



Work Smart Live Smart

Future Shock

Ten Strategies For Handling Changing Technology

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You can't figure out how to connect the DVD player. Your pager beeps and your cell phone rings simultaneously. Modern technology has infiltrated the workplace, your car and your home.

According to the Angus Reid Group, 14% of Canadian workers identified new technology in the workplace as a significant source of stress. Never before have individuals been asked to adapt as rapidly. Instant communication and exponentially growing technology lead us to one of the few absolute truths – Technology change is constant. Technology has reconfigured the nature of work and our social relationships on the job.

In the book, *Mindsets*, the author reports that we have produced more information in the last 30 years than in the previous 5000. Though technology has increased and our environments have evolved, our bodies have not made any significant changes since our days of being hunters and gathers. Many of us are finding ourselves being overwhelmed and unable to adapt to these rapid changes. Alvin Toffler called this strain of not being able to adapt quickly enough to these changes "Future Shock".

The Conference Board of Canada reports that 21% of Canadian office workers feel overwhelmed by the volume of emails and calls that they receive. Though we can not stop this technology roller coaster, we can use a variety of practical strategy to develop resilience and renew and replenish ourselves.

One of the simplest strategies is deep relaxation. The relaxation response is the polar opposite of the stress response. By evoking this response you are providing your body with the rest and recuperation that it needs in order to repair itself and undo the effects of the increase in technology and constant change associated with it. It can reduce blood pressure, heart rate, cholesterol, insulin and sugar levels, strengthen the immune system, slow brain waves down to a more creative and healing frequency and improve the flow of oxygen. Relaxation is now being recognized as an essential survival skill for the modern age.

The most effective relaxation strategy is deep breathing. Though it comes naturally it doesn't mean that we do it correctly. If you have watched babies and children when sitting or resting you will see that they breathe with their whole lungs. Most adults use around one third of their lung capacity when breathing.

Our natural stress response promotes breathing rapidly as the body gets excited and ready for action. Deep breathing can interrupt this stress response and promote relaxation. It can convert fatigue into energy and restlessness into calmness.

The 'Complete Breath' can be used to become emotionally calm yet physically energized. You can take in approximately ten times more air than in normal unconscious breathing. The following are steps for the 'Complete Breath':

- Lie or sit in a comfortable position
- Place your hands, one above and one below your belly button, to help experience the filling and releasing of your entire lung capacity
- Breathe in through your nose
- Breathe in three parts by filling the bottom of your lungs (expand your lower stomach), then the middle, and then the top of your lungs
- Hold for a count of three
- Breathe out in three parts by releasing the top, then the middle and finally the bottom
- Your shoulders should roll slightly forward as you force all of the air from your lungs
- Repeat this process several times a day for 5-10 breaths
- Should you start to feel light-headed from the increase in oxygen to your system, shake your arms and hands vigorously to use up the extra oxygen

Deep breathing several times a day helps to expand your lungs and increase your unconscious natural capacity during the rest of the day.

Nine Other Valuable Strategies To Combat Future Shock:

- Control the use of technology as opposed to having it control you. E.g., For Computer technology use email appropriately. Use meaningful subject headings and a priority system. Don't stay connected 24/7
- Use the technology at hand to its fullest capability. Get trained
- Resist the urge to continually update. Update when the new technology can increase your efficiency and effectiveness over time
- Get support from others who also use the technology or who are having difficulty with the technology. Don't be afraid to say, "I don't know". A safe place to vent and ask questions is the key to maintaining your perspective and mental health. Acknowledge your emotions
- Watch your expectations of the technology. It probably will not be without its flaws and it will probably ripple out and impact other areas because of this. Acknowledge that technology will continue to evolve and have an impact on your life

- Watch your expectations of yourself. You are not expected to know everything and keep up on all of the latest technology changes. Knowing where or with whom to access information on the technology that impacts you is a more useful strategy
- Don't blame others for the technology changes. Address problems in a proactive way and work on the issues that you have control over
- Keep It Simple. When technology changes are increasing your stress in one area of your life, find strategies that can help to simplify the rest of your life so that you can use your energy wisely. Be aware of those areas of your life that have not been affected by the new technology
- Take care of yourself. Eat properly. Drink plenty of water. Get enough quality sleep. Exercise

By watching your expectations, getting support and help, and by learning how to let the stress go before it builds up too high through relaxation and self-care, you will be better equipped to avoid the stress associated with ever-changing technology.

Stress and wellness specialist, **Beverly Beuermann-King** translates current research and best practices information into a realistic, accessible and practical approach through her dynamic stress and wellness workshops, on-line articles, e-newsletters and media interviews and through a collaboration called *Awakening The Workplace*. Visit www.WorkSmartLiveSmart.com for more on Beverly and her wellness work.

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