefit the most from this knowledge is to start implementing it in your life. Then start to notice the difference in your mental capacity and your well-being.

Be sure to implement at least one of the seven essential activities from today.

If focusing on all activities at once is too much, start by implementing one of the activities. It's better to start with one activity you feel like doing than to postpone the first step.

When you have implemented the first activity as a natural part of your daily routine, you are ready to start implementing the next activity. Remind yourself that doing the activities daily will help you succeed.

How to implement each of the seven activities is described in the coming text. The amount of time spent on each activity may vary according to your situation, circumstances and need.

How to get better at the activity **Focus time**

When we closely focus on tasks in a goal-oriented way, we take on challenges that make deep connections in the brain.

Most leaders are familiar with focusing closely on a task or a project in a goal-oriented way. The effect will be even better if it's a task that you have a special talent for and if focusing on the task makes you lose count of time and everything else than the task at hand. This type of focus is also called flow or in the zone. This way of working is a very productive and satisfactory way of working. When distractions are deliberately diminished, and the task ahead is challenging and stretching your talent, you have to concentrate and keep your focus.

This type of action makes deep connections in the brain and is very rewarding.

When you are in the habit of doing focused work as a morning routine your productivity will rise significantly and may very well double.

One of the best ways to do this is to plan ahead. When you have planned what you want to work on, you don't need to use energy to make the difficult decision as to what is most important.

The first thing you should do in the morning, when you start working, is to have Focus Time and work on your most important project or task. Don't work on the most urgent one, work on the most important one.

Don't open your email or any social media, don't listen to your voicemail. Don't let anybody distract you. This time is your precious time to focus on the most important project. It might be a strategic project, a must win battle project or similar projects or tasks that will make a big difference for you or your company.

Why should you do it as the first thing in the morning?

Your brain is loaded with energy after a good night's rest. You have a fresh mind. Your mind isn't loaded with new information that you have to deal with. All the new information and things you have to decide upon will easily side-track you, or at any rate drain energy from your brain, even if you trust that the information is on hold.

Make this way of starting your work day into a robust and rewarding ritual. This ritual might seem to be impossible for you, but try to get around it somehow. It might very well double your productivity.

The more detailed the planning of your morning ritual, knowing exactly what to do, the bigger the chance that you will succeed.

Now, decide to double your productivity and ensure a healthier mind. Start planning your morning ritual NOW.

How you implement more Focus time

Make a plan for your morning Focus time to be a success. Be all set and done, knowing how your Focus time will proceed and what you will work on in your Focus time tomorrow.

1. Decide the amount of time you will use for your morning Focus time
2. Decide when you plan your week to optimise your Focus time
3. Remember to involve your colleagues and employees in your decision and tell them why and what you have decided
4. Decide how you will make sure there will be no interruptions caused by phones, people around you, noise and social media

Remind yourself of the benefits of having more Focus time. Make the decision and plan it today, and you will have more capacity and energy for your high priority project tomorrow. You will start your day with a laser focus and get more of the most important stuff done.

If you stay in the hectic information overload, with endless meetings and phone calls, you miss out on making deep connections in your brain that keep your mind healthy, and you miss out on a significant rise in productivity.

How to get better at the activity **Connection time**

When we connect with other people, ideally in person, and when we take the time to appreciate our connection to the natural world around us, we activate and reinforce the brains circuits.

Findings in neuroscience show that when we connect with others in a compassionate way, we activate and reinforce healing and growth processes in our body and brain. Connecting at deep levels activates and reinforces the brain's circuits and develops and strengthens our mind.

When you connect with employees in this way, you strengthen your mind's capacity and help yourself to heal from stress. Scientists even recommend that leaders learn to coach with compassion as an antidote to the ongoing stress they often experience.

If you find that you have first-hand knowledge about connecting, creating and sustaining relationships as a natural part of your job, be aware there is a twist.

The twist discovered by neuroscientists is by first sight counterintuitive. When our work involves a high cognitive load or complex problem solving we use circuits in the brain that will suppress the ability to connect to other people. The suppressed ability to connect reduces our ability to fully grasp how others experience the world.

Leaders working close to or just below the C-level often have a high cognitive load during their work day. They have complex problems to solve and the workload is extensive and ongoing. This may imply a biased perception of how well they connect. At the same time, they don't always get honest feedback from their peers or the people they lead.

Many leaders know what I talk about when asked to recall dinner time with their family after a busy day at the office.

Please give it a try. Recall dinner time with your family after a day at work with high cognitive load or complex problems to solve. Then answer the below questions:

How well do you connect with your family after a day with a high cognitive load or complex problem solving? What kind of feedback do you get from your loved ones? Do they feel that you connect to them and "get them"? Do they feel

understood? Do they feel that you really listened to their point of view and their view of the world?

If you are one of the few who can disengage from work completely and be fully present with your family after a work day with a high load, then congratulate yourself. Most often it takes quite a lot of awareness and training. Be sure to copy your good routine when you connect at work as well.

If you sense a bit of frustration, guilt or similar emotions that remind you that family time could be better, then be glad that you can change it. You can change by training to stay present and to connect with others at deeper levels. And at the same time you will get better at connecting with your employees and peers.

What is Connection time?

Connection time is when you are fully present to the person you are with. It's a way of listening and being, with your ears, eyes and mind, open to synchronising with that person and to let go of interpretations of how the other person feels or thinks.

Being at this level of connection is where you are fully present to the other person. You make the other person feel safe (not judged) and being heard, seen and cared for. When you add compassion and hope to this state of connection, you have a recipe for a successful relationship that makes healthy minds for both of you.

How you implement more Connection time

1. Start by choosing the "arena" where you feel safe to explore and train your connecting skills. Be aware that it's much easier to start a new behaviour when you feel safe
2. Choose the person you wish to train your connection time with
3. Think of conversations where you felt safe and relaxed. What did the other person do or not do to make you feel this way? What did you do yourself? How was your state of mind just before the conversation? And how was your state of mind during the conversation? Take notes about your observations and consider how you can learn from them.
4. How can you prepare for shifting into the right state of mind, being calm and ready to be fully present?
5. Find ways to activate your curiosity about the persons you connect with

6. Shut out thoughts and worries about deadlines, finances, customers or the like while connecting
7. Train your brain to be fully present and stay focused. Mindfulness and meditation train your brain's ability to stay focused and be compassionate
8. Now just start doing it; you will become better and better by training.

Think of the time and commitment wasted in your organisation on people feeling unfairly treated, not being heard or seen, not being respected or accepted, feeling insecure or scared of not being good enough. All these parameters reduce people's cognitive abilities, health and energy.

When you get better at connecting, you also get better at influencing, as deep connections based on trust open the minds of the persons you connect with to new ideas and change.

You can start a positive avalanche of using connection time in your team or business area, and change your company's culture and productivity for the better.

Don't wait, just go ahead and you will get better and better.

Leaders WHO Inspire

How to get better at the activity **Play time**

When we allow ourselves to be spontaneous or creative, playfully enjoying novel experiences, we help make new connections in the brain.

As a responsible leader you probably see yourself as an efficient and hard-working person. You are a good thinker, problem solver and devoted to execution and focus. How about playfulness? Do you see yourself as playful as well?

Hopefully so, as playfulness is one of the activities that will benefit you in many ways.

Scientists have found that playfulness is helping us to make new connections in the brain, to make better and deeper relationships, to be more positive and to better cope with stress.

Seen from the perspective of leadership, playfulness stimulates internal processes in the brain. These processes help leaders renew and cope with the pressure and stress they often have to deal with. It helps leaders to sustain themselves and hence stay effective. At the same time, playfulness is positive for our relationships.

There is a tendency toward a highly planned daily life with little room for spontaneous ideas or for time to be playful or creative. By having a daily ritual of doing something spontaneous, being creative or by playfully enjoying novel experiences, we tend to become more resilient. When we challenge our brain in new ways, it makes new neurological connections and it's possible that we also train our ability to better cope with changes and challenges.

Find ways to bring in some playfulness in your day. You can start a new hobby, sport or try new experiences.

When we are playful, we are often naturally curious as well. Try to activate your curiosity and find ways to be spontaneous.

For the Play time activity to work positively as a healthy mind activity you have to let go of any tendency to win, or to be perfect. You have to find your inner child, let yourself off the hook and be more curious, spontaneous, playful and have fun.

Some examples of Play time activities you can do:

- try a new sport or hobby, and do it for the fun and benefit of learning
- make creative dinners by “what’s in the fridge” or your own touch to a dish
- try a new game or sport with your child or teenager
- start writing poems or novels, or simply start keeping a diary
- take up painting
- invite your family out for dinner or a Sunday tour and let them one on one decide what to do and where to eat, ask them to be creative
- make and have positive fun with family, friends and co-workers

When you do some of the exercises, more ideas will come. It will get easier and easier for you to make or find these playful and creative activities. You might even inspire others to go along and get the benefits as well.

Decide that you want to start now! You want more and better connections in your brain, you want better relationships and you want to thrive.

How you implement more Play time.

1. To get inspired you can start by listing memories including playfulness. What were they like? Did you have fun? Did others have fun? How was your mental state before you started playing or being playful? How was your mental state or mood afterwards?
2. Decide what kind of activity you want to take up to get more playfulness into your day
3. Decide when you want to start
4. Think it through and be sure you can remove obstacles. You need momentum and success
5. If you need to prepare for the activity, take action
6. Prime your mind by giving focus to others who are playful, learn and copy, consult them, and be aware of sensing what the playful state of mind does to you
7. Copy and do more of what you learned from item 1 to 7.

Be aware that it’s always easier to start a new habit which is a good match to other habits of yours. If you like biking and normally bike on roads, you could try a new challenge by riding a mountain bike in a forest where you need to use a map in order not to get lost.

To help you stay motivated and inspired:

Imagine what it would be like to have an evening ritual that fills you with joy and a smile?

Your new evening ritual:

At the end of the evening think through your day and keep your playful activities in mind. Notice how it changed your mood, your connection to others and your creativity. Think about situations where you found better solutions to problems and challenges that showed up during the day.

Now go for it, just do it!

Leaders WHO Inspire

How to get better at the activity **Down time**

When we are non-focused with no specific goal, and let our mind wander or simply relax, we help the brain recharge.

If you follow professional sport events, you have probably noticed that they have Down time between the important matches or games. The down time is time for the athletes to relax. It is very important for the players to recover and regain strength and energy to be ready for the next game.

Looking at Down time from this perspective often makes it easier to grasp and accept. Our brains also need Down time to stay healthy, to integrate new knowledge and habits and to regain energy.

Some other important gains from letting your mind wander or relax include getting better at solving complex problems and coming up with creative ideas.

Have you ever been in the shower, on vacation, or been out for a walk when, all of a sudden, a great idea pops up, or a solution to a problem strikes you?

These situations are typical Down time situations where your mind isn't directed by any specific focus. It gives your mind the freedom to use other parts of the brain and to use it in different ways.

In Down time you are likely to be in closer touch with your intuition, which is a very fast and often very precise way to get to the best decision or solution to a problem. By taking Down time several times a day you recharge your mind in micro moments.

In most western countries and workplaces we have a strong focus on productivity and performance. Schedules are typically tightly packed with meetings and telephone calls. Finally, when there is a short break between meetings, somebody will be at the desk to ask for decisions or help. This type of work day exposes the brain to fatigue and the mind's capacity will be reduced.

What is often forgotten in performance focused cultures is the need for time to recover and regain energy in between loads of work.

This is particularly important when the work includes complicated problem solving, negotiations, dealing with complicated or complex matters with employees, customers or other stakeholders, which is typical for many leaders in senior or just below senior positions. This is also the case when you have a high workload or stress-provoking situations.

What is Down time?

Down time is when you let yourself off the hook, let your mind wander with no particular focus. It could be simply sitting by the window looking out, or simply relaxing.

Many find it relaxing to let the mind wander when they take a walk. Others have found a way to relax when waiting in a cue or locked in a traffic jam. To get to this point, though, you need to let go of your short-term desire for efficiency and productivity, and accept that you can't do anything, traffic being as it is now. You might as well give your brain a sought-after pause and let your mind wander and relax.

You may find it hard to really accept and get into a routine of relaxing during your work day. Your beliefs, assumptions and old habits are getting in the way.

The takeaway here is, that if you want to be productive, it's counter intuitive to pause and relax. But it is a very effective and scientifically proven advice for optimising your brain, mind power and capacity. From now on, acknowledge yourself when you let your mind wander during your day.

If you find it hard to accept, then remind yourself how professional athletes do. I am sure that you find it natural that they have their down time to relax, regain energy and to be ready for the next exciting match or competition. From now, so will you.

How to start implementing Down time

First you may need to train acceptance of Down time in your belief system. If you find it difficult to start implementing Down time right away, you may be fine with a trial period?

If the results of the trial period are convincing, you will then be ready to implement Down time in your busy work schedule?

If you need a trial period, then decide how long this period should be. Be aware that you will only be able to reap the benefits of the trial period, if it lasts a minimum of two to three weeks.

How do you do it?

1. During your day, when you have a natural shift to another activity or focus, pause for a short period of time before you start the new activity.
2. It doesn't need to be a long break, maybe a minute or a few minutes.
3. When you pause, let your eyes wander or rest on the endless view, as if watching the horizon or the endless ocean.
4. Another way is to make a quick shift in attention. Take time to simply breathe deeply and relax.
5. If your schedule is tightly packed with meetings and calls, then decide to take full control of your schedule.
6. Decide how often and when you will make time for your short breaks between scheduled activities.
7. Tell your colleagues that you will finish 10 minutes before any next meeting. Why not simply tell them you have decided to make time for shifting your focus and recharging? Or you can tell your colleagues that you need time to prepare for the next activity. Be a role model and be proud that you are not just doing what everybody else is doing. You know what is best for you and for honouring your brain's need to make the best results.

You can continue to do what you have always done, or you can decide to step up and take good care of your mind.

Think of the benefits of doing Down time activity several times a day and then, after some weeks, become aware of your enhanced capacity.

After these weeks you will find that you are faster and better in problem solving. You get better ideas and have reduced the times you feel stuck. You even feel you have more energy and are more relaxed after a hard day's work. You thrive at a higher level. Wouldn't it be worth a try?

How to get better at the activity **Time in**

When quietly reflecting internally, focusing on sensations, images, feelings and thoughts, we help to better integrate brain areas.

Studies in neuroscience show that the cognitive capacity we use for solving problems, making decisions, prioritising and much more, is highly influenced by both the emotional and the reptilian part of our brain.

We can train our ability to observe what is going on inside our heads by training to observe our thoughts, feelings and other sensations. **When we take on the observer position, we are detached from our thoughts, feelings and sensations instead of being overwhelmed by them.**

It's empowering to know that you can detach from emotions like frustration, irritation, anger or the like. You can also detach from ongoing thoughts about constrained time limits, or how you can get "them" to accept your idea or similar unconstructive thought patterns. Being able to detach will bring you inner peace and boost your energy.

When you can still your mind and observe your thoughts, emotions and sensations, you can add another level, and reflect on what you observe. By reflecting on your observations, you get better at understanding of the inner landscape of automated feelings, thoughts, sensations and behaviour. You raise your self-awareness, which is the most important competence for leaders aiming to succeed.

One of the benefits of Time in is that we can stop or postpone an auto-response and avoid getting carried away by old habits.

As an example, let's say that your boss or one of the senior executives is a very talkative and self-reliant person. Every time you present a new idea, a conclusion of a project or results gained by your section, he will start interrupting, and take over the conversation. When you are in this situation you get warm and tense. You want to be in control, but it is difficult to get your brain to collaborate, and you use an immense amount of energy on something which could have been fairly easy.

This situation or something similar is quite common for many experienced leaders I have worked with. And it can be changed. It doesn't have to be like this. When we train our brain to observe and reflect internally, we can learn to let go of the uncomfortable feelings or thoughts and keep collaborating fully with our brain. This way we build stronger resilience and avoid using a huge amount of mental energy on something that isn't value-adding.

Another important benefit of Time in is that it integrates circuits from different parts of the brain. When you observe and reflect on what is going on in your thoughts, feelings and sensations, the mind's circuits start integrating. You enhance your mind's ability to collaborate. You get a sharper and more effective mind.

Studies have shown that when getting better at "listening to" the tiny activations or very subtle signals from your brain or body, you can make a short-cut to more accurate insight, can solve a complex problem faster, or make the right decision even under intense pressure.

You will need to still your mind, reduce your anxiety and general neural activity. It's in these moments that you can get answers to your complex problems, answers that your normal way of thinking would never have prompted using your conscious thoughts.

Then what is Time in? Time in can be described as time making us observers of what is going on inside ourselves. Instead of reacting to our senses, thoughts or emotions we decide to be still and observe. This is similar to what you do in some kinds of meditation or mindfulness.

For years now, science has shown that when we meditate or do mindfulness, we become better at recovering from stress, we get better at having deeper connections with other people, our sleep cycle gets better, and our mood gets overall more positive and stable. These are just some of the gains we get.

How to start implementing Time in

If you haven't done any kind of meditation or mindfulness before then you might need a bit of preparation to get started. For the purpose of this tool, I will use the word mindfulness as a collective name for meditation and mindfulness.

1. Decide when you want to do mindfulness. I recommend just after waking up in the morning and/or before going to bed

2. You might decide to start by doing five minutes two times a day. Five minutes is better than doing nothing, and you can always prolong the time
3. Make it a ritual to do mindfulness as a routine at the same time every day. That makes it easier to hold on to the new habit
4. Be sure that your time for mindfulness isn't interrupted by anyone or anything
5. An easy way to start doing mindfulness is by being guided. You can find guided mindfulness and meditations many places on the web. Try different ones to find your favorite
6. It might motivate you to notice differences in your energy, mood or your ability to focus and keep it. Make a log of your mindfulness practice and note down what you observe in the days afterwards.

When you get better at doing mindfulness you can add the next layer. While practising mindfulness, start to observe your ongoing thoughts, emotions and bodily sensations without being dragged into them. When we observe and reflect on what is going on internally, our mind starts to make new integrations.

In the field of social neurobiology, a core activity of the mind is defined to be integration. The integration can be between different parts of the mind. It can be between the brain and the rest of the body. Integration also includes how we integrate with others in our family, community or work. Social neurobiology describes how integration is a very important process to assure that our minds, bodies and relationships stay healthy and function at their best.

What is holding you back? Just start planning and be ready to start to do mindfulness tonight or tomorrow morning.

Instead of being overwhelmed, ineffective or frustrated by the endless meetings and decisions to be made, decide to do something about it and get better and deeper relationships as an extra. Just start NOW.

How to get better at the activity **Sleep time**

When we give our brain the rest it needs, we consolidate learning and recover from experiences of the day.

In our busy daily lives, we often think of our waking hours as a limited resource. We try to find ways to optimise or improve our waking time. When time is limited and there are many things to do, we tend to reduce the amount of time spent sleeping.

During my time in dialogue with leaders I have experienced that many tend to convince themselves that they are doing okay with five to six hours of sleep. Hopefully, you are not in that category?

They are simply fooling themselves. It works the other way around. Getting less than 7 hours of sleep makes us unproductive. We find it harder to concentrate, to keep focus, are more easily overwhelmed, and our memory doesn't work well.

You might think that I am overreacting here, but there is science and evidence behind this. Please, convince yourself to get more uninterrupted sleep every night and you will help your productivity and health, and your mood will be more stable and more positive.

How much sleep do we need?

As many studies have proven for some time now, sleep is very important for our health and productivity. Studies have found that the time we spend sleeping should not be less than 7 hours per night. The ideal time to sleep is a minimum of 7 up to 8.5 hours per night. The exact amount varies from person to person. This is the time we need to get through the different phases of sleep patterns with light sleep, REM sleep and deep sleep. And this is the time we need to let the brain and body get rid of waste products produced during our waking hours.

I am aware that you most probably have started an inner dialogue arguing that I am overreacting here. To further convince yourself, read the lines below.

Findings by scientists at Rochester University show that the time we sleep is really important for our mental health. When we sleep we go through a brain cleansing where the brain gets rid of the toxic waste products, produced during the day.

This is further explained here by a quote from scientists Maiken Nedergaard, M.D., D.M.Sc., co-director of the University of Rochester Medical Center (URMC) Center for Translational Neuromedicine; “The brain only has limited energy at its disposal and it appears that it must choose between two different functional states – awake and aware or asleep and cleaning up,” said Nedergaard. “You can think of it like having a house party. You can either entertain the guests or clean up the house, but you can’t really do both at the same time.”

How you can start off and stick to your new habit of more sleep

To start off your new habit of getting enough sleep, let’s say 7.5 hours, start looking at your week’s schedule and plan your sleep as you would plan important meetings.

1. Open your schedule for the next week. Plan what time you need to go to sleep to be sure that you will get your 7.5 hours of sleep. Mark it in your schedule to help you to commit and follow through.
2. Then plan when you will start to prepare for going to bed. Mark it in your schedule to help you to commit and follow through.
3. Prepare how you will involve or tell your family or other relevant relationships about your plan. Tell them about the “why” behind your decision to help them to understand and accept, and even support your new habit.
4. Think about your new plan and recognise any “old” beliefs and triggers of old habits that may surface. Recognise the old beliefs and then remind yourself that you have decided to change your habit. Remind yourself that the new habit is based on science and it will help you become more productive, get healthier and be a better leader.
5. You may introduce a trigger for your new habit. You can set your phone’s alarm to, let’s say, 10 pm. An example of a trigger is: when my phone’s alarm starts at 10 pm then I start to prepare for a good and healthy night’s sleep.
6. To convince the logical, realistic part of you, I recommend that you read more about how important sleep is for your general well-being and for you to thrive. Learn how enough sleep will help you to be more efficient and help you to strengthen your relationships.

If you want to expand your level of influence as a leader and you want to thrive at the same time instead of just getting by, be sure to get enough sleep. For most people this is one of the easiest activities to start implementing now and get an instant result.

Leaders WHO Inspire

How to get better at the activity **Physical time**

When we move our bodies, aerobically if medically possible, we strengthen the brain in many ways.

You have heard it, and most of us have embraced the fact that exercising our body is very good for us. It's good for your mental health, physical health and it helps you to cope better with stress and to keep your mood in a positive balance. You are even told now that your brain will welcome it because physical exercise strengthens your brain in many ways.

If you are a very active person exercising a lot, you can pride yourself on taking good care of your body and mind. I will highly recommend that you consider doing some yoga, tai chi or the like to stretch and balance your body and mind. These kinds of sports will help you get grounded and being present. Most probably these types of sports also help your brain to integrate neurocircuits between body and mind as a result of your increased body awareness.

Should you, on the other hand, not like to do sport or physical activity, I highly recommend that you do it anyway. Find the activity that suits you the best, start at a low intensity and a short exercise time. Increase the time and intensity slowly but steadily and build a sustainable habit that will fuel you up and increase your overall mental and physical health.

If you don't like the high intensity activity, much science backs up walking as a very efficient activity with a lot of mental and physical benefits. You can either do as I do, I love to walk in the quiet woods or along the beach to clear my mind and ground myself. If that isn't attractive to you then try with some music or a podcast in your ears while you're walking. Another way to get motivated is to gather your family or some friends and have a good, relaxing talk as you are walking.

What is Physical time?

It's the time you spend moving your body aerobically, it can be stretching, walking on stairs, running, biking, dancing, yoga, cleaning, gardening and much more. All the time you spend moving your body will help strengthen your brain. Moving your body has a lot of other pluses, some of them being that you feel more energised, happier and healthy.

How to start implementing Physical time

When you want to start a new physical routine, it can be hard to keep yourself going until the new routine has become a habitual routine. What often helps is doing the activity with a friend. You will find it harder to cancel the appointment with a friend than to find excuses not to keep the appointment with yourself.

1. Decide what kind of physical activity you will go for
2. Please choose an activity with the lowest possible mental resistance giving you the greatest joy
3. Make an appointment with a friend or relative to join you
4. Plan everything: how you start i.e. deciding when, how, how long, have your clothing or sports bag ready, have the playlist ready if you want to have music in your ears. Do what you can to reduce your resistance and be ready to do what you have decided to do
5. Remember to start out at a low intensity for a short time and gradually increase the time and intensity
6. Evaluate your success at completing your physical time once per week and think about how it has changed your mood, your energy and your ability to concentrate
7. Continue your routine and celebrate your successes

What if you don't do it or postpone doing it? You have a lot to lose if you don't take good physical care of your body. Your mood, energy and your ability to concentrate and stay focused may suffer. Research shows that physical time is so important for us to thrive and live our best life. Don't postpone it – just start doing it.

NOW IS THE TIME TO TAKE ACTION

You now have a step by step guide to optimising your mind, stopping overload and boosting your energy, contributing to making you a better leader thriving in your leadership role.

When you have implemented the seven activities you will take better decisions, be better at solving even complex problems and you will be better at influencing and deepening your relationships.

I recommend that you keep this guide as a reference and refer back often to the concept and exercises while building your mind's capacity.

You may also want to go back through this guide from time to time at different stages of your personal and business development. You'll find that, depending on where you are in your growth process, you'll understand and reflect on the material in a different way.

The last thing I wish to remind you to be aware of is the "Speed of Implementation." This is the need to take up new ideas and new learning and put it into action as fast as possible.

The best motivator is to start doing it and get fast results. If you haven't taken action already - take action now.

Thanks for reading this guide, I will be back to you again soon with more tips and help to Thrive, Inspire and Influence.

Best regards

Lotte

Founder & Executive Coach

www.LeadersWHOinspire.com

PS: If you liked what you learned in this guide and you want more in-depth and advanced support or trainings for getting better at influencing, deepening your business relationships, keeping your focus or strengthening your emotional or social competences to attain the strategic goals for the business and your-self, you are very welcome to contact me. I have more than fifteen years of experience with coaching and training experienced leaders like you within these areas. They have been helped to **step up** and **be more** and **thrive** while they are doing it. I would love to be there supporting you, too. Please contact me at this email address: mail@leadersWHOinspire.com

PSS: Are you ready for coaching? As you have showed your commitment by reading this guide in 2 weeks" I trust that you have the commitment and self-discipline to take a big leap into coaching. If this is the case, I will encourage you to contact me and ask for **a free strategic coaching session**. You will get

clearer about your most important focus, what's holding you back and take a first step to get you going. Please contact me at mail@leaderswhoinspire.com In the header of the e-mail write: Free strategic coaching session, write your contact information in the email and I will return to you.

Disclaimer: I only have a few free sessions to give away every year. Please be aware that I may be fully booked and have to postpone your free session or decline it. I will return to you, however, to let you know or to give you another option.

Leaders WHO Inspire