

Being vital: Open for a jumpstart?

What blocks your energy?

If you could rate your normal level of energy on a scale from 1 (slug) to 10 (Energizer Bunny), where would you fall? Probably you fall somewhere near the middle (semi-motivated gorilla). When you are inspired, you can drive results, but when you aren't, things go very, very slow.

Does your day involve dragging yourself into breakfast, then resentfully driving to work, then muddling through the day until you go home and grumble about cooking and housework? Do you get to the end of a year and despairingly find you haven't done anything you consider important, that moves you toward your goals. You trudge through your days and deal with problems as they occur, minimally interact with co-workers or friends, then go home to watch television and go to bed. Ach! What happened?

Your energy is blocked and you need to find out why. Everyone needs a jumpstart every now and then, and some of us need more buzz than others. When we have energy blockage, we have a hard time envisioning ourselves attaining any goals because of something going on in our lives, how we feel or what is inherent in our personality.

We've covered many of these energy blocks in previous sections, such as:

Depression: whether chronic or situational, this depletes your interest and energy.

Poor health: an illness, injury or medical condition can make you tired or unable to do things.

Impoverished or homeless: food and shelter become your first priority.

Lack of confidence: this steals your energy and slows down progress in most anything.

Fear: it is easy to put off or avoid unfamiliar or new things because of a fear of failure.

Pessimism: it is hard to be motivated when you don't expect a good result ahead.

Resentment: We let our anger or bitterness for a person or situation usurp our energy.

Do any of these apply to you? The first two are medical conditions that you can be treated. If you are subject to depression, feelings of hopelessness and sadness, go to your personal physician. He can prescribe anti-depressants and also give you referrals to a counselor or psychologist. If you are often fatigued, tired or have symptoms that make concentration or physical movement difficult, again, see your doctor. He can help you find the reasons for your problems and help you better manage your health.

If you are impoverished or homeless, you must get some help from family, friends, nonprofit agencies or the government. You may also have issues with fear, confidence, etc., but until you deal with the essentials of shelter and food, you will have a very difficult time energizing yourself to meet other goals.

The other four items on this list, issues are huge energy blockers that can almost shut you down if you let them. If you would like to be higher on the energy scale, maybe not an Energizer

Bunny but at least a perky Pekinese, work on these crucial areas. Go back to the sections in which they were covered to get some ideas on how to work on them and then come back here.

Dealing with other Energy Blockers

Here are some other common energy blockers and some ways to break them up.

Clean up your environment. If you have disorganization all around you, it may seem hard to dig yourself out of the mess. A wonderful energizer is organizing and cleaning up the areas in which you live and work. Is your home office desk a pile of paper representing the projects you have started and/or finished over the last several weeks? Cleaning that mess up may seem overwhelming, but break it up in smaller parts over several days and get it done. Put together an organization system with colored files, task files and to-do lists.

Clean up the past. We all have clutter around us that we tend to pack and take with us every time we move. Things like old prints/pictures, old clothes, old bedding, knickknacks, décor items, holiday décor, old sports and exercise equipment, old computers, obsolete software, tapes and CDs. You would much prefer to eat glass than even consider organizing and purging all of this.

Again, split it up by rooms, space, item categories or some other method, so you can systematically work through the chaos. Find places, such as nonprofits and junk collectors, who will come by and pick up your boxes and garbage bags of discards. Consider selling some of it in a garage or yard sale, taking clothes and jewelry to resale shops, selling collectibles on EBay or other auction websites, giving old furniture or décor items to young people trying to furnish their apartment, putting usable but non-essential items in a storage facility.

It's amazingly freeing to clean up the clutter from our past and move on. Of course, we all need our memories and sentimental items, but the artificial Christmas tree you stopped using five years ago doesn't really qualify, does it?

Manage your time. Along with the physical clutter we dread dealing with, we also have to face ways to better organize our time. Everyone has 24 hours a day—it should be easy, right? But, some people really take advantage of those hours and some get bogged down and buried under projects and tasks.

Probably the most common organizing time management tool is the simple daily to-do list. You have probably tried this at one or more times in your life. But, perhaps your to-do list gets obscured by the physical clutter! Then it becomes just another sheet of useless paper. To be useful, a daily task list must be in a visible and accessible place, preferably away from the piles on your desk. Perhaps a small white board or bulletin board in front of your desk would keep your task list within your sight. Colored folders or tablets that stand out from the other papers on your desk might be helpful. Or, perhaps keep a daily task list on your computer that pops up when you first log in.

Along with keeping track of tasks with your list, you also need to prioritize them. Do you feel you have a million things to do and by the end of the day feel you haven't accomplished anything? Yes, sometimes you're "putting out fires" and dealing with unforeseen situations that take time away from your other priorities. But, a lot of the time, you simply haven't put your priorities in order. Determining the most important tasks and marking them by number or color will keep those top of mind. At the end of each day, it's important to go back, check your progress and update your list.

Give yourself time. Do you make sure to schedule some time for yourself? It's possible to get everything done on your task list and completely leave out any time for yourself to "re-energize your batteries." Whether you like a chance to take a refresher nap, read a book, take a bubble bath or go to the gym, make sure you schedule that time into your day. An hour or two of self time a day can make the difference between accomplishing your goals and burning out.

Break out of your routine. Your personality dictates whether you prefer a routine or favor new activities thrown in on a regular basis to keep things lively. Either way, you can get bored and bogged down from your "rut." As you schedule your time, consider ways to vary your routine and add new energy to your days. Go to the gym in the morning rather than after work. Go out with friends for lunch instead of always eating at your desk. Brainstorm with yourself and/or friends to find new, interesting side trips to try on the weekends. Try to expose yourself to new things and varied schedules to keep your inner energy stoked.

Plan nutritional meals. Do you skip breakfast and eat a quick lunch every day? You may find your energy slipping away in the early afternoon. Then, when you get home, you "pig out" on everything in your refrigerator without even considering nutritional values. Of course, if your family depends on you for meals, you probably plan wholesome meals most of the time. In our fast and furious world these days, food companies have designed all sorts of ways to get a quick drink or bite that provide a multitude of vitamins and minerals. Instead of skipping breakfast, grab an energy bar and eat it in the car. If you must eat at your desk sometimes, pack yourself a sandwich or pick up easy microwave meals. Have healthy snacks available at home and work to keep you from bingeing on junk food. Keeping your nutrition balanced will keep your energy fueled and your body ready.

Exercise regularly. Ah, yes, here it is the dreaded word some of us would like to forget exists. But a bit of aerobic exercise releases the important chemicals like serotonin, adrenaline and endorphins that keep your mood up and your energy at high levels. Regular exercise can help you deal with all sorts of health problems such as blood pressure, depression and obesity. Again, this should be part of your self time you should schedule every day. Get your chemical levels up and you will find yourself ready to take on most anything.

It is also a good idea to take short stretch breaks or short five-minute walks during the day. Keep your mind sharper and your energy up by standing and reaching for the sky and bending to your toes. Try some deep breathing before, during and after, to get your oxygen flowing. Even while sitting in a meeting or at your desk, do isometric exercises in which you tense and release various muscles groups.

Breaking through your barriers

We all have barriers that keep us from achieving everything we want to. Consider what your obstacles entail—are they more mental or physical? How can you “crash through” and open yourself up to a better life?

Here are some common barriers:

Open your mind. Some people think they know everything and they don't need anyone else trying to tell them what to do. “Knowledge is power” they say. Keep your mind open to new ideas, different methods, better processes and the lessons of history. If you think you know it all, you have cut off your lifeline to knowledge. .

Take action. So many good ideas and so little action to make them happen. It's important to dream, to plan and envision the future. But if you spend all of your time doing these things, you may not accomplish anything. You must take action and follow through to see the results.

Don't give up. It's one of our human frailties to get discouraged and stop trying. The secret, however, is to look intensely at your goal and determine if your strategies will work. If they don't on the first try, it may simply mean a new plan should be considered.

Stop worrying about what others think. You can make a good impression by being self confident and not relying on others to give you answers. Confidence allows you to fearlessly proceed toward your goals, taking advantage of good input and discarding the noise.

Don't get impatient. Patience is a virtue many of us don't have in quantity. We want immediate results or we get discouraged and give up. Every important aspect of self improvement requires ongoing effort. Keep going and applaud yourself for each step you take along the way.

Know yourself. To improve our emotional intelligence, it is crucial to understand how you deal with situations, interact with others and spend your time. Through self assessments, inner searching and helpful feedback from those you admire, find out about yourself.

Take responsibility. While it is always tempting to blame others for the misfortunes in our lives, you will find that only you can change things for the better with an open mind and solid goals.

Through this program, we hope you will find ways to deal with these tough barriers and go forward to achieve your life goals.

Becoming a Millennium Woman

You are one of the women of the new millennium, experiencing the turning of a page to a new era. It's an ever-growing, fast-paced and technologically innovative era, full of new ways to think, work and live. You can be a part of it or you can watch it pass by. The choice is yours. No one else cares about your life as much as you do. You must break through your barriers and take responsibility for how you live each day of your life.

We have covered many aspects of what can make you a confident, happy, empowered, open-minded and gutsy woman. If you read and do the exercises in each section, you should feel better

about yourself and your ability to take your future in hand. Here are some positive steps to optimistically move forward into your exciting future.

- **Pump up the volume.** Use the energy block-breakers we describe above and keep your energy at high levels. This sets the stage for accomplishing all your goals.
- **Give yourself a pep talk.** Every morning look at yourself in the mirror and tell yourself all the things you will accomplish today, how you'll charm people around you and the steps you'll take toward your goals.
- **Practice.** Start to practice and make positive self talk and bright moods part of your make-up. Start with your pep talk and keep the affirmative mojo going all day.
- **Enjoy the small things.** Capitalize on all your senses. Smell the roses, kiss your spouse, see a bee gathering his pollen, hear the excitement in your children's voices, savor a taste of rich chocolate. Enjoy the life taking place around you!
- **Improve your part of the world** by providing positive support and guidance to the people and projects around you. Join in, volunteer and help others with your talents.
- **Improve your social interaction.** Start smiling, laughing and participating, and you will find new friends and supporters every day.
- **See the good in people.** Look for favorable attributes in each person you deal with, and try to work with the other's strengths instead of their weaknesses.
- **Be more productive.** Clean out the clutter, manage your time and organize your life.
- **Become more attractive.** Give yourself a make-over inside and out to show your absolute best.
- **Open your mind to new things.** Take classes, listen to self-improvement tapes, try something different, consider new ideas, learn new activities and experience the unknown.
- **Use every minute.** Avoid the time wasters like self pity and bad moods. Our life is finite and precious. Take advantage of every moment and relish it!

Exercise: Revitalize!

Take each of the bullet points above and write down some possible action steps you can take toward becoming a Millennium Woman. Be confident, be empowered and gutsy—get out and live the life you want!