

CONVENTION CENTERS: STAYING ENERGIZED IN THIS INDUSTRY

A Few Easy Tips To Use Every Day | By Carrie Paolone, CMP, CEM, CVP

We all know from working in the events industry that what is required to get the job done can include long days and hours, nights and weekends, and of course, holidays. I have been working in this industry for over 20 years, and along the way, I've managed to develop some strategies to keep myself energized and ready to conquer every new day, event, and challenge.

Listen to Your Body and Be Kind to It

When you are feeling really tired and about to burnout, you need to recognize the symptoms and give your mind and body time to rest and recharge in order to take on your next event. If you do not make it a priority to eat and sleep well, especially during busy and stressful times, you could soon be headed toward a downward spiral.

It does not take much just to stop, put aside all your electronics, and enjoy the benefits of eating a healthy meal. When you have done this, you will be surprised by how much more energized you feel. My event managers often say they do not have time to take a break, or to sit down and quickly recharge their batteries, but I always encourage them to hand off their radio and take whatever time is necessary to get back on track. To my surprise, they return to their duties with a clearer head, a calmer demeanor, and a refreshed sense of purpose. It should not be underestimated how powerful it can be to pay attention to your physical and mental needs during a hectic day or event. Regularly feeding your body with nutrient-packed foods, as well as giving yourself time to properly digest, should provide the boost needed to carry you through even the longest and toughest of times. Naturally, going to bed at a reasonable time and free from the distractions of life's favorite tech gadgets is a miracle worker—everything will always look and feel better in the morning!

Take a Time-Out

I like to think that, for most people, the thought of being away from their desk can stir up a little bit of anxiety. If you are like me, you have probably worried about emails piling up, more items being added to your to-do list, or the guilt of looking unproductive to your office colleagues. Put those worries aside, because your productivity should not be measured by how much time you spend at your desk. I cannot recommend enough that you add short time-outs into your daily work routine, regardless of how busy your schedule is.

Everyone, I am sure, hits the 3 pm wall. You know, when it takes you longer than normal to write emails, make decisions, or concentrate on tasks that have to get done. It is that feeling when your brain has had enough and is ready to call it quits for the day. This is the best time, if any, to take a time out, go outside and breathe in some fresh air. If you cannot get outside, just step away from your desk and head toward somewhere offering a change of scenery, or, talk to a coworker about something other than what you are currently working on. In our office, we have taken to stepping outside and sitting at a picnic table, where a small group of us exchange friendly banter and share some laughs. It makes the rest of the day seem less agonizing. I get back to my desk feeling totally refreshed and more productive, almost as if it was the start of the work day again.

Let Go of the Stress

We often joke in our building about the Events Team having a crying room. When other departments say, "there's no crying in events," we laugh because this could not be further from the truth. In this industry, stress can bubble up and consume you unexpectedly. Last-minute changes or revisions, not to mention meeting deadlines, will almost always be overwhelming. Working as the go-between with your operations team on one side and your client on the other can sometimes push you to your limit. When my children were young and having a temper tantrum, I would put them in a time out. Let them cry, disconnect them from what is making them freak out, and give them time to calm down before trying to rationalize with them. Well, guess what? Adults occasionally need the same kind of treatment. Give them time to yell, cry, or let go of any emotion they are holding deep inside. I find a quick release is all you need to get you back to normal. So, walk away from the stress. Step outside, step into a washroom, and let it out, even if it is just for a couple minutes. Remember to breathe, and wait until you have regained your composure before getting back to work.

Practice Positivity

Negativity is a very easy trap to fall into. We start to tell ourselves things like, "This client is being unreasonable," "I will never catch up," and "No one can help me." Before you know it, these negative thoughts become a negative habit, crippling us from moving forward. Learning to manage our thoughts and giving them a positive spin makes all of the difference.

Here is a strategy that has done wonders for me, and I hope it will do the same for you. Next time, instead of focusing on all the things you cannot do for a client, draw your attention to all the realistic things you can do. Moving step-by-step in a positive direction can help you to leave all the negative stuff behind. Rather than dwell on all the catching up you have to do, think to yourself, "This is a busy week but I will start and focus on the most important things first, and work through the rest as time goes on."

According to Newton's law, objects in motion tend to stay in motion. Sitting at your desk and staring at the pile of work right in front of you is kind of self-destructive. Start with one task, even if it's the smallest, and watch as you gradually build a sense of accomplishment. Before you know it, that positive feeling takes over and you're moving on to the next task and quickly checking items off your list. Soon enough, you will be looking back and smirking at what you thought was impossible and never-ending.

The events industry is very rewarding; however, it can suck a lot of energy out of us as well. We push ourselves to the max so that our clients and their guests come away with a satisfying experience. At the same time, we go the extra mile because we want to be able to pat ourselves on the back for a job well done. Even though it can leave us feeling drained and running on empty, I could not ask to work in a better industry. Now let's keep doing what we do best, and stay energized while doing it. **FM**

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