

# ON COURAGE TO ACT

*Challenges for Everyday Life*





## On Courage to Act - Challenges for Everyday Life

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»Be yourself; everyone else is already taken.«

Oscar Wilde



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# On Courage to Act

## a Foreword

In public debate, it is repeatedly stated that a fundamental process of social change is taking place. And that »we are all« being swept along with it. That we have to be prepared to shape this change. And that we must be prepared to change ourselves.

At the same time, however, not much is changing. Ambitious climate protection targets are not being met. Energy and waste consumption continues to rise and burnout rates remain high. Growth, acceleration and the pressure to innovate are the main drivers of economic thought and action. The possibility of being different is both a longing and a nightmare.

Universities are also changing rather slowly and sluggishly. How is an education system from the 19th century supposed to solve the problems of the 21st century? Exam knowledge is still learnt by heart and a canon is taught that was geared towards professional life in the 20th century.



The rapid acceleration of the digital revolution makes it almost impossible to predict career paths. Frequent job changes, combined with phases of personal reinvention, are the rule, rather than the exception these days. In order to survive as a person, you need a great deal of mental flexibility, emotional balance and mental and physical resilience. These requirements go beyond the previous postulates of lifelong learning.

At the House of Competence (HoC), we don't just want to provide students with the skills they need to survive in a changing world. Rather, we support students in becoming active themselves and becoming makers and shapers of these change processes. We promote practices of self-determination.

The programme is based on the premise that the company's employees should be encouraged to think and act responsibly and create space for orientation, reflection and

the testing of value-conscious patterns of action. Under this premise, a new programme focus entitled ›Shaping the future‹ was introduced two years ago.

We realise that the reach of our services is limited. Nevertheless, we want to utilise the corridor we have as sustainably as possible: At the HoC, we conduct research into the effectiveness of our programmes, offer peer-to-peer counselling and develop teaching materials that provide evidence of attendance at seminars and workshops. This booklet bears witness to this. It brings together exercises, mainly from the ›Shaping the future‹ focus area, and is intended to encourage people to try out the topics and content of our programmes outside of the courses. The exercises are used by lecturers at the HoC in seminars and one-day workshops. They originate, for example, from the practice of meditation, resource-orientated coaching, or from positive psychology. Some of the exercises are centuries old and widely known; scientific studies have

now also proven their effectiveness. Students at KIT have also been able to try out the exercises over several semesters. A large number of reflection reports and feedback discussions indicate that they are very well received by the students.

The exercises in this booklet are not only aimed at cognitive skills, but also involve feelings and the body. The exercises do not provide tools for personal optimisation, but rather opportunities for self-reflection and self-determination. They are a kind of challenge - an encouragement to try things out. The exercises are intended to make you curious to get to know yourself better - in an attitude of exploratory learning. But beware: the exercises are not a tool for self-optimisation. They do not work if you only do them for their effect.

It may seem naïve to focus on personal transformation when the central problems must be solved politically.

When we present exercises here that start at the individual level, this does not mean that we think there is no need for big political effort and action on the part of the global community. Quite the contrary!

The challenge in a world that seems to present no alternatives and is susceptible to crises, is to step out of the usual patterns of thought and behaviour. Why not do it differently? If you want to create a future that is open-ended, rich in alternatives and attractive for future generations, you don't have to wait for large- scale change – you can start by making small - scale adjustments. In this respect, key qualification centres such as the HoC can make a contribution. However, the best opportunity for a transfer exercise is not to be found in a successful course - it's in everyday life.

# Challenges for Everyday Life

## a User's Guide

To improve the transfer from an HoC event to everyday life, we offer a range of exercises as teaching materials in our courses, which we now present in this booklet. True to the motto: »Actions speak louder than words«, you can try out the exercises in your everyday life.

The booklet is aimed at all those who have already attended an HoC course and now want to stay on. In addition, we naturally want to make all students curious about the HoC and its topics - and provide a kind of assistance, independent of attending our courses, to help them cope better with certain typical situations during their studies: For example, the examination phase or the by no means easy process of preparing for a career. Many exercises are offered to clear the mind and focus on the essentials.

We have borrowed the subtitle of this book from Karlfried Graf von Dürkheim (2012), in the firm conviction that there is no better place for self-development than everyday life. We offer a broad spectrum in five chapters: Firstly, you will receive instructions on how to **pause for a moment** in order to mindfully observe

the contexts in which you currently find yourself. We show you how to focus on what is going well (**perceiving the positive**) in order to connect with your own resources from this basic mood (**discovering strengths**). We will show you how to take action (**taking the initiative**) and communicate in a state of full self-awareness (**appearing confident**).

You can select the exercises completely independently of the chapter structure. There is no sequence to follow. Some exercises build on each other or complement each other. But in the end, what matters is that you

simply get involved in a specific task. Approach the exercises with a willingness to experiment: Want to bet that you'll manage to get out of that sometimes unpleasant daily grind? Feel challenged to find out as many things about yourself as possible. Don't practise in order to perform (or to optimise yourself), but with the **joy of discovery** of a scientist, who wants to find out everything about something that is of burning interest to him or her.

It's not about increasing your efficiency in your studies, but about getting out of the state of having to function. It's about resilience in stressful times, recognising mistakes as part of learning and appreciating your own strengths and weaknesses. All of this in an enquiring attitude: be your own best object of observation!

The exercises invite you to reflect. It is advisable to record your observations immediately or promptly **in writing**: in a kind of diary or notebook, with the aim of ›writing something out of yourself‹. Because regular practice in everyday life can be easily forgotten, we recommend working with memory aids (mobile phone reminders, pictures or text notes).

You should plan around **15 minutes** for most of the exercises; some tasks take more time, others less. We have deliberately refrained from giving an exact duration. From the exercises, choose the ones that spontaneously appeal to you the most (you can always try out more exercises later). It is advisable to perform an exercise **regularly** over a certain period of time.

Many of the exercises in this booklet are suitable for use as a ritual. If you know which exercises are good for you, you can set a fixed time for them and start or end your day with them in the evening. Rituals give structure and stability to everyday life. They are a way of arriving back at a safe space in the midst of the hectic hustle and bustle of everyday life. Where everything external falls away and you can be who you are in your current physical, mental and emotional states without any pressure to perform (Grün 2016).

### During the examination period

You can use the booklet during the exam period. The exercises for pausing and being mindful in particular will give you more clarity and concentration. Some companies now offer meditation sessions to improve performance at work. But don't just practise for that reason. Allow yourself the peace and order that you experience during self-reflection. You can still go full-throttle afterwards. It is easier to compensate for stress when you are calmer



and more relaxed, and have the feeling of being self-determined again.

Allow yourself a daily mindfulness meditation. With an exercise to feel gratitude, you will not only get through the exam period happier and stronger, you will also strengthen your social relationships and be able to give each other more support (Watkins/ van Gelder/ Frias 2009). Try out ›power poses‹ to engage your body. Or practise metta meditation to give yourself self-compassion during a difficult time.

### **Learning to lead yourself and others**

If you want to lead other people later on, you first have to learn how to lead yourself. Many people, however, believe that prospective managers need to familiarise themselves with leadership instruments, delegation principles or personnel management tools in order to be able to act. But that would be too short-sighted.

Leadership begins with self-leadership and self-questioning about how you need to be in order to lead others. Anyone who wants to learn leadership, especially in a time of dynamic change, would do well to familiarise themselves with the prerequisites, requirements and scope for action of leading and of being led. Leadership in this sense is not a career learner, but a personal path to maturity. The exercises presented here offer you many training opportunities for this.

Use the exercises to reflect on your own views and discover new perspectives. Only when you have a feel for discovering your own strengths, your values or your creativity can you do the same for others. Use the exercises as a path to self-orientation and self-reflection, which you will need as an aspiring manager.

### Preparing for the start of your career

At some point (towards the end of your studies at the latest), you will probably ask yourself what career you want to pursue. And how you can convince your potential employer that you are the right person for the job. You may read one or two job

advertises and ask yourself whether you have the qualifications and skills that are required. And what you can do to match the job description.

The exercises in this booklet are designed to invite you NOT to get involved in this game of conformism («How do I become what others want me to be?«). Accordingly, you will not learn with them how best to sell yourself, but what you have to give to the world. In our understanding, professional empowerment through key qualifications is not mechanical career planning, but the promotion of self-development and the encouragement of self-testing.

You can use the exercises as stages of a journey of discovery in which you will encounter yourself. The observation programme includes your own thoughts, feelings and sensations, your strengths, your decisions, your interests, the topics and people you are currently involved with, your vision and passion and, last but not least, your values. By practising regularly, you can improve your public image and learn to be yourself. Which in

turn leads to a key factor in the application process: Authenticity. The exercises in this booklet are not job application training. But perhaps a beneficial and insightful way to forge your own path.

### Here we go!

Our aim is to contribute to your self-development. We want you to trust yourself and others to master challenges and make a difference in a planned way. And to apply the valuable knowledge gained from your specialised studies. Once your personal and social goals have been clarified, the great achievements of the technology you have studied at KIT will be all the more useful.



PAUSE

FOR THOUGHT



## Pause for Thought

In everyday life, we are usually busy achieving something. Or distracting ourselves from external demands, for example with social media. The following exercises are about neither the former nor the latter. Pausing means (re)focussing on yourself.

Create a space for yourself to take a deep breath without any obligations, where you can relax. Figuratively take a step back and observe what you are thinking, feeling and sensing NOW. Pausing is the beginning of all spiritual progress and has been practised for centuries by various Eastern and Western religions. Meditation, contemplation and mindfulness have also long been recognised in science. Research shows that mindfulness exercises maintain health, reduce stress levels, improve concentration and clarity and ultimately increase performance.

In all the exercises, you can simply perceive, calm your mind and stop obsessing about your thoughts. Draw your attention to the thoughts, emotions and sensations that

arise within you in a friendly and non-judgemental way. Silently make a note: »Ah, that's what I'm thinking, feeling and experiencing right now«. Become an observer of your own streams of thought. And then turn your attention back to the new thoughts, feelings and sensations that will inevitably arise. Pausing gives you the freedom to decide which fleeting impressions you want to consider real and true. You train the accuracy of your perception and can re-evaluate things. You will realise your ability to think in alternatives. And you will inevitably feel connected to your environment and the people around you. Try it out!



## Breath Meditation

The easiest way to pause is to feel your own breath. And to become completely calm in the process. It sounds simple, but it's not that easy, because in the stillness, various streams of thought will immediately appear and attract your attention. The art or purpose of the exercise is not to allow yourself to be absorbed by them and to focus your attention solely on your breath again.

Breathing meditations are widespread in both Eastern and Western cultures. The breath is seen as a symbol of life, as a connection with all living things. The flow of air connects the head, heart and stomach and refers to the dynamics of human self-development in the alternation of accepting and letting go. The effectiveness of the breathing meditation in reducing stress has now been scientifically proven. Just a few minutes a day can help you to calm down and get back in touch with yourself.

And this is how it works: Sit upright and comfortably. Close your eyes. Now consciously notice your breath, inhaling and exhaling.

You may feel the breath as a stream of air at the tip of your nose or when you raise and lower your chest or abdomen.

When thoughts arise - which will inevitably be the case - recognise them without holding on to them. Say goodbye to the thoughts in a friendly manner. And when new thoughts come, let them pass like clouds in the sky. Concentrate on your breath again. Relax yourself. There is nothing you have to do now. Just be there.

After 5-10 minutes, you can open your eyes again. Take a few more minutes to feel and remain relaxed.

## Three Minutes of Mindfulness

Take three minutes to come to your senses.

**1st Minute:** Make a ›stop‹: *»How am I, right here, right now?«*

What **physical sensations** do you feel? Tension, relaxation, warmth, cold, restlessness or calm? And where exactly in your body can you feel this?

What **feelings** accompany the physical sensations? Insecurity, calmness, impatience, anxiety, joy - or something else?

What **thoughts** and beliefs go hand in hand with the physical sensations and feelings? E.g. *»I can't do it«, »I feel overwhelmed«, »I'm looking forward to it«, »I'm tense...«*

Consciously recognise the three levels without judging them. Practise a friendly, accepting attitude towards what you perceive.

**2nd Minute:** Direct your awareness to your breath, follow the inhalation and exhalation. Use your breath as an anchor to be in the present moment. Feel how »it« breathes you in and out.

**3rd Minute:** Extend the breath to the whole body, become aware of the breath in the body. Take »breathing space« for yourself. There is nothing to do, make or achieve: Just be - here and now.

Finish the exercise. Slowly direct your attention outwards again. Remain as mindful as possible when you turn your attention back to your everyday life.

*by Bettina Werner*

## Seat

Nature is a place where we can relax. Science has also identified various health-promoting effects that occur when we go out into nature. The more consciously we do this, the greater the effect. The following exercise is very common among many indigenous peoples around the world.

Take about half an hour or more. Find a place in nature that appeals to you. It could be under a beautiful tree or by a small river, at the edge of a forest or in a small clearing. But it can also be on a park bench, on your balcony or even by an open window. The effort involved should be as little as possible and fit in well with your everyday life.

Now sit down. Make sure you are comfortable and warm enough. Then take a moment to settle in before you start the exercise.

**See:** Your gaze goes to the horizon. Try to see everything in your field of vision without focussing on anything (see everything, look at nothing). Notice the movements, the ›play‹ between light and dark. See the three-dimensional space.

**Listen:** Open your ears to hear everything around you. Stay in the present moment. Let the sounds pass through you - nothing sticks to you. Allow a three-dimensional sound-space to emerge around you. This allows you to perceive things in the environment around you that you cannot see with your eyes.

Repeat this task five times within a week. If possible, you can do it at completely different times. Sometimes early in the morning at sunrise, sometimes at midday when the sun is at its highest, or in the middle of the night.

*by Andreas Lelley*

## Sound Meditation

In addition to breathing, sounds are a good opportunity to practise mindfulness. The task is to notice the sounds of your everyday life without judging them. There is nothing you have to do or achieve.

Choose a suitable environment for this exercise - perhaps the castle park or the foyer in front of the Audimax, or perhaps you would like to use the ›Room of Silence‹ for this. Sit down in a relaxed position. If you wish, close your eyes. Just let your breath flow. Now pay attention to what you hear. The following questions (based on Hoffmann 2015, p. 20) can help you do this:

Imagine you are like a microphone that doesn't know what is coming in. Which sounds reach you? Are they loud or quiet? Do the volumes or pitches fluctuate? Do you find them pleasant or unpleasant? What is the quietest sound you hear? How do the sounds affect you? How do they feel?

When people talk to each other, the trick is to hear the sound without giving the words any meaning. It's as if the people are speaking in a language that is foreign to us.



Sometimes there are pauses between the sounds. Can you hear the silence? Finish the exercise. Slowly open your eyes and listen «normally» again. Repeat this exercise several times within a week, perhaps in different places.



## Mindful Waiting

Even unpleasant experiences of waiting (in front of the checkout at the supermarket, at the bus stop or at red traffic- lights) offer opportunities for small mindfulness exercises (Hoffmann 2015, Ilding 2015).

Why don't you pay attention to how you perceive your body when you have nothing to do but wait? Try walking through your body from head to toe: notice your head, neck, chest, shoulders, upper back, arms, hips, thighs, calves and feet.

When you stand, stand upright. Try the »proud swan«. Imagine that someone is pulling on an invisible thread that leads upwards from the highest point of your head. This causes your chin to drop slightly. Put your shoulders back and your chest slightly forwards. Your pelvis is upright so that you have neither a hollow back nor a hunched back.

How does your body feel immediately after the exercise? How do you experience these minutes when you are in your body?

## Morning Pages

Writing morning pages is a special form of pausing. This exercise is a classic form of writing meditation (Cameron 2009).

Write three pages at a time by hand every morning (writing by hand is slower than typing and helps you to concentrate better). Cameron recommends reserving 20 minutes for this. Write down whatever comes to mind - without any literary pretensions. You are only writing for yourself. When you have finished, put the text away. You don't need to read through what you've written. You literally write something out of yourself. Try to keep going for a fortnight at a time. What do you notice?

This exercise is ideal for ending circles of thought or regulating negative thoughts. The idea is to pay attention to what is bothering you for the 20 minutes of writing - and then let it go. You may notice how the background noise inside you is minimised and you regain a clear head. You can find more exercises in this context in Robinson 2013, p. 40ff.

## Non-Violent Communication

Conflicts are part of life. Both privately and in our professional worlds, even if it is difficult to deal with it professionally. It is usually feelings that trigger conflict. Marshall B. Rosenberg has described a procedure for recognising and listening to these feelings - and how this can be turned into an attitude for dealing with conflicts. The following exercise outlines the basis of this language of ›non-violent communication‹.

Start by describing your own perception to the other person. And name the feeling that you associate with it. Think about it: Behind every feeling is a need. What need is hidden behind your feeling in the conflict? Is it a violation of your image of equality, of order, of recognition, of curiosity, or something else? By communicating this need, your conflict partner has the chance to understand you and fulfil the subsequent request.

Reflect on your needs at the back of your feelings - make sure you clarify them. Make a note of your experiences and challenges when using this method.

## Perception

» *When I see/ hear/ perceive/ think about it ...*,«

## Feeling

»...*I feel/ I am (emotional word) ...*,«

## Need

»...*because ... (+ need word) is important to me.*«

»...*because I need ...*«

»...*because I would like it if ...*«

»...*because it is very important to me that ...*«

## Please

» *Would you be ready, please, to (+ concrete action in the now) ...?*

»*And I would like you to please (do something)...*«

» *Is it OK for you if you please (do something)...*«

Experiment with this and practise a variety of different emotional words and needs. Expand your repertoire to include subtleties and synonyms. Pay attention to the difference between feelings and needs!

by Daniela Geraets

## Just Eat While Eating

This exercise is about taking meals with mindfulness. This includes switching off the TV or radio, putting aside the newspaper/magazine or smartphone. Focus only on the current activity, the meal. Take three deep breaths before eating and only then start eating. Open all your senses while eating: be aware of how you are sitting. Look at the colours, shapes and ingredients. Pay attention to the smells and flavours in your mouth. Make a note of your experiences over the course of a week.

*by Manuela Schnaubelt*

## Shower Mindfully

Showering can also be used as a mindfulness experience. You can start being mindful early in the morning. The following questions are for your inspiration.

- How does the skin feel?
- How does the water feel on your skin?
- How do the shampoo and shower gel feel? What is the fragrance like?
- How do I feel at the beginning, how do I feel afterwards?
- Is showering a burden or a pleasure?

*by Manuela Schnaubelt*

## Map of Values

What values do you have? Which attitudes, ideas, characteristics, principles or qualities do you consider worth striving for? Which are particularly important to you? Which ones have a special significance in your life?

Recall a situation in which the value in question was either disregarded or realised. If you react very negatively to a value when it has been disregarded or very positively when it has been realised, it plays an important role for you.

You can now evenly distribute the values that you have recognised as particularly important on a treasure map. The larger the font, the more important the corresponding values (according to Schweppe / Long 2016, p. 25). Draw your treasure map of values!





# My Consumer Behaviour

In economics, we talk about companies bringing products and services into the world in order to satisfy needs. Individual consumption forms the demand in an economy and therefore has an enormous impact on the sustainable development of the economy and society. This means that in order to contribute to sustainable development as an individual, it is necessary to reflect on one's own consumption behaviour. To go deeper, it helps to look at your own needs structure.

## **Max-Neef et al (1991) postulate 9 basic needs:**

- Maintenance of life (e.g. eating, drinking)
- Protection (e.g. taking out insurance, looking for a safe place to live)
- Affection (e.g. spending time with family, friends)
- Comprehension (e.g. learning, reading)
- Participation (e.g. social participation, work)
- Leisure (e.g. resting, watching television)
- Creativity (e.g. making music, painting)
- Identity (e.g. affiliation to status, gender)
- Freedom (e.g. freedom of expression)

Which of your needs are particularly strong? Which needs are fulfilled by your favourite products and services? Which favourite products and services could you do without and how could you fulfil the underlying need differently? Which of your favourite products and services act as pseudo-satisfiers (i.e. you only think you are satisfying a need, but you are not)?

*by Julia Hufnagel*

## My Role in the Team

There are many different roles in a team. Roles that are consciously assumed, assigned or ascribed. Roles can be: inventor, trailblazer, coordinator, facilitator, observer, co-player, implementer, perfectionist, specialist ...

What role do you play in the team and what role do you really want to play? Ask yourself the following questions:

- How do you define ›constructive‹? Can you work constructively with others?
- What is your opinion on diversity in the team? What do you think about the different characters, talents and opinions? Which do you find exciting and attractive or rather uninteresting and less appealing?
- How respectfully and tolerantly do you deal with these differences? What specific experiences have you had with similar opinions and with dissimilar opinions?
- When are you proactive?
- When are you motivated to work with others on a topic?

- How confidently do you defend your ideas? In which contexts do you behave like this and in which not?
- How do you accept criticism?
- Do you mediate disputes?
- Which team members do you pay attention to and which do you not?

Feel free to talk to another person and ask for their assessment.  
Self-image and external image provide interesting insights.

*by Daniela Geraets*

# Time Moves Forward

## How Do We Live It?

Do you know the story of Momo and the time thieves? When the grey gentlemen appeared in Momo's town, they told the inhabitants how much time they could save by not doing seemingly useless things. They were supposed to invest the time they saved in the ›time savings bank‹ and get it back later with interest and compound interest. And indeed, little by little, more and more people were won over by this idea. They began to rush through life, giving up seemingly useless activities, becoming more and more efficient in a time-economic sense - but at the same time more joyless. It took some time for them to realise for themselves that they had been cheated: Their time for the essentials had been stolen from them.

This is the story that young adult author Michael Ende spent seven years writing and finally published in 1973. He had the foresight to capture the spirit of the times. Because the grey gentlemen from Momo's little town have now taken possession of our minds. We try to get more and more out of our day and sleep less. Being stressed is almost considered a badge of honour. Resting for long periods of time seems suspicious to

many, and simply doing nothing is considered a mortal sin. Only those who truly live can lead themselves and others. People with a fixed daily structure, a clear rhythm and regular break times experience how this brings peace and order into their lives.

Within the experience of a healthy life, there are five priorities that should not be missing.

**Sleep:** Many people don't get enough sleep and often ›sleep‹ through the day, and are not present in their various interactions.

**Dreams** contain numerous clues about our needs or about a previously unknown psychological reality. It can help to write them down in order to discover their secret.

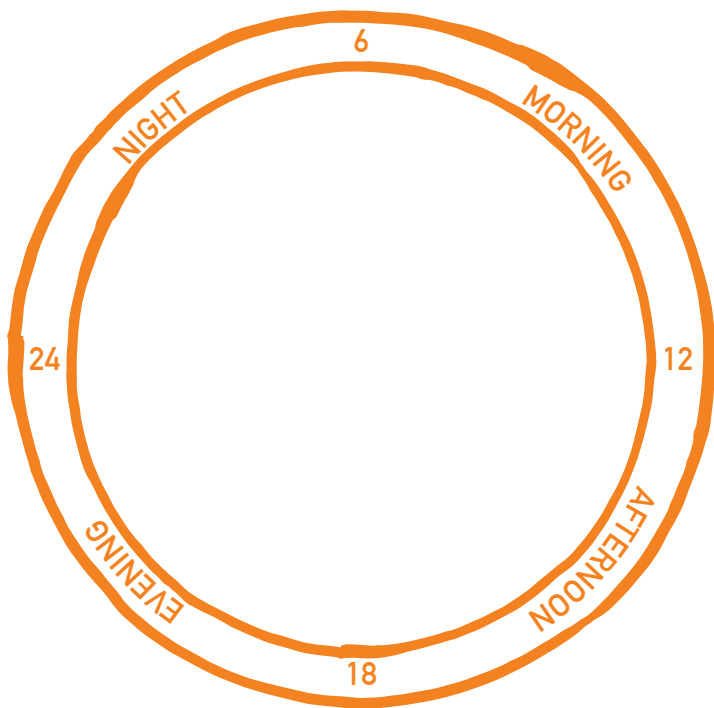
**Movement:** External movement such as cycling, jogging etc. gives life internal movement. What are your motives for doing or not doing something?

**Relationships** from which you can draw and live. That want to be nurtured, that are sometimes peaceful and are then very lively again. People who are simply there and who do you good with their great openness, sympathy and interest.

For some people, **work** seems so important, that it seems like there's nothing else in the world. Work that gives you joy and pleasure in life. Work is not just fun. It can also have a very sobering effect, which is also part of life.

Take 10 minutes for the following exercise: look at the course of a typical day that you remember. In the clock shown, enter as precisely as possible how much time you spend on which of the five priorities. What does the result look like? What do you notice? Does anything surprise you? Does the time-of-day analysis tell you anything about how you live your time?

*by Stephan Veith OSB*







PERCEIVING  
THE  
POSITIVE



## Perceiving the Positive

There are positive and negative feelings in human experience. And both have their justification and purpose in our lives. If the positive feelings take centre stage in the following exercises, it is not to pretend that these negative feelings do not exist or that it is important to suppress them. On the contrary: »Too much sunshine makes a desert.«

The aim is not esoteric ›positive thinking‹, but a scientifically based focus on the good and enriching aspects of life. Positive feelings have been proven to promote thinking, creativity and problem-solving skills and contribute to stable social relationships. In other words, exactly what you need for your studies.

While negative feelings are perceived more quickly, attract more attention and have a longer lasting effect (»only bad news is good news«), positive feelings are more frequent on average, but are not as easily recognized in everyday life, which is probably also due to the fact that they are

not so clear and often overlap. In other words, you have to use targeted strategies to recognise the positive.

Scientific research has proven the effect of positive emotions and provides many training options on how they can be recognised and integrated into one's own experience.

Positive psychology emerged in the late 1990s and conducts scientific research into optimising human performance and mental health. The aim is to identify ways in which individuals and communities can flourish. The concepts are now being applied in many areas of the economy and society. For example, ›positive leaders‹ focus on making their company flourish and motivating employees instead of just solving problems, removing obstacles or increasing competitive assets and returns.

## Take Stock of the Situation

The American psychologist Barbara L. Fredrickson has developed a quick test, the so-called ›positivity ratio‹, which can be used to track down everyday feelings (Fredrickson 2009). It was initially assumed that there was an optimal ratio of positive to negative emotions, but this theory has since been debunked. What is undisputed, however, is that focussing on positive experiences triggers an upward spiral in which attention is expanded and long-term resources are built up (so-called ›broaden-and-build theory‹).

It is therefore worth taking this snapshot of your emotions again and again in order to notice fluctuations and attribute them to external influences.

Click here for the test: [www.positivityratio.com](http://www.positivityratio.com)

## Coffee Beans Method

It's not so easy to recognise good experiences. In everyday life, we are often in ›problem mode‹: we mainly notice what is not going well; what is positive does not need to be mentioned. Just like the Swabian village teacher said

»No telling-off is praise enough.« There is a simple method to change this.



In the morning, put a number of coffee beans (or other beans) in your right trouser pocket. If something is going well, move a coffee bean unobtrusively from your right pocket to your left pocket. In the evening, take stock: What went well today?

by Marie-Hélène Seidl-Scheerer

## Gratitude Journaling

One of the quickest positive emotions to detect is gratitude. Many spiritual traditions have emphasised the special role of gratitude for hundreds of years, seeing it as a hallmark of a deeply-felt quality of life.

Gratitude for the great and the very small can be a source of strength to actively, courageously or calmly master your daily tasks. There is no goal to achieve. There is only gratitude to feel.

A classic gratitude exercise is the ›gratitude journal‹, sometimes also called the ›positive daily review‹ or ›three good things exercise‹ (Emmons 2008, p. 193; Bannink 2012, p. 97).

Take time each day to remember moments of gratitude before you go to bed. These can be linked to everyday or completely normal events, your personal qualities or people in your life that you particularly appreciate.

Write down the three good things that happened to you that day. Sometimes you may have to search for them first, but you

will soon discover that you are also grateful for small and trivial things. Make a note of how these experiences came about and, if you wish, add what influence you had on them.

If you know your own strengths, you can also associate the positive experiences with them, like this:

*»Today went well in that (...)« »The reason for this is that I was able to contribute the following strength: (...)«*

Do this exercise for at least a week. How do you feel? Can you notice any changes at the end of the week? Observe how your mood changes and record the results.



## 50 Ways to Find Happiness

This exercise (after Bannink 2012, p. 64) is about noticing and collecting the happiness that is already there but is often overlooked. This exercise is particularly enjoyable if you do it together with a good friend on a nice evening over a delicious drink. Or take a piece of paper and write something down throughout the day.

- Name ten positive qualities about yourself.
- Name ten successes from your life.
- Name ten ways in which you are nice to others.
- Name ten lucky breaks in your life.
- Name ten ways in which you are supported by others.

Reflect afterwards: What do you take away from the exercise? In what light do you see yourself after you have completed the list? How do you experience the people around you?

## Pleasure in Everyday Life

The following exercise combines the mindfulness mindset with the practice of conscious enjoyment (“savouring”) known from resilience research.

Over the next week, consciously pay attention to the beautiful things in your everyday life. Consciously notice what gives you pleasure, what you find enjoyable and can savour. These can be special events (e.g. treating yourself to a massage) or - more importantly - everyday pleasures. Take a few moments each day to remember and make notes.

Make a note, preferably in the evening or before going to bed:

- What was nice today?
- Why was it nice? What feelings did it trigger in you?
- Reflect on how you feel when you write things down and remember them. Feel the good feelings.

*by Manuela Schnaubelt*

## Lists of Joy

Have you ever written a list of all the things you enjoy? Famous people like Bertolt Brecht kept such lists (Knopf 2000, p. 174 f.).



Write your own list of joys. Try to add to it again and again. It's nice to speak your list of joys to yourself (quietly or aloud) and visualise the individual points very vividly. It works like a refreshing shower.

**Bertolt Brecht, »Pleasures«**

*The first view out of the window in the morning  
The old book we found again  
Enthusiastic faces  
Snow, the change of seasons  
The newspaper  
The dog  
The dialectic  
Showers, swimming  
Old music  
Comfortable shoes  
Grasping  
New music  
Writing, plants  
Travelling  
Singing  
Being friendly.*

## Positive Communication

The way we communicate has a major influence on the quality of our relationships. For the following exercise, choose different people from your environment with whom you would like to try out this exercise. Don't talk about what you are going to do, just do it.

For the coming week, resolve to do the following on at least three days:

Say more positive things than negative ones! For every critical comment, every criticism that slips out, say something nice to the person that isn't stretching the truth. There are certainly many ›real‹ things that are worth saying!

You can also do a preliminary exercise first: If you ›catch‹ yourself making a negative statement to a person, formulate two to three positive statements in your mind, but don't say them. You can do this directly in the situation or in retrospect.

The exercise is all about quantity: The positive statements should outweigh the negative ones. It has been scientifically proven that negative statements have a much greater lasting effect than positive ones. Criticism is remembered longer than praise. To compensate for this, more positive statements are needed.

Observe what influence the change in communication has on your relationships. Does the positive communication change the way you feel? Make a note of your experiences.

## The ›Mini Retreat‹ (Part 1)

This exercise is one of the classic strategies from the area of conscious savouring (Blickhan 2015, p. 72 f.). The exercise consists of several phases that build on each other. It can help you to distance yourself from your everyday problems and find inner peace.

The exercise is based on creating a list of activities that are good for you. The more varied the individual entries are, the better (as behavioural therapy studies have shown).

So what is really good for you? Which surroundings, which rituals? What feels like a kind of ›mini holiday‹? Think of shorter or longer activities. Activities that you do alone or together with others. They can be spontaneous or planned activities.

Examples: Taking a nap, listening to music, lying on the sofa with a soft blanket, watching a film, going out with a friend, dancing, going for a walk, getting a massage, cooking, drinking a cappuccino/tea, etc.



The aim is to compile a list of at least 30-50 entries, which you then enter in a table with 3 columns:

- Short activities
- Longer activities
- Activities with others

Instead of the list or the table, you can also make a collage: with your own photos or with images from magazines or the Internet.

You can then do the second part of the exercise (on p. 119).



## Writing the Future

This writing exercise is designed to help you become aware of your goals and their impact on your life so that you can remain both determined and calm in your day-to-day studies (Blickhan 2015, p. 153).

Take at least 10 minutes to write on four consecutive days. If you want to leave more time between the writing days, make sure that the intervals are not too long so that the inner coherence is maintained.

On day 1, you choose a specific area of your life (e.g. studies, private life, friendly or romantic relationship, health, self-care, sport, experience abroad) and suitable time periods for it: e.g. in 5 years, in 10 years, in 20 years.

Now imagine that everything has gone as well as possible up to this point: you have actively utilised your strengths and have come closer to achieving your life goals.

Put yourself in your future self's shoes and take time to arrive there emotionally: What inner images are present here? How does it feel? Now write down how you feel, what you are doing and what is important to you spontaneously, from your gut, without thinking too much. Write for at least 10 minutes without interrupting, without immediately reading through and revising what you have written.

Repeat the exercise on day 2, 3 and 4 with a different area of life.

Very important: Keep writing, even and especially if you think you can't think of anything more. Keep writing anyway and let yourself be surprised by the result. Put what you have written aside at the end and take a moment to notice any changes in your state of mind. It is best to read through your text again a few days after completing the whole exercise and let it sink in for a while.

## Metta Meditation

In recent years, psychology has discovered the concept of ›self-compassion‹, which has its roots in Eastern philosophy. Self-compassion combines three aspects: Kindness towards oneself (even in difficult, painful times, in the face of failure or imperfection), a sense of connection with all people and a mindful basic attitude. The positive effect of self-compassion has now been scientifically confirmed: People with a high level of self-compassion are generally more open, show less aggression after attacks, have less anxiety and fewer self-centred negative thoughts (Fredrickson 2009, Neff 2012).

In the following metta meditation, you will practise a friendly, well-wishing attitude. Read through the exercise once or twice, then put the booklet aside and set an alarm clock for ten minutes. Now settle into a comfortable posture in which you can remain calm until the alarm clock rings. Focus your attention on your breath. If you notice any thoughts, let them go. Say the following sentences silently.

*May you be safe and secure. May you be happy.*

*May you be healthy.*

*May you live in peace and ease.*

Firstly, think of someone close to you for whom you have warm feelings. As soon as the feelings of love and compassion have manifested themselves, turn your attention to yourself. Say these phrases to yourself. Most people need a lot of patience and practice for this. Then direct the words and feelings back to others. Firstly to someone you know well, then gradually to friends and people further away. Finally, to all living beings.

You can extend the exercise step by step to 25 minutes. You may find it helpful to follow the voice of American psychologist Kristin Neff: [self-compassion.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/LKM\\_cleaned.mp3](http://self-compassion.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/LKM_cleaned.mp3)

## Allowing Negative Emotions

Positive emotions act like small ›power stations‹ of change and strengthen our personal resources. The regular experience of positive feelings promotes our self-acceptance, stabilises our relationships and our health. We experience more competence and meaning in our everyday lives and feel optimistic. However, unpleasant emotions also fulfil an important function: they inform us of critical events and signal, ›danger‹ when they first become apparent. As a result, although we often focus on negative emotional qualities in everyday life, we tend to push them aside as we find them unpleasant and disturbing. However, it would be more beneficial to practise acceptance and tolerance when perceiving negative emotional qualities.

Practise getting in touch with your feelings: Try to consciously recognise your emotions. When experiencing unpleasant emotions such as anger, sadness or helplessness, adopt a curious observer attitude. In this way, you maintain a distance, but at the same time engage with your emotions.

The following attitude can help: *»It's interesting that I react angrily, sadly, helplessly (...)!«*

If you are feeling unwell and literally flooded with negative emotions, it can be helpful to remind yourself that we are not ›our feelings‹. Rather, a feeling is a state that also passes again (from the Latin ›emovere‹ - ›to move out‹). Use the phrase: *»I am feeling sad right now«* instead of: *»I am sad«*.

Variation: Imagine the image of an orchestra consisting of many musicians and instruments. The instruments play together, take turns, lead and fall silent. In the same way, we are made up of ›inner parts‹ whose interplay makes us the person we are. The following attitude can support this: *»A part of me is feeling very critical, sad, helpless...«*.

by Marie-Hélène Seidl-Scheerer

## Through the Eyes of a Gold-Panner

Every day is precious. Through the eyes of a gold panner, I can look at the grains of gold that have been given to me among the dust and dirt (burdens and worries) that I can let go of. Please take 15 minutes for this exercise so that you can lift the treasure of the grains of gold and let go of all burdens and worries.

### Preparation

*»I perceive myself as I am right now. I feel my breath as it comes and goes. I become calm and relaxed inside. I can look at my day today with the eyes of a gold-panner.«*

### Go through the day

*»I go through the day in the individual hours; morning, noon, afternoon, evening... Everything can be as I perceive it now.«*

### Seeing grains of gold - expressing my regret

*»With a kind heart, I look at the grains of gold I have gained in my life balance. What grains of gold have I been given today: in the form of encouragement, joy, hope, a loving look, a helping hand, comfort and confidence? What didn't work out for me*

*today, fell by the wayside, came to a standstill, didn't go well, couldn't be ›washed‹ properly? I say goodbye to all of this with great regret, asking for reconciliation and letting go of everything that didn't work out.«*

### **Looking ahead to my life balance for tomorrow**

*»I ask for the strength to decide in favour of what is good for my life balance, what will work well tomorrow, what will bring me into a good balance.«*

*by Stephan Veith OSB*





DISCOVERING

STRENGTHS



## Discovering Strengths

Whether choosing a degree programme or sitting in job interviews, students are constantly being asked about their own strengths. It is often difficult to answer. People are too preoccupied with their weaknesses or focus on solving problems and difficulties. As important as it is to face up to problems and accept weaknesses, it is also important to discover and practise your strengths.

Strengths are patterns of thoughts, feelings and behaviours that provide energy, performance, success and satisfaction. People who are in touch with their strengths speak more clearly and fluently, sit up straighter, show more expression in gestures or facial expressions and have more reach and success (Blickhan 2015, p. 155). According to Petersen/Seligman (2004), a focus on strengths enables greater vitality, good mental health, better stress resistance and resilience, a higher expectation of success and high performance. Knowing your own strengths promotes personal self-esteem, self-confidence and self-efficacy. The strengths concept of positive psychology assumes

that everyone has the same strengths and that it is only a question of life experiences that determine which strengths come into play in thinking, feeling and behaviour. Every person therefore has their own pattern of strengths, which is as individual as a fingerprint. In realising our strengths, we humans are always dependent on each other. Strengths never only have an individual effect, but are always community-related.

With our exercises, we want to encourage you to express your uniqueness creatively. We would like to invite you to live and give your best with your strengths: For yourself, for a meaningful life and for the sustainability of our society.

*by Michael Stolle and Berthold Winkler*

## Values in Action

If you want to find out your own strengths, you can use a test from positive psychology. The test measures ›Values in Action‹ or 24 character strengths that are inherent to every person and are recognised across cultures as positive and desirable:

*Perseverance, authenticity, humility, commitment, gratitude, enthusiasm, fairness, kindness, leadership, hope, humour, creativity, love of learning, curiosity, sense of beauty, social intelligence, self-regulation, spirituality, bravery, teamwork, judgement, forgiveness, caution, wisdom.*

The scientifically well-evaluated test is offered on a portal of the Psychological Institute of the University of Zurich. The ›Values in Action Inventory of Strengths‹ (VIA- IS) questionnaire comprises 240 items in which you are asked to assess how accurate or inaccurate you find the respective statements.

The questionnaire is only meaningful on an individual basis. It is not suitable for comparing two individuals. The results are a snapshot. If a high value appears for a character strength, this

means that you use this strength frequently as a matter of habit; if the value is low, it does not play such an important role in your behaviour.

Carry out the test at: [www.charakterstaerken.org](http://www.charakterstaerken.org)

Reflect on the result: What did you learn about yourself from the test? Where do you use your strengths in your studies, in relationships or in your free time?

Character strengths can be trained through frequent use, similar to a muscle in sport. On the following pages you will find ideas and suggestions on how you can utilise and train your strengths.

*by Berthold Winkler*

## Train Your Character Strengths

Find a new way to express your strengths. Set aside a specific time in the coming week to practise one of your character strengths in a new way, either in your studies, at home or in your free time. In any case, make sure you create a clearly defined opportunity to practise it.

If your characteristic strength is **creativity**, you can decide to set aside two hours on one or two days for creative work (painting a picture, redecorating your home, looking for new ideas in books/magazines, etc.).

If you consider **perseverance** to be your strength, you can decide to work on a difficult subject for at least two hours twice a week. Or do extensive sport or a relaxation exercise twice a week.

If your strength is a **sense of beauty**, then you could choose a longer and more beautiful route home from university, even if it adds 20 minutes to your journey time. Or you could plan a cycle tour through the countryside lasting at least an hour.

Document afterwards: How did you feel before you became active, during the activity and afterwards? Was the activity challenging or did you find it easy? Did the time pass quickly? Would you like to do the exercise again?

*by Manuela Schnaubelt*



## Three Blessings

Write down three things that went well today and yesterday (e.g. conversations, tasks, work assignments, plans, experiences, etc.).

Then go back further. Think back to something you did really well in the past. What was it like when you started? What did you want to achieve? What problems or adversities did you have to overcome? How did you go about it? What was the result? How did you realise that you had succeeded? Write down your success story or stories.

If you have taken the VIA strengths test (p. 79), you can relate your observations to this. Which character strengths did you use? What do you intend to do?

## Recognize Your Achievements

The following exercise from the practice of positive psychology will help you to become aware of your sense of achievement (Härtl-Kasulke/ Re- vers 2018, p. 149). After getting up, think about what you want to get done by the evening. Create a to-do list for the day. Also think about the little things that may not seem so important but still take up time. Don't overfill your list - stay realistic.

Over the course of the day, tick off the points you have completed one by one. Has something else come up? No problem. Add it to the list later and tick it off. Be happy about every tick.

Take another look at the list in the evening, tick the last boxes of the day and enjoy the number of ticks. You have achieved something! Dissatisfied because not everything could be ticked off? No problem. Rome was not built in a day. Plan the next few days a little more carefully and adapt your list.

*by Manuela Schnaubelt*

## Reflected Best Self

Can you spontaneously describe your strengths? Most people find this rather difficult. So ask people around you to give you this feedback. Most people will be happy to do so! You will learn what strengths others see in you when you show your best side. In positive psychology, this exercise is referred to as ›Reflected Best Self‹ (Blickhan 2015, p. 188).

Select as many people as possible (around ten would be good). Ideally, these people should come from different contexts: Family, friends, club, neighbourhood, university group, community, etc.

Ask each of these people for a short written feedback on your person. Ask for an honest opinion, not compliments. The writers should write down as quickly as possible (10 minutes) what strengths they see in you and name three or four strengths. Ask for experiences or events with concrete examples of these strengths.

Once you have collected all the texts, read through them. Try to find commonalities. Record your findings: on index cards, as a mind map, also enriched with drawings.

Then put the texts and your evaluation away again. Now write for at least 15 minutes in one go, expressively and from the gut, a text in the first person, about who you are when you are at your very best.

## Flow

Have you ever been in ›flow‹? Do you know the feeling of being completely absorbed and absorbed in an activity where time flies by and you seem to succeed at everything?

If not, then take a look at Robert Lewandowski (in the Bayern Munich vs Wolfsburg match on 22 September 2015) scoring five goals in nine minutes in a state of flow. Pay particular attention to the fifth goal and the reactions of his team-mates and the coaching staff: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=XEfguy2M3yE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XEfguy2M3yE)

Set yourself a major task for the coming week and reserve two to three hours for it in your diary. Don't let anything distract you during this time. Switch off your mobile phone, don't answer the phone, don't let yourself be distracted by emails, WhatsApp messages or the doorbell. Fully immerse yourself in the task at hand.

You can reflect again in the evening: How did you feel at work? How was your concentration? How did time feel to you - did



it pass slowly or quickly? How much did you achieve? Are you satisfied with the results?

*by Manuela Schnaubelt*

## Letter to a Sponsor

In the following writing exercise (based on Robinson 2014, p. 279 f.), imagine that you are someone else. Someone who knows your interests, your inner attitudes, hopes and goals well.

Imagine that this person is now writing a letter to a sponsor who wants to support you in your future plans but does not know you. Write this letter as quickly as possible and do not revise the letter again. You can also write the letter on two consecutive days (15 minutes each).

When the letter is finished, leave it for at least a day. Then read it through and make a list of the points that are most important to you. Then make a mind map of the next steps you would like to take to find out more about your interests and talents.

## Vision Board

This exercise (after Robinson 2014, p. 38 f.) is ideal for anyone who likes to work with their hands, follow their intuitive impulses and give free rein to their creativity. Create a personalised vision board! A vision board is a collage of images that represent your hopes, wishes and dreams for your future. The main purpose of a vision board is to create a visualisation of the life you want to lead. Don't follow what others say. Follow your own voice! It's about your life, not someone else's.

Cut out photos, illustrations or words from magazines that appeal to you. Of course, you can also use images from the internet. Only your own photos are not useful because they represent the past, not the future.

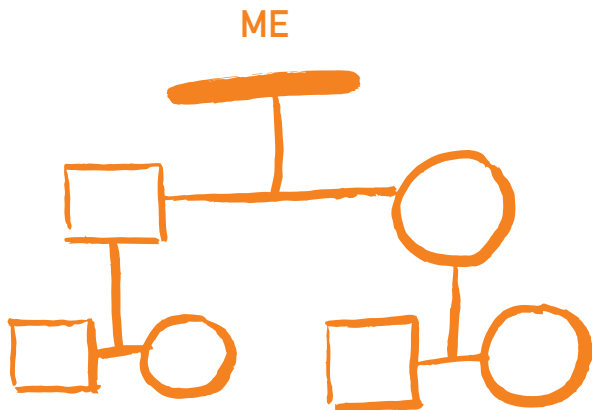
Place the pictures on a large surface, preferably in such a way that you can hang them up over and over again. Hang the vision board where you'll see it often. Add to it as you go along. What do you notice, what ideas emerge?



## My Powerhouse

Through this exercise, you will discover some of your strengths. The way to do this is through your family of origin - because you have learnt a lot there, whether through positive or negative experiences. And perhaps there are strengths in your relatives that are part of your genetic make-up and are still waiting to be developed. Draw your family tree. It is up to you how far into the past you want to go, whether to the generation of your grandparents or great-grandparents. You can use the illustration as a guide and adapt it to your family relationships. Leave enough space next to the individual people. You will need it in the next step.

What has the relative mastered in his/her life? Write this in keywords next to the circle or square. What strengths, skills and character traits did the person need to achieve this? Write these down in the diagram as well. Now think: What do you admire about this person? What do you appreciate about him or her? Make a note of this in the chart as well. Carry out this step for all relatives so that you end up with a collection of the numerous strengths that exist in your family.



Read through your family's strengths. This is your family's »warehouse«. Realise that these strengths are also inherent in you. Because we recognise what we admire in others precisely because it is also in ourselves. Which three strengths would you like to consciously utilise in the following week?

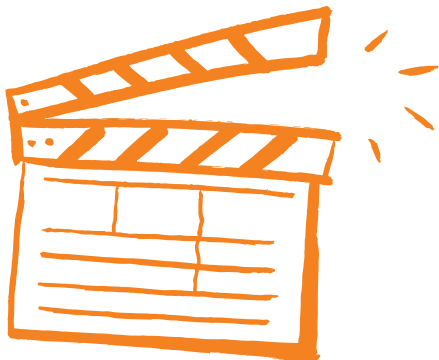
*by Andrea Legge*

## The Film of My Life

In situations of upheaval or phases of change, we are often confronted with the question of whether we are on the 'right path'. Whether we are living the way we want to or if the way we live is done from the bottom of our hearts. At such times, it can be helpful to practise self-reflection.

Realise what is really important to you and what ideas you have about a fulfilled life. A creative approach to dealing with this question is to see yourself as the director of your life story.

If you were to write a film about your life, what kind of film would it be? A thriller, a comedy, a science fiction film or another genre? What would the title of the film be? What role would you or your friends or family members play in the film? Which actor or actress would play your role? Which actors or actresses would you book for the other roles? Which scene of the film are you currently in? How would the film end? Is there special title music?



Jot down your thoughts. Place no limits on your imagination. Then check: What values can you derive from your ideas? Do your ideas correspond to your current life situation? What goals would you like to set yourself in order to realise your ideas? What steps do you need to take?

*by Marie-Hélène Seidl-Scheerer*



# TAKING THE INITIATIVE



## Taking the Initiative

The following exercises will show you how you can deal with yourself and others if you want to make a difference. We will give you tips on how to destabilise ingrained patterns of perception and experience, deal with resistance in an appreciative way or develop strategies to anchor new things.

Change is more than the superficial organisation of ›change processes‹. It is about finding an attitude and the clarity to start with change (on a small scale). The following guiding principles can help you: Change is not a surgical procedure. When you change something, the old is still there. It is normal that you initially still run on the old track. But the more persistently you practise, the more naturally you will find the new track.

Changes are difficult, but feasible. Neurobiologically, the new connections in the brain can still be This is all the more successful when passion, compassion or love come into play.

The more positive emotions you notice, the more sustainable the change in lifestyle habits will be. If you experience success early on when making changes and other people in your immediate environment give you feedback, this will do your project good. So relate to others and gain their appreciation and goodwill.

Change does not always bring about improvement straight away. In order for new patterns of behaviour to become established, you have to allow yourself to make mistakes. Make peace with the initial situation you find yourself in. The new is always created on the basis of the old.

Always remember: there is no formula for organising change. There are thousands. Take the initiative and be courageous!



## If-Then-Plans

Putting your own plans into practice is not exactly easy. One method that has been scientifically proven to be effective is the so-called ›strategic automation of intentions‹ or ›if-then plans‹.

This involves naming a vaguely described intention very precisely and carefully. Not: »I intend to do XY«, but »I intend to do XY in the following way when situation Z occurs« (Storch, Krause 2014, p. 177). Projects described in this way increase the feeling of self-commitment on the one hand and link the specifically described situation with the desired action on the other, resulting in goal-orientated automatisms.

For example, if you want to stop eating sweets and checking WhatsApp messages during study breaks, your if-then plan could look like this:

*»Whenever I'm sitting in the library in the afternoon studying for an exam and I can't think straight, I'll get up and walk around the square by the forum, maybe I'll see someone I know well.«*

Try it out:

Whenever...

---

---

then...

---

---

## Get Out of the Routine!

If you want to do something different and change ingrained habits, you can start with a simple exercise (Iding 2015, p. 59). And make all kinds of unplanned discoveries in the process, which may (initially) have nothing to do with your own plans, but which enrich your life immensely.

Over the next week, try out three alternative ways to get to KIT. You can also choose three different routes to your sports centre or leisure activity, as long as you really do take new routes that you haven't taken before. Don't be afraid to take a diversion. Plan a little more time than usual and open up your senses. What is different than usual? What do you notice? Pay careful attention to your perceptions, thoughts, feelings and physical sensations. Make a note of your experiences.

If you want to change something, it's a good idea to break up deadlocked routines. If you want to stop always doing the same thing, you can give your perceptual system a makeover and casually subvert previous patterns of experience.



We know this from systems theory: If one part of the system is changed, the whole system changes. Incidentally, in the African bush it was considered extremely unwise to always take the same path. »Never walk the same way twice. This means death,« was the saying there.

## The Other Hand

The following exercise is a good way to destabilise your experience patterns in order to gain strength for new things and become more tolerant and flexible:

Use your non-dominant hand as often as possible for everyday tasks. Right-handers use their left hand and left-handers use their right hand to butter a sandwich, brush their teeth, take money out of their wallet or enter the password on their mobile phone.

Be considerate, humorous and relaxed about all the lapses that will inevitably happen to you. Enjoy being a beginner again (while the synapses fire unnoticed in your brain).

Expect to do the exercise for a week. Reflect: How did you feel when you did the exercise for the first time? How do you feel at the end of the week? What effects do you notice?

## Compliment

At least once a day for a week, compliment someone you know well or say something nice to a person: *»I like the way you smile«*; *»I like that you listen to me so well«*; *»You cooked a great meal today«*.

Also try to notice compliments that are given to you.

In the evening, reflect on whether anything has changed for you or others. What do you notice? How do you feel? Take time each day to reflect and document your experiences.

*by Manuela Schnaubelt*

## Expand the Network

A good network not only helps you during your studies, but above all when you start your career. Building up your own network requires a targeted approach and a lot of practice.

Firstly, visualise your short and long-term goals in your studies and career. »Who could help me get an internship at company XY? Who could tell me more about my desired career field? Do I know anyone who already works where I would like to apply soon?«

Based on these questions, make two new contacts within the next month that could be relevant to your career path. To do this, either create an online profile on sites such as LinkedIn or Researchgate,

»Academia« or »Xing«, or take part in an event in your or a related field (e.g. career fair, conference, workshop, panel discussion).

Search online for people who also work in your professional field and try to make contact. During an event, talk directly to

other participants, e.g. during the coffee breaks, and exchange contact details.

If you find it difficult to actively approach strangers, think of situations in which it is easier to get started and formulate initial sentences (e.g. »What did you think of the lecture?«; »Where do you get the coffee?«) or ask colleagues or friends to introduce people to you.

*by Andrea Geipel*



## Smart Decisions

If you look at which skills are becoming increasingly important in a world defined by digitalisation, you quickly come to the topic of ›decision-making‹ (Bashki et al. 2017). When it comes to statistical forecasts or maximising profits, i.e. processes where it is helpful to evaluate a lot of data, algorithms are increasingly being used to make decisions. Under what conditions are people likely to follow the preliminary decisions of artificial intelligence in the future?

The following exercises are about trying out how to retain something like autonomy when making decisions in your everyday life. To do this, it is helpful to realise that there is no such thing as a ›right‹ or ›wrong‹ decision. Decisions are smart if the framework conditions for the decision-making process are well organised. And this is the case when both human intelligence systems - conscious and involuntary intelligence - are involved (Storch 2015). So it's about connecting the head and the gut, if you like. Because then there is at least the prospect that your decisions will make you happy.

### Method ›Less makes you happier‹

When making consumption decisions, you can consider whether you really have to have the best of everything. Otherwise you'll be standing in front of a shelf full of jam jars, thinking and thinking about which one you want to buy. If you can decide at all, the jam won't really taste good in the end anyway, because you don't know if it was really the best jam on the shelf. So limit your choice when choosing things that are of no great importance. In our affluent society, these are pretty much all consumer decisions. Two or three alternatives are good enough. Enjoy your (quick) decision and return to the things in life that give you meaning (Schwartz 2006).

### Method ›Get pregnant with something‹

When deciding on a direction, it helps to pretend for a while that you have already made up your mind. If you don't know whether to choose A or B, choose A and live with this decision for three to five days. During this time, forbid yourself option B. Observe how you feel. Are you full of energy and joy? Or do you have a knot in your stomach and sleep badly?

What do you observe? You then go three to five days “pregnant” with variant B. How do you feel here? Compare your observations.

### Method ›10-10-10‹

This method is suitable if you are dissatisfied with a certain situation and finally have the vague feeling that you should do something differently (Welch 2012). In this situation, formulate possible decisions for yourself. Answer the following questions honestly and in detail: »*What possible consequences will alternative A (B, C ...) have for my life in ten minutes? In ten months? In ten years?*« Then consider which alternative comes closest to your idea of a successful life.

The exercises described above and many more can be found in Arts and Science Exhibitions (2014, p. 93 ff.). If you want to find out more about the rules of thumb you use to make involuntary decisions, read Gigerenzer (2008) and Kahnemann (2011).

## Do Something Good

Do something good every day for a week that others might be happy about. Do it without talking about it and without causing a stir (Iding 2015, p. 51).

You don't need to save the world. Something very simple is enough, for example serving coffee at the AKK, handing out chewing gum or cooking something for your flatmates.

Write down what you are giving, why you are giving it and how it makes you feel. How do you feel after this week?

People unconsciously hope for love and attention when they give gifts to other people. We want to be loved - and we often go to great lengths to achieve this. Giving generously can be an enriching experience because it teaches us a lot about ourselves and our desire to be loved.

## Translate ›Must‹ into ›Choose‹

The following exercise is taken from the concept of ›non-violent communication‹ according to Marshall B. Rosenberg (2016, p. 132 f.). It is suitable for bringing more flexibility into your own actions. This is because it frees you from the deceptive illusion that you have no other choice when it comes to activities you don't like.

**Step 1:** Think about what you do in your life that doesn't bring you joy. Make a list of tasks that apply to this activity. Also write down all the activities that you find awful but still do because you think you have no choice.

**Step 2:** Assume, without further thought, that you are doing all these things because you have (at some point) freely chosen to do so, and not because you have been forced to do so by anyone.

Therefore, place the words »*I have freely chosen to...*« in front of each item on your list. Observe the resistance that arises within you and what changes when you leave the sentence as it is.

**Step 3:** Once you have recognised that you have freely chosen a certain activity you don't like, try to find out what the underlying concern is. Here, you can again incorporate a sentence fragment and complete: *»I have freely chosen to..., because I want to...«*

Typically, it's about money, affirmation or values (which don't have to be conscious). Or about escaping punishment, not feeling ashamed, not feeling guilty. Or a sense of duty or loyalty.

Once you have realised what your concern or need is, you can decide whether you want to continue acting in this way (because you have realised the meaning or significance of it) or whether you want to stop because you can satisfy your need in another way.

## Being Offline

Looking into the ›present‹ - into what is right now, with an unobstructed, clear view - and enjoying the moment. There are many ways to learn this. The following exercise is perhaps one of the most difficult.

Switch off your smartphone and don't check any messages on your computer. Switch off Outlook, Facebook, WhatsApp & Co.

Set yourself specific time periods for this (for example, during your lunch break, after work or at the weekend). Think about how long you can really manage to be offline. Subtract another quarter of an hour from this. This time period now applies. Keep it up for at least a week.

If you can persuade friends to join in, it will be easier. And you won't miss as many messages.

Observe what thoughts and feelings or physical sensations arise in you when you are offline.



When the week is over: How are you feeling? What have you noticed? What are you planning to do?

Studies show that the constant use of a mobile phone can lead to sleep disorders and depression. Mobile phone use is also »embodied«: the lowered gaze prevents us from perceiving the world. And it creates a posture that makes you feel small, cramped and ineffective.



## Taking Responsibility

We are living in a time of fundamental change, in which we recognise that something is coming to an end and something is emerging, the extent of which we cannot grasp. Major transformations must be shaped politically and institutionally if the world is to succeed in cutting fossil fuel emissions, reducing waste and conserving resources.

At the same time, there is an individual way to help shape the transformation without thinking exclusively about the big picture. In a life of abundance, the aim is to regain time and freedom to organise essential things that are part of one's own ›good life‹. Is there such a thing as ›time prosperity‹? Whilst science is in the process of finding alternative ways to lead a successful life without being forced to, you can start practising ›carry on like this‹ in your everyday life (Rosa 2016; Hunecke 2013; Paech 2012).

**Nutrition:** Opinions differ when it comes to food. It should be as cheap as possible, healthy and, above all, delicious. Some swear by meat, others consider it unethical to eat animals. Either

way, our diet plays a major role in global warming and the consumption of resources worldwide.

What can you do? Go vegan for a week! Maybe you can manage to buy regional and seasonal produce.

Document what you buy and eat for a week. What would you classify as sustainable food? How expensive would it be to buy more ecological products?

**Consumption:** Today's society can no longer function without consumption - we have geared our economic system towards it. Every day we are bombarded, consciously and unconsciously, with advertising and pressurised into making purchasing decisions. Through mass consumption, we are exploiting our planet and producing (packaging) waste.

What can you do? Avoid plastic waste for a week! Document your consumption!

Muck-out at home: What can be “weeded out” and how can you do it sustainably?

**Clothing:** The trend today is towards fast fashion: as many items of clothing as possible and all of them cheap. The price is low for the consumer - the higher price is paid by people in other parts of the world with their health, safety and sometimes even their lives (Lessenich 2016).

What can you do? Two suggestions: When shopping, ask where the clothes were produced. Find out where fair clothing is available.

Reflect on your consumer behaviour when it comes to clothing: Where do the clothes in your wardrobe come from and how old are they? Develop ideas on what you can change in your consumption behaviour and how you can even save time in the process.

*by Annika Fricke and Nina Kiese*

## The ›Mini Retreat‹ (Part 2)

You can only do the following exercise (Blickhan 2015, p. 72 f.) if you have already completed the first part on p. 66f. and have a list of ›mini holidays‹ in front of you.

Now create a weekly plan in which you enter fixed times for some of these ›mini holidays‹. Make sure you also include longer activities (approx. 20 minutes).

Stick to the planned times and opportunities for the ›mini holidays‹ and allow yourself to consciously enjoy them. You may even want to take holiday photos. This would be a welcome opportunity to add to your collage from the first part of the exercise.

When the first week is over, take some time to look back and reflect on how you put the ›mini holidays‹ into practice. Enjoy the holiday memories and be inspired for new ideas and holiday destinations. Perhaps the ›mini holiday‹ will become a natural part of your everyday life in the future.

## The Pursuit of Happiness

›The Pursuit of Happiness‹ - the pursuit of happiness is both a fundamental right and a longing of every human being. But what is happiness? People have been thinking about, writing about and researching it for centuries. More than 100 schools now have their own ›happiness‹ subject (Fritz-Schubert 2017).

Positive psychology is based on the idea that those who know what happiness means in individual cases can become a better version of themselves (›personal best self‹). Those who experience happiness are able to live more fully and better realise their potential.

Which activities, things and events in your life are sources of happiness (Blickhan 2015, p. 33)?

Remember that there are two different types of happiness:

**Feel-good happiness:** Pleasure, well-being, pleasant feelings

**Value happiness:** Personal fulfilment and satisfaction



Write down several terms that define feel-good happiness and value happiness for you!

How long does the feeling of happiness last? What time perspective do you associate with it: past, present or future? To what extent do you experience happiness on your own, where in connection with other people?

What impetus does this provide for your future plans? What are you planning to do? Where is the journey taking you?

## Set Your Triggers

If you want to change a habit, you must expect to automatically fall back into your old patterns. You can visualise this as if your previous habit is a kind of neuronal motorway that you immediately drive onto as soon as certain external or internal stimuli suggest it. Your desire to do things differently, on the other hand, is initially just a kind of “half-beaten” track.

The following self-management exercise from the ›Zurich Resource Model‹ (Storch, Krause, 2014) aims to help you go off the beaten track at the motorway slip road, a new path which becomes wider and firmer the more often you use it. Until one day the old slip road disappears and taking the new path becomes automatic.

Choose an object that you associate with your (behavioural) goal in an associative and visual way. This could be a special stone in your trouser pocket, a coloured jumper, a leather wristband, a sticker next to your front door, a perfume, a mobile phone ringtone or a photo on your home screen.

The item can be mobile or stationary. It should definitely be under your own control and it should be new, as ›old‹ objects already have different neurobiological associations.

Make a list of what these items could be. There is no right or wrong, just get started.

Put your items in position. If it's something in your shared room, place it visibly; if it's something to carry around, take it with you.

The objects function involuntarily as so-called ›primes‹. These are stimuli that act below the threshold of consciousness. In a sense, you learn your new goal without thinking about it. The method of unconscious goal pursuit is fast and effective because you do not need any cognitive resources.



## Prioritising with the Eisenhower-Method

Especially when we have a lot to do, we quickly lose sight of the big picture and don't even know which task to start with. One method that helps to get an overview and prioritise is the Eisenhower matrix. This involves dividing tasks to be completed into four categories according to importance and urgency.

Firstly, write down all the tasks that need to be completed. Then evaluate them in terms of their importance and urgency.

A task is important if it helps you achieve your goals. If a task does not bring you closer to your goals, it is categorised as unimportant. For this reason, it makes sense to visualise your goals in advance (e.g. pass exam XY).

A task is urgent if it must be completed by a near future date (approaching deadline). If a task does not have to be completed until a later date, it is not urgent.

|               | urgent                                 | not urgent                              |
|---------------|--|---|
| important     | <b>A</b><br>do it yourself immediately | <b>B</b><br>schedule and do it yourself |
| not important | <b>C</b><br>delegate                   | <b>D</b><br>Don't do it                 |

Category B tasks are interesting because they bring you closer to your larger goals. Everyday tasks fall into category C. Perhaps a flatmate can take something off your hands during a stressful phase. Category D includes all tasks that distract you from your actual work (emails, news sites, Facebook, etc.).

*by Britta Hoffmann*

## Interculturality Journal

Different languages, traditions and religions have long been an integral part of our society. In order to live together harmoniously in a culturally diverse world, it is important to treat the unfamiliar and culturally different with tolerance and appreciation. Empathy, the ability to change perspectives, openness and attentiveness are particularly important for this.

To practise these skills, you can keep an interculturality journal over the next two weeks: Find at least four situations for this (your own encounters, observations, media representations), for example intercultural encounters at KIT, in a sports club, in a restaurant, in films or on social media.

These do not have to be artificial situations, they can be spontaneous encounters or observations from your everyday life. Describe and reflect on these situations. The following key questions can provide you with incentives to systematically reflect on your experiences.

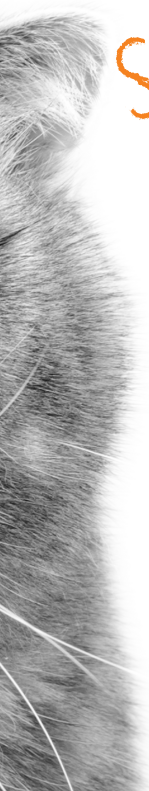
How did you feel in/with the intercultural situation? What did you perceive? How do you think the other people involved in the situation felt? Did you feel able to react appropriately? If not, what else would it take? Were your expectations of the situation met? What surprised you? Did you recognise any stereotypes in yourself? What conclusions do you draw from the situation? What further food for thought did you gain from the situation?

If there are not sufficient  
»new« intercultural situations that arise, you can reflect on an earlier situation.

*by Anna Lehner*



APPEARING  
SELF-CONFIDENT



## Appearing Self-Confident

If you are aware of yourself and at peace with yourself, you will feel something like self-confidence. Many of the exercises covered in the previous chapters may have helped you to become (more) self-aware. And perhaps you have noticed in one or two tasks how regular practice gives you a sense of security.

The following exercises will show you how you can stay connected with yourself when communicating externally. Most of the exercises come from the lecturers from the specialised field of

»Communicating and presenting« at the HoC. Once again, the exercises do not act as tools to help you present yourself. You will not be given artificial muscles to strut through the world like a cowboy or Superman. Rather, it is about becoming aware of your physicality: in your voice, in your posture, with your own handwriting or in the way you relate to others.

In science, this is referred to as ›embodiment‹, which literally means just that – embodiment, and describes the inclusion of the body in thinking. Embodiment approaches view people as a unity of body and mind. Physical and mental events interact permanently and reciprocally (bi-directionality) and are inextricably linked. The body is the organ with which you experience the external world.

Experiencing one's own body as a perceptual space is a direct and relatively easy way to learn how to regulate emotions. Scientific studies on embodiment show that the targeted influencing of body variables such as facial expressions, hand movements, body postures and body movements have an impact on emotions, motivational processes, brain activity, attitudes and judgements (Storch et al. 2015).



## Headlights On!

Like other muscles in the body, the voice can also be ›woken up‹ before it is used. To make the voice fit, the whole body should be warmed up beforehand to put it in an active state of tension. Make sure your posture is upright. This has a positive effect on the flow of breath, the diaphragm is flexible and the tension in the muscles is in balance.

You can achieve this upright posture - not to be confused with the soldierly »belly in, chest out« - by ›opening‹ your sternum. Where your centre front ribs come together - you can feel this point clearly with your fingers, this is the point that matters. Allow yourself to sink into this point: Your upper body hangs like a marionette suspended by strings, i.e. without tension. Now slowly move your sternum upwards. You will notice how your chest also straightens up. This point on your body is like a ›spotlight‹. If you sink down at this point, the ›spotlight‹ is off and your presence is weak. If you stand upright, the ›spotlight‹ is on.



Now experiment with this exercise by consciously switching the ›spotlight‹ on and off. Repeat this exercise in between. How do you feel after this exercise? Do you feel that your charisma changes within seconds?

Switch on your ›spotlight‹ when you speak in front of a group. This attitude has a positive effect on the listener.

*by Ruth Floeren*

## Power Training for the Voice

How do you keep your voice fit? With breathing exercises, for example. You might be thinking: »Why should I do breathing exercises? Anyone can breathe!« That's right. Breathing is the foundation of our lives. But in stressful situations, with excitement, stage fright or under pressure to perform, our calm breathing rhythm is interrupted. We gasp for air, we breathe loudly, wheeze and become breathless.

Breathing is a vegetative bodily function, but people can influence and train their breath. You've probably heard the advice: »Take a deep breath first!« Whereupon you fill yourself with air and then start your speech breathlessly. When the speaker feels breathless, they have too much air, not too little. Although the saying is commonplace, it is wrong in terms of breathing! Try it the other way round. Before you start speaking, breathe out first.

### Assume an upright, balanced posture

Stand grounded, legs hip-width apart, arms relaxed, body tension: ›spotlight‹ on (see p. 132).

### Wake up your diaphragm

Breathe out »fffff« vigorously. Imagine you are blowing out a candle. Breathe out hard and long on »sh«. Imagine you are scaring away at least ten chickens. Breathe out slowly on »sssss« (sharp s), pause briefly, then let it flow out with »sh«, pause, and then breathe out your entire breath on »sh«.

Blow out »ff« with a powerful impulse, pause. Let »it« inhale automatically.

### Train your articulation muscles

Alternately open your lips wide and close to form a proboscis, like imitating a kiss. Circle your tongue between your lips and teeth. Finish by fluttering your lips.

### Unleash your voice

Yawn and let yourself hear »primal sounds«. Tap your body awake and make »orang-utang noises«. Hum a cosy »mmmm«. Smack your lips and chew with relish: »Hmm, that tastes delicious!« (Finding the right position, see p. 138 f.). Place your hands in front of your mouth like a singing bowl and hum »hmmmmm«,

open to »mooh, maah, meeeh, miiih, muuh«. Find the place in your hand, on your fingers ... that vibrates clearly (= let the voice resonate in the front of your face)! Place your hands in a funnel shape in front of your mouth and call out: »hello«, »come here«, »hey you«, »over here«, »stop«; then repeat the calls without the funnel. It's much easier now, isn't it?

### Focus on the respective speaking situation

Concentrate your energy on your listeners, your dialogue partners or your audience.

Repeat these exercises every day for a week. How do you feel after these exercises? Can you feel how these exercises relax your facial and jaw muscles, tongue and lips and prepare your voice for use?

*by Ruth Floeren*

## Mindful in Relationships

You gain self-confidence not only when you look after yourself, but also when you connect with other people around you. It is one of the basic needs of every human being to develop autonomously and to resonate with others. Both sides - becoming active and entering into relationships - belong together. Therefore, the following exercise is actually also helpful for becoming more self-aware.

Focus your attention for a week on the way you listen. Pay particular attention to the various impulses you may have: interrupting the other person; thinking of your answer before the other person has even spoken or wandering off in your thoughts. Is it possible for you to listen without agreeing with what is being said? Just listen? Pay attention to your feelings, your facial expression and direct your attention to the other person's voice: the sound, its quality and its intensity.

*by Manuela Schnaubelt*

## Finding the Middle of the Voice

Speaking in the middle voice pitch is particularly important for vocal health. This is the pitch in which you speak with the least effort. This is where your voice sounds best. The speaker's muscle relaxation is transferred to the listener: this makes it easier to concentrate on listening. The speaker is perceived as competent and confident. How do you find this feel-good voice?

Sit or stand comfortably but upright. Imagine you have your favourite dish in your mouth. You chew and savour: »*hmmm!*«. Your voice moves relaxed from top to bottom, your lips vibrate loosely. Continue chewing and after every third »*hmmm!*«, extend to »*hmmmthistastesgood*«. Don't strain yourself, but stay active. To do this, nod your head slightly:

»*hmmmthistastesgood. Yees. Yees!*« Repeat this until you realise that your Hmmm... always sounds at the same pitch without thinking. This is your middle voice, your "sweet spot". The position in which you can produce your voice completely effortlessly.

Now say the following sentence without modulation in exactly this position: »*The weather should be really nice again!*«

That almost sounds a little bored, doesn't it? Exactly: indifferent, but effortless.

Now say this sentence again. You start in your position of difference. Then try to convince yourself and others. So you are speaking with emotion. You can feel that your voice pitch now sounds about one to two tones above your middle, indifferent pitch. This is your natural speaking pitch, i.e. close to your middle voice.

Repeat this exercise every day in between. How do you feel after this exercise? Can you feel how pleasantly, effortlessly and gently your body organises your speech, how authentic the swinging around the normal pitch is?

*by Ruth Floeren*



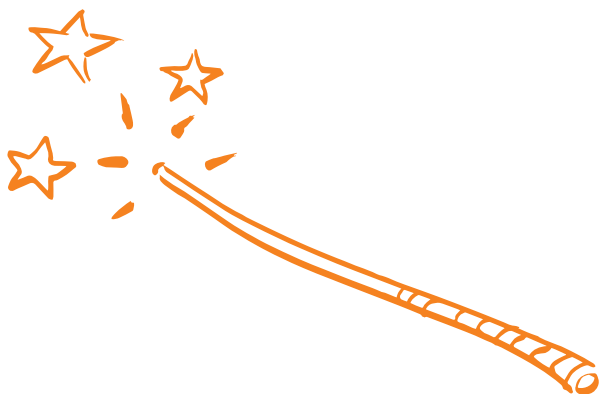
## Request Concert

If you find it difficult to express your wishes, this exercise (based on Rubin 2015, p. 50) can help you practise making wishes: confidently and kindly.

Think about what wishes you have not addressed recently. Perhaps you would like a loved one to spend more time with you or a fellow student to help you with a presentation. Or you would like your flatmates to clean again. Or you would like to decide where you go on holiday with your girlfriend or boyfriend this year.

Think about four things you would like someone else to do for you. Write down how you would like to formulate your wishes. Be clear and direct. Instead of: *»I need the washing up done again!«*, say: *»I'd like you to do the washing up tomorrow«*. Make sure that you don't ›belittle‹ yourself or apologise. It is also important that you use ›I‹ messages.

Don't make your request on the hoof, and speak in a calm, friendly tone. Maintain eye contact when doing so. If your re-



quest is not well received, try to find out why. Then point out possible alternatives. If your request is accepted, be happy about it and accept it without feeling bad.

## Communicate Openly

This exercise can be used as a practical tool to help you to be positive in interpersonal relationships, to represent your own needs or to address a conflict. By taking into account the levels of perception, effect and desire, we approach our dialogue partner in an appreciative manner and thus avoid unnecessary accusations, hurt or devaluation.

**Perception:** Start by describing your perception of the situation. Describe in concrete terms what you saw or heard. Avoid generalisations and do not judge. *»I noticed that...«*

**Impact:** Describe the impact that the other person's behaviour or words have on you and, if applicable, on others. Above all, express how you feel. Feelings are our ›private events‹ that cannot be questioned from the outside. They also serve as an important point of reference for the other person during the conversation. *»That means for me/ I was annoyed about it...«*

**Desire:** Describe your needs. Be clear about what you want in the future. Especially in tense conversations, we tend to fall



into patterns, reproach the other person or make demands. In contrast, we can formulate wishes freely without putting pressure on the other person. *»My wish for the future/ I would like to ask you...«*

*von Marie-Hélène Seidl-Scheerer*

## Power Poses

If you think that your brain is purely an organ of thought that exists largely detached and independently of your body, you are mistaken. People do not have a bodily relationship to the world alongside an emotional and cognitive one; it is much more about one and the same relationship to the world (see Rosa 2016, p. 144 ff.).

Embodiment approaches (›embodiment‹ literally means ›embodiment‹) view people as a unity of body and mind. Physical and mental events permanently interact and are inextricably linked. Most people are often only aware of the connection from one direction: if you don't feel well because you think, for example, that you are the only person not achieving the goals you have set yourself for exam preparation, you will probably hunch your shoulders and sit hunched over at your desk. But the influence also works in the other direction.

Studies on embodiment show that the experimental manipulation of body variables such as facial expressions, hand movements, body postures and body movements have an influence

on emotions, motivational processes, brain activity, attitudes and judgements. So if you spend too much time in front of your smartphone during the day with your eyes down and your back round, this will have an impact on your feelings and state of mind (Storch et al. 2010).

Try it out by adopting postures that make you feel powerful for two minutes a day. The American social psychologist Amy Cuddy explains the background to these ›power poses‹ in her TED Talk ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ks-\\_Mh1QhMc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ks-_Mh1QhMc)). Even if the effects of ›power poses‹ have not been scientifically proven, it is a good method for trying out embodiment in everyday life.

## Standing Exercise

»An important way to come to yourself and be with yourself is via the body«, writes Father Anselm Grün (2014, p. 59). The following standing exercise follows his recommendations. Why not try it out when you are giving a lecture or have a presentation exam? It is not about trying to impress in an artificial way, but about slowly practising more self-confidence through your body. You can feel in your body that you can be yourself without acting, with everything that makes you who you are.

Stand with your feet hip-width apart. Your knees are slightly bent. Rock slightly forwards and backwards, just so that you notice how you have to counter-steer to avoid tipping forwards or backwards. Balance yourself until you feel that you are exactly in the centre of your feet.

Imagine you are a tree with roots growing into the earth. Feel how firmly rooted you are.

Then focus on your chest, spine and head and visualise yourself as a tree with a broad and large crown. If you wish, close your

eyes. Now say the following sentences to yourself (out loud or silently):

*»I have a point of view. I have both feet on the ground. I have stamina. I can get through something. I can stand up for something. I can stand up for myself. I stand by myself. I stand in myself.«*

You can repeat these sentences several times. Stop for a moment. Think about it. Then give your talk or presentation. What does this exercise do to you?



## Content and Focus

When visualising flipcharts, many people think of pretty ›pictures‹ and ›symbols‹ - and forget an important visual vocabulary: writing! The following exercise provides ideas on how to get to the heart of things using only writing.

Whenever there is an issue, a problem or a solution, there is always the ›most important‹, ›important‹, ›less important‹ and ultimately ›secondary‹.

Only when you clearly work out priorities does information become digestible knowledge. Visualisation means condensing information! As with a successful recipe, it is not just the ingredients that are decisive, but above all the coordination and quantities of the individual ingredients! If everything is equally important or unimportant, the result is unpalatable uniformity. The quality falls by the wayside.

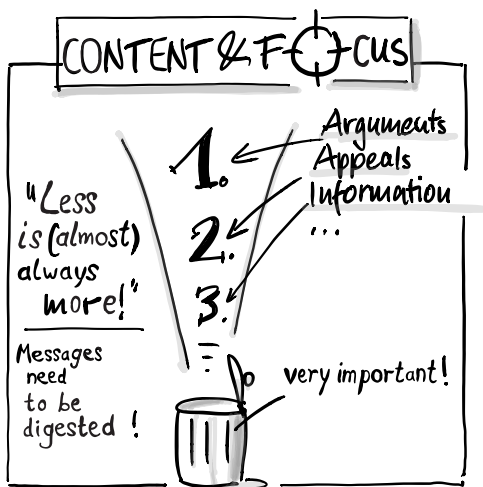
Here's an exercise: You're probably dealing with a specific topic at the moment. Or you need to summarise something for others:

1. How can you summarise the entire topic in a short sentence or keyword for your headline?
2. Which keywords are necessary to further explain the topic? Write down these keywords in the appropriate order (smaller than the heading!). Leave space in between for further additions.
3. You can now use symbols such as arrows, lines to separate or join, text boxes and underlining to highlight individual words, and perhaps an additional colour to create even more clarity. You may also want to add small comments in small handwriting. However, make sure that the page is not too full despite these additions.
4. Take another sheet of paper, your »wastepaper basket sheet«. Write on it what information you have deliberately left out. Always trust that our brain has a wonderful property: »If I'm on the right track, I'll remember the necessary details.« It's like orientation. If I remember a certain junction, I automatically remember other waypoints.
5. Now take a conscious look at your sheet of paper with the notes. It already looks different to your usual notes. The dif-

ferent font sizes and the more deliberate placement of all elements already create structure and organisation. More on how to optimise this even further in a moment.

6. If you feel like it, do the same thing again. But use your reflection on the first version to get to the heart of the matter even more precisely. Perhaps your wastepaper basket sheet will be fuller. Optimise the layout on the sheet as well as the font sizes for clarity and meaning.
7. And if you feel like it, do it for the third time. This time, however, experiment with a different format. This will give you initial experience of which subject is better suited to a portrait or landscape format.

In future, always remember the following questions to work out the content and focus of a topic: *»What is it about? And what is it about in detail? How do I prioritise, what do I leave out? How do I sensibly reduce complexity?«*



You can clearly express all of this through the proportions and arrangement of the font. And if you can think of a ›little picture‹ and ›symbol‹ for the most important points, everything will work even better.

*Text and illustration by Siegfried Bütetisch*

## Marionette

Our posture is a pattern of the distribution of tension in our muscles. When we visualise certain images, we stimulate our nervous system to check this pattern and improve it if necessary. This equalises the distribution of tension. This leads to a more upright and relaxed posture, greater flexibility and more ease of movement.

Stand upright with your feet parallel and facing forwards, about hip joint width (not hip width!) apart. Shoulders and arms hang down, head upright and neck long, gaze towards the horizon. Close your eyes (your head may then straighten up a little).

Now imagine that a puppet string is attached to the top of your head, to the top of your skull. It holds your body upright. So you don't have to do anything to be upright. Remain in this visualisation for about one minute. Allow your shoulders and shoulder blades to drop, your head to straighten and your neck to lengthen.

Imagine that a puppet string is attached to the upper end of the sternum (where the collarbones almost meet). Your chest is held by this thread. Remain in this position for about one minute. Allow your chest to rise and your breath to deepen. You may even sigh.

If you wish, you can ask another person to support you by lightly touching the two points with a finger. This will make it easier for you to visualise the places where the threads are attached. Observe how your posture and perhaps even your facial expression change as a result of the visualisation, and how you feel more relaxed and confident. Then ask the other person whether their impression of you has changed.

*by Dirk Schuka*

## Power Breathing

Under stress, our breathing becomes shallower: the abdomen becomes firm, there is less movement in the diaphragm when we inhale; the chest remains in the inhaled state, the muscles of the shoulders and ribs can no longer relax when we exhale. Shallow breathing is accompanied by a feeling of tension and insecurity, while deep and full breathing is accompanied by a feeling of calm and strength.

Stand upright, feet parallel, hip joint width (not hip width!) apart. Bend your knees slightly so that your pelvis is slightly more flexible. The head is upright and the neck long, looking towards the horizon.

Place one hand on your lower abdomen (in the area between your belly button and pubic bone) and the other on your breastbone. Observe the movement of your breath for a few breaths, first in your abdomen and then in your chest: Where is there movement when you inhale and exhale? What changes in the lower abdomen, what changes in the chest when you breathe?

Leave your breathing unchanged, i.e. do not interfere with the breathing process!

Now send your breath down into the pelvis (or even to the pelvic floor) for a few breaths with each inhalation. If you notice a movement in your abdomen, gently strengthen it without forcing anything.

Then let your shoulders and ribs sink downwards for a few breaths with each exhalation (do not actively ›pull‹ downwards).

Combine the two sequences: for a few breaths, send your breath into the pelvis as you inhale in your imagination and let your shoulders and ribs sink as you exhale. Finally, try it out without the help of your hands. Enjoy the calm that this creates and observe how the tension eases and a feeling of strength arises in you.

*by Dirk Schuka*



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