

# WELLNESS-BASED PERFORMANCE

You have the power to focus your mind, improve decision-making, sharpen strategy, build team and lead through change – even while under intense pressure. Start by trying these wellness-based performance practices when meeting civic life’s daily challenges.

## Wellness Practice

## How It Works

## Performance Pluses



Center on vision

In your mind and heart, what do you aspire to achieve? What is your greatest contribution to society? Write out a one sentence vision statement. Couple your personal mission statement with an inspirational image. Put on your desk or make it your screen saver. When the going gets tough, bring it back to center.

**Focus.** Vision is your lighthouse in the dark. Circumstances and people may change. Vision remains constant, guiding actions, behaviors and decisions in the right direction. The repeat, visible reminder helps create new, future forward neuro-connections.



Gain clarity in  
16 seconds

Close your eyes. Inhale and exhale normally for two to three breath cycles. Next, breathe in for six counts. When you cannot take in anymore air, hold your breath for four counts. Then, exhale slowly and measuredly for six counts. Open your eyes. Continue on with your day.

**Balance.** Our bodies and minds ramp up on adrenaline and cortisol (stress hormones) - often when we'd benefit from ramping down. Grounded in evolutionary biology, this fight-or-flight response can impair judgment, memory and communication – not to mention physical health. Taking four to six breaths per minute equalizes our nervous system, reorienting us to a calm and focused state.



Log 3 strengths  
daily

Grab a pen and piece of paper or start an Evernote specifically for logging demonstrated strengths. Reflect on your day. What went well? What are you proud of? What challenges did you overcome? How did your team work together? Write them down – at least three. Expand on what is working. Lastly, congratulate yourself on a job well done.

**Strengthen.** With the civic landscape's constant volatility, it's easy to focus on what went wrong and dismiss what went right. In fact, our brains are predisposed to the negative by a 3:1 ratio. Pessimism narrows focus, whereas positivity widens attention and cultivates a mindset of generation and openness to the unexpected. This simple practice also increases happiness levels immediately after and for up to six months.



Connect with core  
relationships

Who do you need around you to keep you happy, healthy and grounded? Make a list of people you need to perform at full tilt. Ensure you are connecting with at least one of these people each day in a reciprocal way: FaceTime, active listening, grabbing a bite, hugs and such.

**Connection.** Civic leadership can feel isolating. We are social creatures built to connect. Authentic connection releases oxytocin (the “feel good” or “trust” hormone) in the brain. This shifts us into a place of psychological safety, where we learn and grow.



Take a tech-free  
10 – and move

Take regular ten minute breaks from technology and move around. Set a specific, regular time each day. Create a standing meeting on your calendar with a pop-up reminder. For a power boost, step outside. Take in natural surroundings. Look at the sky. Take a power walk. Do ten minutes of “corporate athlete” stretching. Importantly, communicate that you are unplugging so others know you’ll be offline and can respect it. This manages expectations and frees you from that feeling of needing to respond to something.

**Resilience.** Excess screen time and compulsively checking phones increase anxiety and create a sense of urgency. The constant connectivity also makes us feel like we have less time than we actually do. One study cites a 20% increase in feelings of work-life balance, productivity and collaboration among Boston Consulting Group employees after establishing “predictable time off”.

Additionally, outdoor physical activity is one of the most effective ways to reenergize, reduce stress and insight creativity. Movement releases endorphins and serotonin, triggering our brain's reward system and feelings of positive affect. Feeling good helps us keep events in perspective and act on the big picture.

