

### Take a P3 break - a purposeful PAUSE promotes positively networking

It's Monday morning 9am, and Tom just finished his 3rd call to leads recommended by friends and was now trying to create a few follow up networking emails to friends of college classmates. His mind was racing, his overwhelming 'to do' list was hijacking his every thought, and he was drawing a blank on how to begin his 1st personal follow up message.

Tom was following the rules of networking. His iPhone alerted him each morning to spend 1 hour on targeted relationship building related to his career goals. Although a good reminder, he just couldn't get his head in the game and make real progress on his networking goals.

He was having a hard time creating the right mental framework plus his focus on the future was building up fear, frustration and anxiety - all sorts of negative emotions.

To top it off, one of his "friends of a colleague" abruptly said he didn't have time to talk at 9am on a Monday and quickly ended the call. This experience of "rejection" poked at his self confidence and not surprisingly he felt himself going into a slump. His voice of self criticism kicked in, "Why didn't I say this or not say that and how could someone be so rude?"

His energy draining, Tom thought, how am I going to build my motivation let alone maintain it, stay positive, focused, and mostly will I be able to quickly bounce back when conversations go in the wrong direction?



**Solution: Mental shifts, nurturing positive emotions and fostering recovery.  
- invest 10 minutes a day and create a new outlook.**

It's no surprise that the pressure of a job search or networking in general, causes mixed emotions, fear, and mental chatter or clutter. So many ideas and leads, how can you make sense of it all and organize your thoughts? This is why creating the space for optimism and allowing for resilience is imperative to helping you stay focused, positive and productive while networking. Investing in yourself and your wellbeing is easy and the impact is palpable.

Before asking anyone to take care of your needs, you first need to gently take care of yourself. According to the experts, our positive to negative ratio should be minimum 4-1 in order to get you on a path to flourishing and higher is even better. (Barbara Fredrickson) Cultivating positivity and self compassion will help you be fully present (rather than in the anxious future or regretful past) and it will allow you to connect more authentically to those around you. And importantly for networking, it will support you in skillfully managing your responses while fostering a more meaningful dialogue and rapport with others. (note below) Put simply, it will help you connect to others and build relationships.

This is what we refer to as positively networking.

So how do you add positivity interventions into a very busy schedule? And how do you nurture those positive emotions and stop yourself from getting hijacked by the spiral of negativity?

Here are four simple yet powerful tools to get you started on a solid path to positively networking.

**1. Purposeful mindfulness pause:** Before you dive into networking, take some time to reflect and clear your mind through a short breathing exercise. Breathing is something that we take for granted and yet it's our most precious activity each day and it's also a great tool to clear your mind and make room for the more relevant thought of the day.

Sitting in a comfortable chair with both feet on the ground and your hands in your lap, take 5-10 minutes at the start of your day and see if you can fit in short 5 pauses in your day to relax and recharge your mind. Practice a simple exercise focusing on your breath, in and out, allowing yourself to consciously observe your thoughts, and even infuse loving kind thoughts about yourself in the new open space you're creating. You can also practice breathing while asking yourself some reflective questions. When did you feel most engaged on a project? What inspires you?

If your mind wanders, gently take pull it back to your focus on your breathing. The intention of pulling your thoughts back to your breathing is the power of this exercise. It will help you clear your mind, allow for new thoughts and creative ideas to take hold and recharge your energy. Who wouldn't want all of that?

**2. Reframing your experiences:** Many of us have a little voice in heads that interprets our networking stories - the stories we tell ourselves. It's the voice of self doubt, criticism and expectations. Being aware of that little voice is the first step to making a mental shift. Remember how Tom quickly started bullying himself for his approach on his networking call and then switched to the contact for being rude.

What's a different way of looking at the same story? What might have been the culprit in creating a less than good networking experience? Could he have tried a different way to open up a conversation early in the morning, might the person's abrupt reaction be a response to something going on in her life and misdirected at Tom? How we frame a story impacts our outlook and our emotions. Since there is very little we actually control, it's important to put energy into skillfully managing how we react to uncomfortable situations and reframe the stories we tell ourselves. Chances are, it's not about you.

**3. Nurturing your P/N ratio:** Building your P/N - positivity to negativity ratio - two fold through morning or evening journaling can change your life. Each morning as you begin your day or before falling asleep, jot down three activities that generated positive emotions in the previous 24 hours. What made you smile, laugh, joyful, curious, feel at ease or intrigued?

Remember that in our minds, negative emotions roar while positive ones purr. Thus, it's more important than ever with networking to nurture the positive and minimize the negative. (of course this does not minimize the importance of being fully prepared which we'll get to later.) These positive emotions could have been generated through a personal relationship or they could have been surfaced though meeting a friendly stranger while taking your dog out for an evening walk. Capture the positive feelings you had as a result of these experiences, reflect on the goodness of this emotion, write it down.

**4. Gratitude grows:** Create a gratitude statement for the day. What is it that makes you feel thankful or what do you appreciate about your life, your family, yourself and others. Who has specifically added something to who you are as a person? Gratitude feeds our positive emotions and chips away at the negative ones.

If you want to explore any of these topics further, be sure to visit our website where we reference many books and articles on this subject that we're sure will be helpful on your journey.



### Tips:

- Have a journal at your bedside where you capture your positive emotions and gratitude statements each night for 6 weeks. Capturing the wonderful feelings of optimism may just make a difference in how refreshed and energized you feel in the morning.
- Track your P/N ratio for a few weeks and see how the tools are working for you. ....link to [positiveresonance.com](http://positiveresonance.com).
- Allow for a few purposeful pauses throughout your day to help boost your ability to be fully present, give your full rather than partial attention. People you're in conversations with will feel this. It's also been demonstrated that a 15 minute pause every few hours in your day increases efficiency and happiness at work so why not give it a try. (article on happy working NYT).
- Try the quick values in action assessment (VIA) link online to learn more about your intrinsic values. Generously post notes on your computer, in your cubicle or at your desk with reminders of your core signature value strengths. Using them often and openly will inspire you to be at your best.
- Display some things in your networking environment that trigger a smile, peace and calm. Make a deliberate effort to create positive emotions by appreciating the beauty around you, looking at a picture of your adorable child or playful pet, your favorite holiday photo, an inspiring quote. Consciously reverse your spiral through visuals.



### Mistakes:

**Mistake #1:** Not finding the right environment. Being distracted by your phone, emails and the noises will only remind you that work is waiting and will likely distract you from the present. As you begin the practice it's so important to create the right environment, a safe place where you can relax.

**Mistake #2:** Giving up on mindful breathing after only a few tries. It takes time to train your brain and build your muscles. After a month you will be able pull your mind back to the breathing with more ease. It takes consistent practice for more than a month to garner the most benefits so stick with it.

Mistake #3: Giving power to your negative emotions and experiences. Negative and positive emotions have a spiraling effect, up or down, so be sure to stop the negative ones quickly in their tracks.



### Excuses:

**Excuse #1:** “I don’t have time for this, I cannot spare 5 minutes in my day at the moment.” To this we say, be kind to yourself. First, you must show compassion to yourself and only then are you able to generously express it to others.

All it takes is 10 minutes a day and if you put the effort into scheduling purposeful pauses in your day and especially after a challenging situation, you’ll be stilling your thoughts, creating a sense of calm, and opening your mind to new possibilities. You can do it! It’s not a coincidence that we often have our best ideas in the shower. It’s the same concept. Give your mind the space to relax and a new great idea may actually work its way into that space.

**Excuse #2:** “I was born this way so there’s nothing I can do about it.” The experts confirm that you actually have the power to alter 50% of your emotional state through interventions and steady practices. (B. Fredrickson) After 6 weeks of practicing mindful mediation, groups from college students to business manager have seen significant change in their optimism, resilience and overall outlook.

The person on the other end of the phone will experience a different conversation if it’s positive based rather than blurred by negativity.

**Excuse #3:** “I’m awkward talking about, let alone practicing mindfulness pauses or any kind of meditation.” The good news is that you can take a breathing break and most will not even notice. This practice is surely becoming more mainstream and if google, general mills, and many other organizations are building it into their cultures, there must be some truth to it.

Mindfulness, meditation, breathing exercises and purposeful pauses. No matter your chosen practice, the common goal is to create the space for your mind to strengthen your innate capabilities. There are loads of resources online to guide you through mindfulness mediation, breathing with a purpose. For starters try the short loving kindness mediations online at positive [resonance.com](http://resonance.com) or at the Institute for Mindful Leadership.

**Homework Assignments:**

1. Invest in a personal journal where you can capture your daily dose of positive emotions, gratitude statements and other energy boosting insights. You can download your Positive Outlook daily journal here\_\_\_\_\_
2. Start training your mind today. Begin with a short mindful breathing exercise 2 times a week, in the morning to start your day. Focus on your breathing while wishing yourself kindness and ease in getting things done throughout your day. Imagine what can be accomplished in the coming hours, always bringing your thoughts back to your breath and the present moment. This is especially important after a particularly challenging interaction.
3. Make a personal commitment and share this with a networking buddy, friend or partner - someone who can hold you accountable. And give them permission to check in with you each week to see how your practice is coming along. This is all part of building your community of support as you pursue your purpose through positively networking.

Fredrickson, B. L., & Branigan, C. (2005). Positive emotions broaden the scope of attention and thought-action repertoires. *Cognition and Emotion*, 19(3), 313-332