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# Unleash Your Brain for Energy, Creativity and Success

Lisa Ward, CAE

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## Unleash Your Brain for Energy, Creativity and Success

Lisa Ward, CAE, VP Communications and Strategic Initiatives  
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Regular stretch breaks and a midday walk help stretch tired muscles, relieve neck and shoulder tension, and generally boost energy, resulting in more productive work for the rest of the day. Could the same be true for giving our brains short breaks from work – figuratively taking our brains for a walk?

It's so easy to keep our brains in the same gear day after day as we focus on our work. But always working in the same gear can lead to stagnant thinking. Our brains want and need stretch breaks and exercise the same way our bodies do. And like exercise for our bodies, it's good to change up the routine occasionally. Our brains are at full strength when we expose them to new experiences, new challenges, new ways of thinking.

A note to the Type A personalities who are reading this article: This idea may feel like you're being encouraged to play hooky from real work. You're not. Give yourself permission to take a break and try something different. You're not cheating; you're expanding how you think.

Learning new skills, trying different hobbies, and exploring unfamiliar territories foster fresh connections between brain cells. These novel experiences keep our brains agile. In his article, *Unlocking Your Brain's Full Potential: The Power of Brain Hacking*, Asadullah Khan suggests, "Learning something new every day can help improve cognitive function and memory. It can be as simple as reading a book or article, taking an online course, or practicing a new skill."

There is a great deal to be said for continuous learning, as Khan encourages, but if we confine our learning to comfortable, familiar topics, or only those pursuits applicable to our work, it's the equivalent of getting into an exercise rut when our bodies are craving cross-fit. Your brain is working, but on a short leash. What it really needs is freedom to run. Serial entrepreneur and marketer Deep Patel agrees. In an article for *Entrepreneur*, Patel encourages us to cultivate creativity by challenging ourselves to create every day, but warns to, "Push past your first ideas. We often focus on concepts we already know."

Pushing past our first ideas can be scary, but that's part of the point. We overcome anxiety by trying things that make us anxious. It's a tremendous confidence builder to look back at a new experience or challenge you were dreading and realize it wasn't that bad after all. In fact, it was a lot of fun.

Pushing yourself out of your comfort zone is the first step in unleashing your brain. Give it a try. Sign up for a pottery class. Try tai chi. Learn to speak Russian. And, if you're no good at it, so what? Expertise doesn't matter. It's the novelty and the challenge that unleash our brains, and ultimately help us be more creative and productive both on and off the job. So go for it – day volyu svojemu mozgu. (Unleash your brain.)

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