

Nine things that will help you feel better right now!

1. Take a snapshot of this moment, and become aware of your working position. Are you comfortable? Is it possible for you to do less?

What were you doing before you felt this way? What were you thinking about? What was your mindset?

Notice where you may be making effort or creating tension. Being pulled toward the computer screen, holding a pen or other tools too tightly, holding your breath or shallow breathing, clenching your teeth, furrowing your brow, tightening the upper arms and armpits, low back, leg and hip tension, tight on one side, are just a handful possibilities that most people recognize. Whatever you noticed is probably part of your habit.

Once you're aware, things might change automatically. You can also ask yourself, do I really need this effort in order to do what I'm doing? Can I do less?

2. Look up often from your computer or project, out a window or into an open area, if you can.

Let your new view help you. Most of us can usually do less in order to see. Soften your gaze, and let the images come to your eyes, rather than physically going toward what you see.

3. Allow your breathing to happen naturally.

If you notice yourself holding your breath or breathing shallowly, try allowing a full exhale, without forcing or pushing out the air. This allows the next inhale to be fuller with less effort.

4. Recognize the space around you, whether it's in your view or not.

You have space all around you and your awareness can move up and away from whatever you're working on. There is space between you and your project, and between you and the people and things around you.

5. Quiet your thinking.

With the exception of the instruction that you're giving yourself, let your other thoughts be quiet for a few moments. Don't worry! They will probably start right up again, and the point is not to maintain this or hold it. The practice of noticing where you go, and continually renewing the quieting of your inner dialogue, (even for a few minutes), can make you feel less stressed.

6. Free your neck.

Your head/neck/back balance is a key component of good coordination. Can you turn your head easily, or look up or down? If that's difficult, try letting your eyes look easily in the direction you want to turn. We can interfere with the best and most natural coordination of our head and spine by rigidly holding a position, such as clenching around the neck and jaw in order to look at a computer screen, or collapsing, as we often see in "text-neck". Make sure all electronics are at a good height for viewing, and take breaks often!

7. Allow for movement in your standing and sitting positions.

If you're sitting, be on your sit bones with your feet flat on the floor. Your back can either be supported by a backrest or not. If it's not, come to the edge of your chair so you can feel your sit bones and your legs can be free to move at the hip joints. We are built for movement, and a typical sitting position at a desk keeps us too immobile for too long. Gently roll forward and back and from side to side on your sit bones. Move your legs from side to side. If you're standing, be on both feet. Notice whether you favor one foot or the other. Move around a bit and change that pattern. Unlock

your knees and free your ankles and hips. Change position frequently, even if just a little.

8. Remind yourself that you have time.

Whatever you are doing, even if you are on a deadline, take a couple of seconds to look away from your project and say to yourself “I have time”. It’s OK if you don’t quite believe it. For most of us, being on a deadline is a stimulus to panic. By telling yourself that you have time, you can break that cycle a little bit. If you are on a deadline, is the panic helping you reach it? You may find that you’re able to be more productive if you are able to pace yourself.

9. Rest and take breaks!

Taking regular breaks to get up and move around is important, and can actually improve productivity in the long run. If you can, find some time each day to practice constructive rest, an opportunity to rest and renew the mind and body, as taught in Alexander Technique lessons.

A quick description of constructive rest: Lie on a firm but padded surface with knees bent, feet on the floor, hands resting on your belly and eyes open. Put a small firm support, such as a paperback book under your head. Let your weight meet the support and give yourself some time to quiet your thinking. Doing this simple practice for 10 minutes a couple of times a day can be very helpful!