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GRATITUDE: THE FOUNDATIONAL EMOTION GROUP

6 of 7: Gratitude Break

Take a break to recharge, renew, and refocus – especially on busy days.

We all need a break from the busyness of the day – to recharge, refocus and renew. However, when we're at our busiest, the last thing we want to do is take a break. After all, we're busy and already don't have enough time in the day. The irony is that even a break of a few minutes can help us attack whatever is on our list with renewed energy and focus.

This is a brief practice that can be done in either a seated or reclined position, or even while you're walking. This practice assumes you're in a seated position. It doesn't matter where you take this break. You might try sitting on a park bench, on the ground, or by a pond. Many find this exercise especially enjoyable at sunset or sunrise. Let's begin:

- Start by finding a comfortable, seated position with your eyes closed or your gaze focused downward. Place your hands in a comfortable position with your palms facing up or down.
- Begin by connecting your body and mind by taking 2 to 3 deep slow and even breaths. As you focus on your breath, notice if there's any tension you need to release, such as in your neck or shoulders. Take a few additional breaths to help you relax and release that tension. (pause 10 seconds)
- Take a few more slow, relaxing breaths, noticing the gentle rise and fall of your breath. Breathing in and out. (pause 10 seconds)
- Once you're feeling relaxed, bring your awareness to your immediate surroundings. Scan it for all the things you can see, smell, taste, touch, or hear. You may want to say, "I am grateful for the smell of cut grass." Or, "I am grateful for the color of the sky." Or, "I am grateful for simply being alive."
- Return to your breath, taking note of the rise and fall of your breath, allowing it to fall into a natural pattern. (pause 10 seconds)
- Now turn your attention to those people close to you - your family, your friends. Bring them to mind and say to yourself, "I am grateful that you are in my life."
- Now turn your attention to yourself - the unique and special person that you are, blessed with imagination, an ability to communicate, a desire to learn and grow, and the ability to overcome obstacles and setbacks. (pause 10 seconds)
- Finally, take a moment to realize that life is a precious gift. Allow all of your blessings to sink deep within you, warming you and healing you. (pause 10 seconds) As you contemplate all that is good in your life, say to yourself, "For this I am grateful."
- Before we end this practice, take a moment to gently bring your awareness back into the room. And when you're ready, slowly open your eyes.

Before you leave this exercise, reflect on what you discovered and tune in to how you feel. Can you detect a shift in your energy level or optimism about returning to your busy day?