

Soulmio

EVEN **HEROES** NEED TO TAKE CARE OF THEIR MENTAL HEALTH

WELLBEING

MENTAL HYGIENE

RESILIENCE

Mental Health | HR & Managers

Methods, tips, and strategies for overwhelming moments



EVEN HEROES NEED TO TAKE CARE OF THEIR MENTAL HEALTH



Methods, tips, and strategies for overwhelming moments

KNOW-HOW, EXERCISES, INSPIRATION FROM COLLEAGUES

- **10 personal tips from Simona Zabrzova on how to avoid burnout**
- **How are you? Your Inner Battery**
 - Emotions as a source of energy for work and beyond
 - Checklist: your current energy level and sources of replenishment
- **Mental Resilience Gym**
 - What happens in case of excessive psychological stress
 - Practical reflection: your crisis plan
- **The art of saying no without being arrogant**
 - How strong are your personal boundaries?
 - Recommendation: be able to refuse politely and firmly
- **Switch Off at Least for a While**
 - How to tame your thoughts
 - 3+1 Practical Exercises for Relaxation and Better Concentration
- **BONUS**
 - Better wellbeing: personal tips from CEOs, HR managers, and HR specialists

I am glad you are reading these lines. It means that you are at least trying to put yourself first. And that's not selfishness, but the best strategy for living in this hectic world that usually doesn't give you a moment to breathe.

That's why I founded Soulmio. So that people like you and me could pass on the best that's within us, while also paying attention to ourselves.

Only a few leaders are asked how they are doing, or if they need a helping hand or just someone to talk to. That's why we need to create such a supportive environment for ourselves.

I truly believe this e-book will help you in building your own mental wellness!

Simona Zabrzova
Co-Founder & CEO Soulmio



Managers and HR professionals are also human beings with their own challenges. In this e-book, we share insights from some of them, providing strategies that help them navigate the complexities of life.

Below, you'll find my personal top 10 tips for maintaining mental wellness.

10 personal tips from Simona Zabrzova on how to avoid burnout

1. I prioritize myself.
2. I am not trying to live up to unrealistic expectations of others.
3. I openly talk about my dreams and needs.
4. I channel my energy where it brings value.
5. I don't feel obligated to be available for everyone at all times.
6. I trust my intuition and apply rational thinking.
7. I pay attention to my body's signals.
8. I dedicate 10 minutes a day solely to myself.
9. I don't set unattainable standards for myself.
10. I allow myself the time to rest.

INSPIRATION FROM CEOs

LIFE PRINCIPLES

Don't stand still and always seek out people better than yourself.

I try to live by the principle: *Go to bed better than when you woke up in the morning.* An inner drive constantly pushes me to learn - among other things, by observing and interacting with people. In line with this principle, I don't feel the need to be the smartest person in the room. On the contrary, I appreciate an approach I recently heard from a colleague: "The better idea wins."



Jan Hanus
CEO of the energy startup Woltair

The only true test of intelligence is whether we get from life what we want.



Honza Mayer
Managing Director
Heureka CZ & SK

A frequent source of stress is not the problem itself, but my reaction to it.

I regularly note down what stresses me at any given moment. Ideally, right as it happens, or as soon thereafter as possible. I rely on quick notes that take less than a minute and don't consume mental capacity. Sometimes, marking an event in the calendar with a plus or minus is enough.



Ondrej Kratky
CEO Liftago

MENTAL HEALTH OF HR AND MANAGERS

WHEN YOU TAKE CARE OF THE MENTAL HEALTH OF OTHERS, WHO TAKES CARE OF YOURS?

A significant part of your job involves listening to colleagues, resolving conflicts, and addressing dissatisfaction. It's expected that you'll automatically be there for others, often beyond regular working hours.

But if you're taking care of others, who's looking out for how you're doing?



Caring for mental health of others: JOY OR A CONCERN?

44 %

of **HR specialists in the USA** report that their work had a **significant or somewhat negative impact** on their mental health in the last 6 months.

Source: The Gallup HR Community Q1 Survey, 2023

45 %

of **HR specialists** in the UK are **considering leaving their jobs** due to the pressure of addressing the mental health of employees and burnout.

Source: Wellbeing Partners, 2022

38 %

of **HR specialists in the USA** believe that they adequately **supported employees with their mental health issues** in 2022.

Source: SHRM State of the Workplace Research, 2022

What about you?

To what extent does caring for the mental health of employees bring you joy or concern?

AVAILABLE MORE THAN YOU HAVE TO

37 % companies in CR

address the mental well-being of employees by trying to help on a personal level.

Source: Seduo / LMC report on corporate education in the Czech Republic in 2022

23 % of HR specialists

in the UK experience compassion fatigue due to supporting employees with issues.

Source: Wellbeing Partners, 2022.

38 % of HR specialists

in the UK have conversations with employees about their mental health outside of working hours.

Source: Wellbeing Partners, 2022

?

What about you?
How much of your work consists of personal involvement in caring for the mental health of employees?

HOW ARE YOU?

INNER BATTERY

“When my energy is running low, the most helpful thing for me is to **go to bed early**.

I'm an early bird, so I go to bed after 9 pm with a good book, and you can tell the difference in the morning. That's my first aid.

Otherwise, **the mountains**. Fortunately, as someone from Ostrava, I have the Beskydy Mountains just half an hour from home. Even though the photo is from different mountains...”



Tamara Ksandrova

Recruiter of the year, 2022

HOW ARE YOU?

INNER BATTERY

The feeling of having enough or lacking energy, or the state of our inner battery, reflects how we live our lives. If we neglect ourselves and prioritize other people or activities, we lose connection with ourselves. As a result, our energy decreases, we become susceptible to negative feelings, lose insight into our own experiences, and neglect our needs. To consciously monitor the state of our energy, we need to better understand ourselves - our experiences and needs.

Emotions are the indicator light of our inner battery, which starts to shine when it needs to be charged - to replenish energy or alert to a certain need.

If we want to effectively work with our inner motivation, it's crucial to pay attention to our experiences, which drive our behavior and also fulfill our needs.

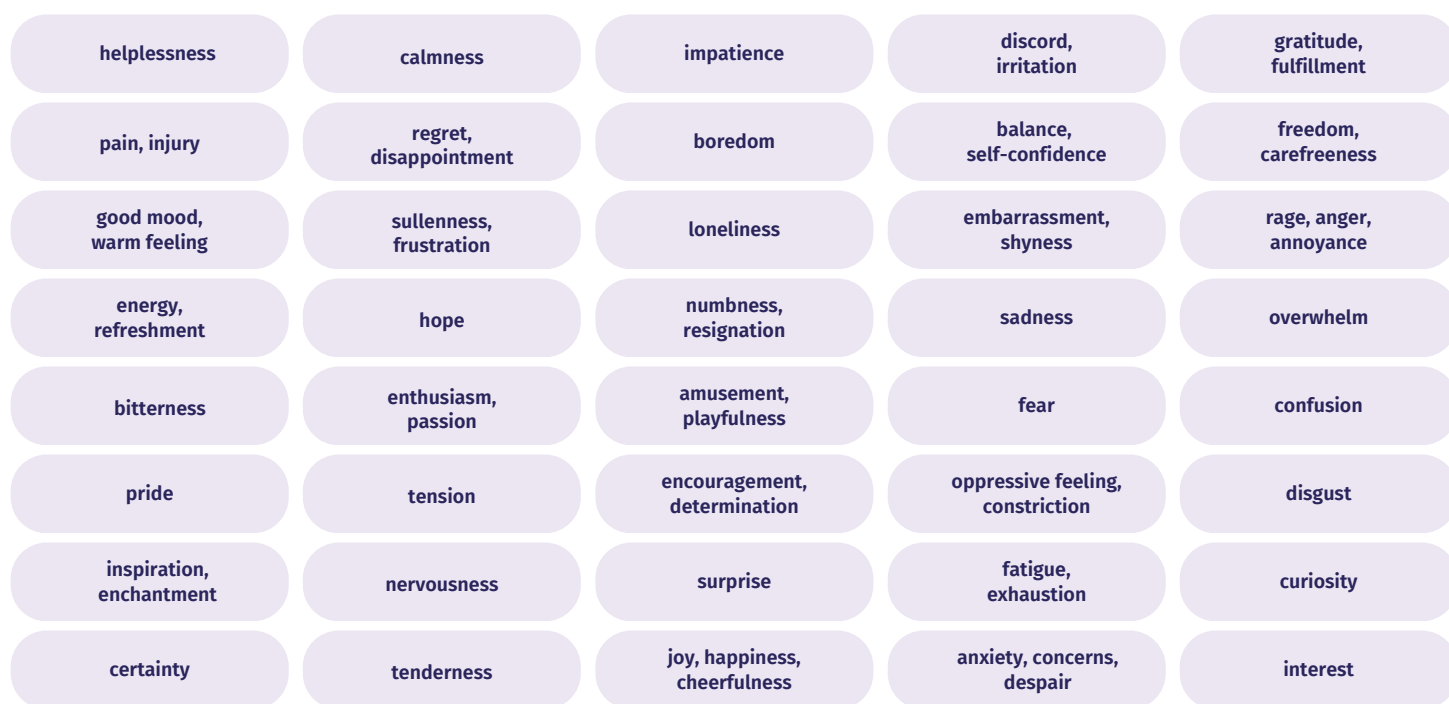
The more specifically we express ourselves, the better we understand what we truly need.

Ask yourself: 'How am I feeling right now?' 'What am I experiencing at this moment?'

for example:

- Today, I feel full of energy; I'm delighted that I managed to complete the course.
- I'm **exhausted**; after the whole week, I feel **overwhelmed** by responsibilities.


Get inspired by the mood board below to better name your emotions - accurate naming leads to better understanding. List out which of these feelings are currently affecting you.



HOW ARE YOU?

INNER BATTERY: CHECKLIST

Don't postpone your 'How am I feeling?' indefinitely. Try answering the following questions right away. Perhaps you'll recall activities you love but have stopped doing. Or you'll realize that you're troubled by things you can't control.

1 What is the current status of your internal battery? What % of "charged" do you feel?

My Energy: _____ %

2 To find out what exactly is draining us, we first need to examine our current state. Let's answer the following questions:

How am I feeling in the last month from 0 to 10? (0 = least satisfied, 10 = most satisfied)

What drains my energy and causes negative emotions?

What am I missing in life? What long-term needs have I not met?

What kind of people are toxic to me and rob me of my energy?

HOW ARE YOU?**INTERNAL BATTERY: CHECKLIST**

- 3 In order to recharge our internal battery to the required capacity, we need to have a vision and an idea of what gives us energy.**

What rituals/habits give me a sense of peace and well-being?

What activity makes me happy?

What am I looking forward to?

What kind of people am I comfortable with and want to spend my time with? (write at least 5 people)

- 4 What is in my circle of influence?**

Where we focus our energy is what we give space to in life. However, sometimes we devote energy and space to things we cannot fully influence (political situations, environmental conditions, global conflicts and wars, weather, the nature of other people, etc.)."

In what areas do you lose energy (are you reactive) and do you know you can't control it?

Where can you take responsibility?

Where do you want to focus more of your energy? To what activities? To which people?

MENTAL RESILIENCE

A PLAN FOR MOMENTS OF CRISIS

When people constantly want something from me and I can't accommodate everyone, it helps me to keep my sanity by regularly reminding myself of what has crystallized as truly important in my life over the past few decades. **Time with my loved ones, taking care of them and myself...**

There's no need to get worked up over every little thing, let alone mere possessions, wealth, or fame...

I believe the devil lies in the ability to discern what does and doesn't matter – and how much strength we have left for everything.

Yes, and it's also important not to succumb to the feeling that without me (each and every one of us), everything around would quickly fall apart. It really won't."



Tomas Ervin Dombrovsky
Labor market analyst

MENTAL RESILIENCE

HOW TO COPE WITH EXCESSIVE LOAD

No matter how you take care of your internal battery, you can't avoid overloading it every now and then. How to stand up to it so it doesn't overpower you?

Short-term overload

It is a shorter and intensive period, often associated with a large number of deadlines, responsible decisions under time pressure and limited space for so-called deep work and regeneration. Team members may behave and act under the influence of narrowed consciousness.

Narrowed consciousness

In stress, in short-term overload, a person's consciousness narrows: it concentrates on solving the task in the sense of survival.

It's an evolutionary mechanism that once served for survival when encountering predators. At that moment, the body activates lower brain structures, which help, among other things, to make instinctive decisions and sharpen the senses. It's not a state of flow.

REPEATED SHORT-TERM OVERLOAD WITHOUT SUBSEQUENT RECOVERY MAY LEAD TO REDUCED ABILITY

- to focus
- make good decisions
- act rationally without the undesirable influence of emotions
- experience work as meaningful
- have insight into one's own actions
- communicate effectively
- maintain good relationships in the work team

PERFECTIONISM

We often focus on what went wrong. We see, f.e. 3 mistakes, shortcomings, and we stop noticing the other 25 things that went well. We don't feel good enough about our work, and our self-confidence decreases.

REGENERATION

- regular and balanced diet
- regular and quality sleep
- beware of excessive drinking of beverages containing caffeine and alcohol
- sports and other leisure activities
- developing good partner, friendly, family relationships

BOTH SHORT AND LONGER BREAKS ARE ESSENTIAL FOR REGENERATION. THEY HELP TO REDUCE ANXIETY AND STRENGTHEN CRITICAL THINKING.

TELLING OTHERS ABOUT SUPPORT IS A MATURE COMPETENCE NOT A FAILURE



What can you do for yourself?

- set priority tasks
- set an exact time for tasks involving a time reserve
- divide tasks into smaller units
- communicate prioritization in advance with the team or supervisor
- regular short breaks in the scope
- 20-30 minutes to set realistic expectations instead of perfectionistic ones
- practice digital hygiene
- **BREATHE, BREATHE, BREATHE** (square breathing, breath observation)

MENTAL RESILIENCE

MY CRISIS PLAN

In addition to generally valid health tips, it pays to develop your own mental survival plan for challenging times.

Try to think of a situation where you were overworked and you know you wouldn't want to experience that situation again.

By answering the following questions, you can examine the situation more closely and see how you can handle it with less stress next time.



What exactly was going on? Try to summarize in 5 points.

What was the worst?

How did you recognize in yourself that you are experiencing the situation as difficult?

How did people around you recognize that you experience the situation as difficult?

At what stage of stress did you ask for support?

How can you take better care of yourself next time? Try to summarize in 5 points.

Additional question

How do you encourage others to see receiving support not as a failure, but as a necessary part of teamwork?

PERSONAL BOUNDARIES

THE ART OF SAYING NO

What energizes me the most is when I go out into **nature with my family** or when we travel to interesting places and discover curiosities.

I relax with **physical activity**, I love walking in the mountains, and yoga and pleasant music can calm me down. I also like to lie down under a blanket with a good book.

I also feel good when I can **be alone for a while**. At that moment, I try to connect with myself and ask what would make me feel good right now.

Nikola Sraibova
Coach and lecturer



PERSONAL BOUNDARIES

HOW STRONG ARE YOUR BOUNDARIES?

"I need to discuss something with you, it will only take a moment..." "You always help me so well, can I ask you something now?" As a manager or HR, it is your duty to be available to others at all times. Or not? Paying too much attention to others can also be the cause of your thinking and overwhelm. Rejecting someone occasionally is not impolite, but a necessity.

A person with healthy boundaries can say "no" to others when they want, but also likes to open up to intimacy and close relationships.

A person with too rigid boundaries always keeps others at a distance (emotionally, physically or otherwise).

A person with porous boundaries tends to get too involved with others and not see themselves.

What are your boundaries? Think about the following sentences and mark the statements with which you identify.

Too rigid boundaries

- I don't like to ask for help, I prefer to do everything myself.
- I reject intimacy and relational closeness (sometimes even in a romantic relationship).
- I only have a few close friends - I don't like to establish new relationships.
- I prefer to keep my distance from others to avoid trouble.
- I do not share any personal information.

Porous boundary

- In my own way, I accept the lack of respect from others.
- I find it difficult to say NO to others.
- I get involved in other people's problems and try to solve them right away.
- I am very dependent on the opinion of others.
- Sometimes I share too much personal information.
- I feel rejected when others disagree with me.

Healthy boundaries

- I value my own values.
- My opinion is important.
- I share personal information reasonably (neither too much nor too little).
- I know myself, my wants and needs and I can communicate them.
- I accept when others tell me NO.
- I can easily speak up when something is bothering me.



PERSONAL BOUNDARIES

What is your result?

Count the statements you agree with in the areas on the previous page. The area in which they predominate best describes you.

Claims of "Healthy Borders" prevail

Congratulations! You know yourself well and can sense when someone is crossing your boundaries. You do NOT take other people personally and you know how to draw attention to it yourself when something makes you uncomfortable or when the behavior of others is so called "out of line". Respecting your values and sharing your opinion is essential for you to be comfortable in relationships.

"Porous boundary" claims prevail

You seem to be a candidate for a "people-pleaser", a person for whom the needs and well-being of others are more important than your own. You strive and do your utmost, sometimes even beyond your capabilities. It's important to be aware of when you are acting at your own expense and accumulating an energy debt. Your deeds are not always reciprocated, and this can cost you a lot of mental strength. An **important challenge for you will be to learn to act in a way that makes you feel good and to fulfill your own needs first**. The reward will be greater peace and balance.

Claims of "Too rigid boundaries" prevail

Having too rigid boundaries can make you someone who keeps a distance and comes off as standoffish. You guard your privacy very closely, and opening up to others can be challenging for you. You might believe that you'd rather do everything yourself and not let people into your life too much. All of this can be fine until you start feeling lonely and overwhelmed by handling everything on your own. If this distance is draining you, then this strategy is more demanding than beneficial for you. **Ask yourself how to fulfill your needs without the rigid shell you have around you**. Occasionally show others that you value their company if you feel that way, and don't be afraid to ask for help. You might be surprised by the positive response from those around you.

None of the claims prevail

If none of the areas dramatically dominates, we recommend focusing on situations in which you feel uncomfortable and want to change them. **Ask yourself which situation drains your energy**. Think about what specifically would help you perceive your boundaries better in individual areas: family, work, personal life. Where do you feel safe and where would you need more stability?

Remember:

Most people have different types of boundaries. For example, someone may have healthy boundaries at work, porous boundaries in romantic relationships, and a mix of all three types with their family. But it's natural. What is appropriate to say when you are out with friends may not be appropriate when you are at work.

Some cultures have very different expectations when it comes to boundaries. For example, in some places it is considered extremely inappropriate to express emotions in public. In other cultures, however, emotional expression is encouraged.

PERSONAL BOUNDARIES

SAY NO WITHOUT BEING ARROGANT

Healthy boundaries help us feel safe, confident and in touch with ourselves. At the same time, we let others know what is okay for us and what is not.



What healthy boundaries help us with:

- Listen effectively.
- See other points of view while still respecting your own space.
- Inform others of our limits - not what they should and shouldn't do.
- Choosing what to accept and what not to accept without rejecting others.
- Respect your own needs.
- Avoid future conflicts and confusion.
- Let into our lives people who will fully respect us and value our time.
- Not letting others "push" us where we don't want to be.

Example of setting boundaries during a conversation:



Place of emotional outburst:
"You won't talk to me like that!"



Use instead:
"When you raise your voice at me, I feel really uncomfortable".

Why do we struggle to say NO?

- fear of the conflict
- low self-esteem
- belief that others are more important than me
- fear of standing up for oneself
- trying to please others

What phrases to use when we don't want something or don't have space?

I'm grateful for your offer, but I can't right now.

I would like to participate, but I already have another program.

Thanks for thinking of me, maybe it will work out another time.

I am currently busy with my activities but try to get back to me in a month.

I have a few things I need to take care of first, can I let you know later?

It sounds great, but it's definitely not going to happen this month.

Sorry, but I have no more space in my diary.

I'd love to take on a new project, but I'm really busy at the moment.

Let me think about it, I'll get back to you.

I'm so glad you're thinking of me, can we meet next week?

I don't have room for this right now, but thanks for the offer

I wish I had more time, but I can't make it this time.

No, I can't do this for you, but I could do this...

Don't take any of the phrases as dogma, but rather as inspiration. Choose the ones that suit you and practice them first. Say them out loud and only then put them into common situations.

MENTAL HYGIENE & MINDFULNESS

SWITCH OFF AT LEAST FOR A WHILE

“When my mind is racing, it helps to keep me sane when I **go for a walk with my canine buddy**.

Avenger, our amstaff, helps me realize that we can **find joy in the simplest things**, like when we find a great branch on the ground or a carcass.”

Jakub Oliva
Lawyer, labor law specialist



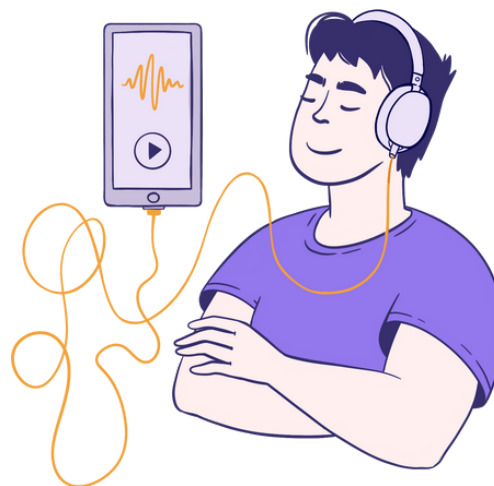
MENTAL HYGIENE & MINDFULNESS

HOW TO TAME YOUR THOUGHTS

You drive to the edge, you forget to drink and eat. After hours of focus and meetings, you feel like hitting your head against a wall. Dinner plans and a family weekend prevent you from realizing how good the coffee or tea you've been looking forward to tastes. Slow down! At least for a while.

Healthy mental hygiene = attention to one's body, thoughts and soul. It is necessary to pay regular attention to all three areas, they are interconnected.

- **Unhealthy mental hygiene** stems from an imbalance, which can be a result of, for example:
 - we have a higher expenditure than income
 - we are still active and cannot be passive
 - we live mostly in tension and lack relaxation
 - we are overwhelmed and have no space for an empty body and mind
 - we try to please others at the expense of ourselves
 - we cannot be with ourselves



mental hygiene at the mental level = psychological resilience at the level of thoughts

what REDUCES healthy mental resilience in the area of thinking

way of life on so-called **autopilot** >> we act thoughtlessly

automatic patterns >> we act based on habits and captured mechanisms

overwhelm >> we don't filter what information comes to us from the outside world

identifying with your thoughts
>> the belief that we are what we think

relatability >> we take the information we receive as a person

what INCREASES healthy mental resilience in the area of thinking

accepting the idea that "we are not our mind"
>> we become the **observer of our mind**

exploring the captured patterns of our behavior >> we discover what thoughts have a positive/negative emotional effect on us, according to which we subsequently act

creating conscious boundaries >> we monitor and filter what information comes to us from the outside world

not identifying with our thoughts >> we only observe thoughts and do not react to them - we are a neutral observer of our thought processes

conscious observation of your mind = the so-called observer role

MENTAL HYGIENE & MINDFULNESS

JUST OBSERVE THE THOUGHTS

We create a lot of problems just by worrying excessively or thinking about the past. Psychological concerns = often non-existent problems are reflected in tense muscles, poor diet, insomnia or irritability. How does it work and how to alleviate such conditions?

What prevents us from changing our thinking?



the so-called **False Circle of Beliefs**
(a term from Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy)

- **thought:** what our mind tells us to think about in a given situation
- **emotion:** our evaluation of a given thought that triggers an emotional reaction (e.g. sadness, anger, nervousness, feeling wronged, etc.)
- **bodily reaction:** an emotional reaction triggers a bodily reaction (eg cold/wet hands, palpitations, rapid heart rate, back sweat, hotness, etc.)
- **behavior:** the body's response causes how we react, ie. how we show up. Our speech will provoke a counter-reaction from the other person, which is likely to match our original thought.

So our beliefs are confirmed over and over in this way. That is why this phenomenon is called a vicious circle.

Tips: How to be in the role of an observer of your thoughts

- open up to the possibility that we don't have to identify with what we think
- begin to be aware of our thoughts
- just observe our thoughts and not follow them = learn not to react
- to find a place of neutrality within ourselves from which we can see how we react
- ask yourself the question from a place of neutrality:
- **"What reaction/thought would be beneficial and useful for me and for the entire given situation?"**
- learning to postpone one's own reactions - to create space for inhalation, exhalation and distance to be present - through the senses (smell, hearing, touch, taste)

Thoughts that are associated with intention:

attack	acceptance
fight	kindness
criticize	be useful
educate	gratitude
complain	create
promote	humility
overestimate	compassion
defend yourself	respect

do not lead to satisfaction and psychological resilience

they are beneficial for our physical and mental health

MENTAL HYGIENE & MINDFULNESS

SWITCH OFF AT LEAST FOR A WHILE

There are a number of healthy strategies for feeling better. Regular exercise that you enjoy. Time with people you love and encourage you. Experiences. Choose and keep what works best for you. Or try one of our three tips. You can easily run them several times a day without anyone noticing.

What are you hearing right now?

Some relaxation methods are so simple and unobtrusive that it would be a shame not to try them. Calmly at work among colleagues. This one won't be noticed and will help you focus better.

- Close your eyes.
- Take a deep breath. **And exhale.**
- Notice what you are hearing right now.
- Where does the sound come from?
- How **loud or quiet** is it?
- Is it pleasant or unpleasant for you?
- Is it **known or unknown**?
- How many sounds can you hear at once?
- Can you **focus on just one** and suppress the others?

Exhale longer than inhale

Olympians, medical professionals, top presenters, singers and psychotherapists rely on it. So why wouldn't you give breath a chance too?

- Bring attention to how you breathe.
- Set a timer for 3 to 5 minutes. Or take at least 10 breaths.
- **Focus on making the exhale longer than the inhale.** That is more than enough.
- Or you can count under your breath.
 - Inhale for 1-2-3-4. Exhale for 1-2-3-4-5.
 - You can extend the intervals. So that it is always pleasant for you.
 - Inhale for 1-2-3-4-5. Exhale for 1-2-3-4-5-6. And so on.

Listen to the audio recording of the "Box breathing"

5 minutes



Time for a coffee or tea

Sometimes you don't need special breathing techniques, closed eyes, or a half-hour meditation. Often, it's enough to fully focus on what you're doing and not let your thoughts wander.

- What **sound** does the coffee machine or kettle make?
- And the mug? What does it look like? **How does it feel to the touch?** What sound does it make when you tap it with a finger or a spoon?
- And what about the coffee or tea? What do the beans or ground coffee look like?
- What does the tea look like? How do they **smell** before you pour water over them?
- When does the mug warm your hands pleasantly without burning them?
- How does your coffee or tea smell? Do you notice the lovely steam rising from them?
- How warm do you like your drink? Hot? Just right? Lukewarm? Cold?
- How does your coffee or tea **taste** when you let it linger in your mouth longer than usual?

Soulmio

We create **safe and inspiring online** space where people will always feel heard and understood, find immediate psychological support and have tools to improve their mental wellness and work performance.



- **Online mental health care program for companies** All-in-one platform for startups, medium-sized companies and corporations. From online therapies to education.
- **Workshops and webinars** 60/90 minutes on a topic to support the well-being of your employees.
- **Mental Health Day** A day packed with workshops with psychologists/coaches at your company.
- **Monthly topic** A regular dose of popular-science content in a pack.
- **Business coaching** When workshops are not enough. For managers and talents.
- **Education of HR and managers** We will focus with you on the area of work psychology and wellbeing.

Support the mental well-being of your employees with us, improve a positive company culture and the productivity of your teams.

Write to us at info@soulmio.com