

30 Seconds to Calm



**The Brain Secret
to Maximize your
Success in Business
and Life!**

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30 Seconds to Calm: The Brain Secret to Maximize your Success in Business and in Life!

Calm may not be a word you associate with achieving success. You may think, “driven, yes, persistent, yes, perhaps even stressed, but calm?” However, knowing how to pause and access a calm state as needed is critical. You are going to discover how being “calm” can help you make smarter decisions, save you time, make and keep more money and overall improve your quality of life and ability to enjoy it! And, you’ll learn one of my favorite techniques for feeling calm in 30 seconds or less.

Lets start by going back to something you likely learned in middle school health class: the fight or flight response. Our bodies are truly amazing with their ability to cope with an emergency situation. You have probably heard the stories of amazing feats of strength done in rescue situations. If you had to lift a car off your grandfather when it collapsed as he was working under it, you may be able to! (true story!) Or if you have to run outside to catch a child about to fall from a tree, you would get there in record time! (also a true story!)

Our bodies and brains work together so we have almost super-human like strength or speed when we need to get away from a predator or help ourselves or a loved one out of danger. The good news is, those situations are few and far between. We aren’t running from lions, tigers or bears!

However, there are two problems with this system in our modern world. The bad news is....our bodies do not know the difference between a real or imagined threat. For example, if you are panicked because you are stuck in traffic or you are worried all day about a looming deadline, your brain sends off an alert system. The sympathetic (stress) response kicks in and your body is flooded with hormones like adrenalin and cortisol which are not as useful if we don’t actually have to run or fight in the face of danger. Over time, if our bodies are continually on alert with no physical outlet, it becomes damaging to our bodies with increased risk of many health problems and chronic stress suppresses our immune system.

The second problem with our emergency response in today's world is that when the sympathetic system is activated, we are not using the part of our brain that is needed for higher level thinking and decision making. Instead, we are using our amygdala, sometimes referred to as our primitive or "lizard brain. This is the part of our brain focused on survival. This is useful if we need to rely on quick reflexes to run away, fight or even freeze if that is what it takes to survive.

So, if you start the day "hitting the ground rushing", you may be operating in the emergency mode for much of your day. When you keep yourself mentally stressing about everything on your to-do list or putting out fires all day, so to speak, your brain is focused more on survival than your long term goals. The brain and body systems are more complicated than I can explain in this report, but it is helpful to think about the amygdala "hijacking" the controls away from the executive functioning area of the brain when it senses danger and reacts.

Think about your typical day.

How much of the time do you feel stressed?

Consider how you may be reacting to your stress by fighting, fleeing or freezing?

An example of the flight part, may be that you are **fleeing** from an uncomfortable task to something that feels better in the moment, like munching on a snack or distracting yourself on facebook.

Perhaps when you are stressed you are more irritable and the "**fight**" response comes out too easily when you snap at a loved one and then feel guilty later.

Perhaps you even **freeze** and tend to procrastinate on projects and find yourself feeling stuck and "paralyzed" with overwhelm.

When we feel "stressed out, overwhelmed or anxious", it is in our nature to escape to what feels good in the moment. Our primitive brain wants what feels relieving and safe right now. So, that may show itself with

various compulsive behaviors such as eating more than we need (stress snacking on and off all day), shopping to feel better and spending more than we have, or self-medicating with smoking, drinking, or anything that “takes the edge off”, but avoids truly dealing with the issue at hand.

So, what is the solution? Herbert Benson, researcher, professor at Harvard Medical school and founder of the Mind Body Medical Institute, discovered that we can shut off the fight or flight response by activating the relaxation response. This involves the parasympathetic nervous system which works to return our body to to a calmer, non-emergency state.

When we are calm, we can access the pre-frontal cortex. That is the part of our brain that involves complex decision making. It is considered to be the area for executive functioning, and enables us to plan ahead and create strategies, and also to adjust actions or reactions in changing situations. Additionally, it helps to focus our thoughts, which help us pay attention, learn, and concentrate on goals. When we use the pre-frontal cortex if we are not in a fight, flight or freeze mode, we are better able to delay gratification and make decisions in line with our goals and values.

For example, perhaps you had a goal to lose weight. You felt determined that losing some weight would help improve your quality of life, energy and health. And yet in a stressful moment, you impulsively turned to food to feel better. Once your brain and body learn that food helps soothe you in a time of stress, you form neural pathway in your brain so that it becomes an automatic reaction and habit. In order to change a habit or behavior that is sabotaging your goals, you first need to step back, be aware and step out of anxiety and stress in order to think clearly enough to consider other options.

If you take just a moment to pause and use techniques to calm the body and brain, you will be better equipped to walk away from temptations that sabotage your goals. Whether you have a history of finding yourself in the the pantry without consciously choosing to have a snack, or coming home with clothes you really didn't need to buy, or you procrastinated on a work related tasks that cost you time and money, there are ways to get back on track.

So, how do we turn off the stress (sympathetic) response and activate the peaceful (parasympathetic) response? (I find that it is easy to remember which is which if you think of the s for stress and the p for peace!) The first, easiest, fastest way is by **breathing**. That may sound too easy, but truly, all the best research says that by slowing down and deepening our breathing, we literally send a message to our brain that “this is not an emergency”! Our brain gets the message and can stop sending the red alert out to the body.

My suggestion is to just notice your breathing at first. Just by becoming aware of how it feels to inhale and exhale will start to slow down your breathing. Then you can practice breathing more deeply from your “diaphragm”, or “belly breathing” to help your body relax.

The other part of the 30 seconds to calm technique involves your thoughts and senses. This is a great mind body technique that can “ground” us in the present moment and in our bodies. I first heard about grounding techniques when I worked in a psychiatric hospital with some clients who would have traumatic flashbacks. They were experiencing another time and place and we would bring them back to the present reality by having them become aware of their feet touching the floor, the sounds around them, and other “grounding” techniques.

What does grounding have to do with you and being calm? When we are stressed, our thoughts are often in the past or in the future. We may be going over and over a past event we wish would have happened differently or we may be focused on the future with to-do lists or worries. When we can focus our thoughts on the present moment, it can be very calming. You may have heard suggestions to “live in the moment”, but perhaps you weren’t sure exactly how to do that. You may also have heard about “mindfulness” which is being aware of the present moment, without judgement. When we just notice our surroundings and what we are experiencing without judgment, we slow down and we are then “in the moment”.

The “5 senses scavenger hunt” is a great way to shift to the present moment and a calm state. This can be done before or after shifting your breathing, depending which one you find easier to get you started. All you do is notice things with all five senses - easy, right? Just notice five things you see around you. (pause and do this now if you can) Notice if you smell anything (may be neutral). Notice if you taste anything (also may be neutral). Notice what you feel against your skin and your body (this may be something you seldom pay attention to as you routinely go about your day. Go through various parts of your body and just be aware. For example, your feel in your shoes, on the floor, your back against the chair, and the texture of your shirt on your arm.) Now notice what you hear....

Ahhhh....do you feel calmer? I have taught this to my kids as well because it is so easy and yet it is profoundly effective even for people with PTSD or schizophrenia. So, I know it can work for you - you just have to try it and use it! Even as a quick way to get focused before a task or while you're at a stop light. Just breathe and take a quick pause to notice your 5 senses. You may just find your calmness helps you

I find that many busy women feel an almost constant low-lying anxiety. This may feel like restlessness, fatigue, irritability or other uncomfortable experiences. You may not even be aware of the stress response going on in your body because it has become so familiar. In fact, you may find that when you think about relaxing, sitting still or taking time for self-care, your body and brain may resist “letting your guard down” since it has gotten used to being on high alert.

So, if you are honest with yourself, are there times that your stress has had an impact on your health, your finances, or your relationships? Without beating yourself up (we all have that survival lizard brain that kicks in sometimes), just become more aware about how you may have reacted to stress in a way may have worked against your goals. Whether those goals are to be a good model for your kids and not yell in anger, to stay on top of your business billing without procrastinating, making sales calls without avoiding them, or dealing with clutter so you don't have late fees or lost opportunities, pausing for moments of calm and clarity can make all the difference.

If you find yourself in any of the previous examples or you spend, eat, drink, or otherwise soothe beyond what is helpful, I encourage you to set aside some reminders throughout the day to take a moment for calm. It only takes 30 seconds or less, but could have a profound effect on your productivity and your success with your goals.

This special report gives you some tools for lasting change, but I know you may want more. I have been working with stressed, busy, success driven women for more than 20 years. In my own life and the lives of my clients I have found there are ways to have **success without sacrificing our health, or sanity, or our relationships!**

My expertise is in belief and behavior change and making it easy so you can feel great about your work-life balance - whatever that looks like for you in your life now.

If you are feeling stuck and are sacrificing parts of your life for your work success or sabotaging yourself from getting to the next level of success with your goals, **I offer a complimentary “Clarity Breakthrough” phone session for 60 minutes.** I want to hear what has been working or not working in your life, then I’ll help you gain clarity about what is keeping you stuck and help you find a plan to move forward so you can have the success you’ve been craving!

Please email me at michelle@inneroasiscoaching.com and I’ll be happy to send you an application questionnaire and we’ll find a time that works for both of us.

I look forward to staying connected with you!

Warmly,

Michelle