

Staying Centered at Work

"All man's miseries derive from not being able to sit quietly in a room alone." -- Blaise Pascal

All eyes these days are focused on the turmoil of our global economy. In the rough whitewaters of today's economic environment, it's important to navigate on an even keel. Successfully meeting workplace challenges can be likened to the way white-water rafters approach their task.

Beginners watch for the craggy rocks, the problems to avoid, the risks to circumvent, usually ending their runs feeling emotionally exhausted and physically drained.

Experts focus on the "flow line" where the currents safely guide them through the roughest areas with a minimum of mental and emotional stress, ending their runs on a high, with energy to spare.

Clarity, focus and inner peace are paramount when making choices and decisions that affect current and future workplace sustainability. One of the most effective ways to maintain a quiet mind, a peaceful heart and a relaxed body during these rough times is through the practice of centering.

What is centering?

"Wisdom means listening to the still, small voice, the whisper that can be easily lost in the whirlwind of busyness, expectations, and conventions of the world..." -- Jean M. Blomquist

Center is a state – mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual – where you engage life from a state of presence – a place of well be-ing, calmness, relaxation, tranquility, and self-awareness. From a centered place we move about our day with a sense of purpose, unencumbered by frustration and free from reactivity, open to whatever appears in our experience. Center is the place of creativity, discovery, learning, and insight – regardless of the events, circumstances and people with whom we are engaged.

In a centered place, we approach every event, circumstance and individual as an opportunity to learn something about "who I am" and "how I am" in this moment – not caught up in mental gymnastics or judgments about the "who" or "what" with which we are engaged. We are mentally alert, free of tension, and move with a grace and ease - flowing, not rigid. We are conscious of our immediate environment; we are acutely aware of, and intentional about, what needs to be done and we take care of business without efforting or struggle.

Many know this place of centeredness as being "in the zone", or operating at "peak performance" or experiencing a heightened sense of well be-ing, i.e., a state of presence.

From a state of centeredness we interact with others from an inner, Essential place of understanding, forgiveness, compassion, integrity, authenticity and joy.

How do we center ourselves?

Here are some steps to follow:

Remember and visualize a time when you were engaged in an activity where you felt "on top of the world", or "this is as good as it gets!", where time stood still, where you felt a deep sense of excitement and adventure or where you experienced a heightened sense of well be-ing.

Notice your state of being – your head, your heart, your body. Sense as much of your self as you can, in this moment with curiosity and allowing, not with judgment. Focus on the feeling. Allow the feeling to immerse your total being. Bathe in it.

Breathe calmly and deeply into your belly, hold the breath for a few seconds and exhale with a long breath, deeply and quietly. Inhale and exhale naturally - effortlessly, no pursing your lips, no noise with the exhale, no “trying” – just let it happen and focus on your breath.

Sense your feet on the floor and allow the floor to support you; relax your shoulders, upper body and legs so you don't have to rigidly “shore yourself up” (often unconsciously). If you are seated, sense your butt in your chair and allow your chair to support you. Allow yourself to “let go” and be supported. Breathe deeply and focus on your body. Soon, your mind will quiet and clear. Your Inner Judge and Critic will diminish in its chatter and intensity. Your body will relax. Your heart will open. This is a place of centeredness.

In this place of centeredness, permit yourself to “let go”, to not be attached to outcomes or to any “goal”. Allow your experience to flow and trust the process of centering to support you in whatever you are engaged in, in that moment. Trust is important. Over time, you'll find yourself experiencing degrees of inner peace, calm, relaxation, OK-ness, even in the midst of fire-fights, tense negotiations and conflict-resolution sessions. Clarity and insight will abound. The act of listening will be heightened. Over time, centeredness can become a major piece of the fabric of who you are at work.

How do I make Centeredness a habit?

Live every day with intention, attention and no tension. Be crystal clear about your life purpose, your goals at work, and truly understand why you are doing what you're doing.

In times of stress, breathe deeply, remind your self of your intentionality and your goals and chose to show up taking the “high road”. Set your intention that every interaction you engage in be for the “highest good of all involved”.

Cut out the usual excuses for why you can't take time to center: there's no time; it doesn't work; I'll never be able to center, etc. The antidote to the excuses is to stop “thinking” about centering and center!

Don't judge centering as a “chore”; rather, choose to make centering a fun thing and you'll find yourself easing more gently into the practice.

As often as you can throughout your day, re-create this sense of centeredness, even for a few seconds or minutes. It helps to find times during your day when you can be “alone with your self” for a few minutes to breathe deeply, and reflect or meditate. Persistence and consistency are important aspects of creating a centering practice. Purposefully centering yourself many times throughout the day, even when you are not feeling particularly upset or in need of centering, will help to deepen your practice.

The idea is to be consistent with your centering practice, not to make it as long as you can but to do it as often as you can, so it becomes routine. Placing subtle reminders around your workspace can help you remember to center on a consistent basis.

Centering allows our True Self

Centering allows us to connect with our True Nature, our authenticity. The more we are centered, the more we are attuned to our inner source of wisdom, leading to right knowing, right understanding and right action. The more we are centered, the more we are able to move away from our ego-driven, judgmental mind. When we're caught in the prison of our mind, our thoughts and emotions are busy,

reactive, judgmental and more often negative - blocking out the positive guidance, insights, connections, creativity and delight that lie deeper within our True and Real Self.

Centered, we are more able to live our life at work from a place that guides us in making wise choices and decisions, perform optimally, produce effectively and relate openly, honestly, and sincerely.

Centered living is a way of re-energizing and refreshing your self, de-stressing your self, focusing your self and calming and slowing yourself down so you can be truly present to your experience in mind, body and spirit, from a place of positivity, aliveness and joy.

So, during these days, set your intention to allow time to practice centering - following your own "flow line" as you navigate the "white waters" of a challenging time.

So, our \$10 food for thought questions are:

What creates discord and stress in your life at work, at home and at play?

Are you connecting to what you really want to do with your life?

Do you have a heart-centered connection in your relationships, including with yourself?

Do you ever allow your "gut" feelings to influence your decisions/choices? Why/why not?

Do you generally find yourself stressed and your mind shut down?

Do you find yourself stuck in habitual thinking patterns or life challenges?

Do you often try to use your mind to calm your mind? Does it work?

Do you often find yourself distracted in conversations, meetings and even when alone?

Does your life focus more on material things or on love and friendship?

Are you more focused on who you were or on who you're becoming?

Do you consistently engage in a stress-reduction practice?

Do you find it difficult to let go of worry and fear?

What would it take for you to begin a centering practice?

"All this talk and turmoil and noise and movement and desire is outside of the veil; within the veil is silence and calm and rest." -- Bayazid al-Bistami

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Peter G. Vajda, Ph.D, C.P.C. is the founder of True North Partnering an Atlanta-based company that supports conscious living through coaching and facilitating. With a practice based on the dynamic intersection of mind, body, emotion and spirit, Peter's approach focuses on personal, business, relational and spiritual coaching. He is a professional speaker and published author. For more information, www.truenorthpartnering.com, or [pvajda\(at\)truenorthpartnering.com](mailto:pvajda(at)truenorthpartnering.com), or phone 770.804.9125. You can also follow Peter on Twitter: @petergvajda