

Bring Yourself Fully to Your Nonprofit Role

Use these research-based tips to connect to what matters most.

By Marcy Heim

Where does the day go? The week? The year? It's a common lament. If only we could slow down time! The speed of time is directly related to our energy. Our energy level is enhanced when we're fully present in our time. Being present means you do the following:

- **Stop thinking about an upcoming prospect appointment** while you absentmindedly listen to your colleague talk.
- **Stop half-listening to your major giver** as you think about the paperwork you need to catch up on after this day of calls.
- **Don't glance continuously at your phone** from the second you wake up.
- **Don't waste your time asking "What if?"** (What if that big gift doesn't come in? What if the tax laws change? What if I'm not ready?)

When you check your cellphone first thing in the morning, you've just given away control of your time and energy to someone else. You're reacting to somebody else's priority, not your own. You've surrendered (and perhaps squandered) your emotional energy and time to someone else's comment, question, crisis, or rant.

Mind research shows that constantly reacting and splitting your attention makes you feel like time is racing. It's also exhausting.

Perhaps it's time to be more aware of what you're doing with your gifts of time and energy. Are you using them intentionally for the benefit of your organization, your relationships, and your well-being? Or do you need to make some different choices? These research-based suggestions will increase your positive energy:

1. Focus on what you want. What do you focus on most? Whatever it is, you bring more of it into your life. Are you spending time being anxious, worried, and negative? Then

that's the kind of energy you'll attract. Are you focusing on affirming, visionary thoughts? If so, you'll create positive energy.

2. Use your words wisely. Do you want your words to support, encourage, hurt, attack, educate, promote your opinion, bring you sympathy, make you look noble? You choose, but notice which remarks and conversations leave you feeling energized and which leave you drained. If all your donors viewed your words, would it foster giving, trusting relationships?

3. Clear out "clutter." Excess anything is clutter. Its mere presence drains your energy from your greatest priorities. Turn off the phone and enjoy the space. Schedule specific times to manage your e-mail and organize the piles on your desk.

4. Throw kindness around like confetti. Only 25% of Americans believe we're living in a kind society. Our brains are wired to get a hit of positive energy when we're helpful and compassionate. Regardless of how others are behaving, you can be kind and polite.

A big piece of building rapport with major donors is being likable. They'll experience less anxiety over major money decisions if they like and trust you. Kindness is a value that transcends borders, faith, race, and age. (See theworldkindnessmovement.org for more.)

5. Purge your inputs. "Unsubscribe" and "Unfriend" buttons exist for a reason. Use them.

6. Listen. Even when you're not entirely interested, don't agree, or have a million things to do, don't let yourself get distracted while you listen. Full attention is the best gift you can give another human being.

7. Give thanks. Being thankful turns your focus on what's right in your life. That spawns positive energy and creates even more to be thankful for.

8. Energy generates energy. Walk, clap, dance, wiggle throughout your day. Breathe in and think, "I am breathing in good energy."

9. Bring yourself fully to your work role each day. All of us choose how we'll show up each day. Terry Chadsey, ED of the Center for Courage and Renewal, suggests sharing something positive that captured your attention as a way to slow down and connect with your role.

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“What are you doing with your gifts of time and energy?”

10. Be proactive. Stephen Covey defines being proactive as “being responsible for our own lives.” Our behavior is a function of our decisions, not our conditions. Proactive people focus on things they can do something about. The nature of their energy in doing this is positive, enlarging, and magnifying.

Take time to think about what will push you off center, deflect you from your purpose, or get you riled up. Stay away from energy drainers.

There will be objections, concerns, and differences between your donors, you, and your organization. You and your givers benefit most when you can leap over the drama and blame. Then you can get down to helping people use their giving investments to create solutions that will lead to a good world. Invest in joy! 

Marcy Heim, CFRE, PLCC, has over 35 years of fundraising and management success. Her workshops, keynotes, and coaching packages produce dramatic fundraising and team-satisfaction results. Sign up for a complimentary subscription of Artful Action, her ezine, at marcyheim.com.

The Nature of Time

For more on putting your time and energy to good use, see these articles at NonprofitWorld.org:

Take Back Your Time (Vol. 31, No. 2)

The Real Secret: Moving Beyond the Law of Attraction (Vol. 29, No. 4)

Six Ways to Get Out of a Rut (Vol. 24, No. 4)

The Ben Franklin Program for Focusing on What's Important (Vol. 29, No. 1)

Never Enough Time (Vol. 26, No. 5)

Why Clutter Hurts Your Leadership & What to Do About It (Vol. 36, No. 1)

Think, Dream, and Do (Vol. 28, No. 6)

Embrace Mindfulness as a Leadership Practice (Vol. 36, No. 2)

Do You Know Where Your Goals Are? (Vol. 26, No. 5)



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