



# RETOOLING YOUR MINDSET

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**5 tips** to stay positive at work

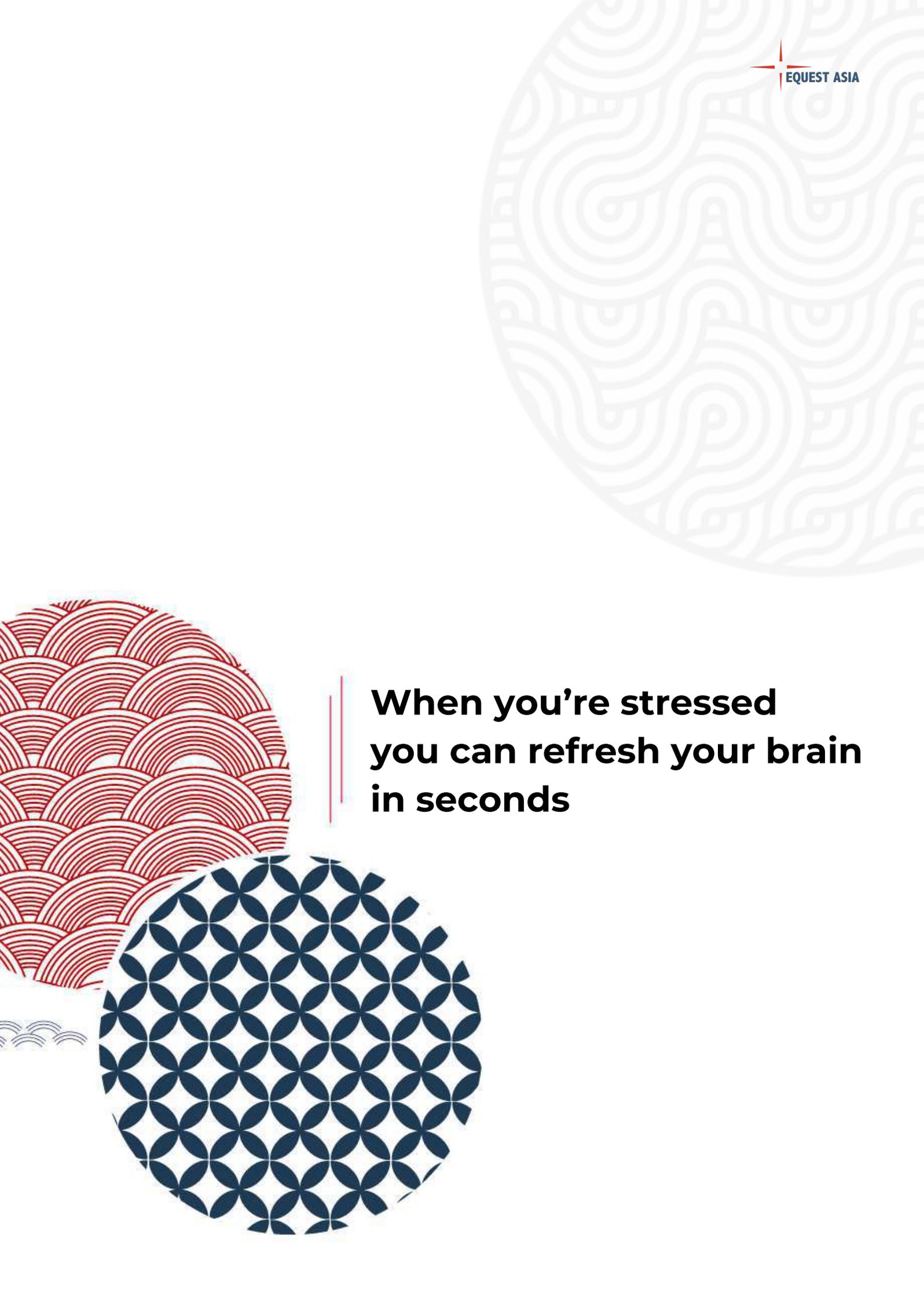
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*EQuest Asia*



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**When you're stressed  
you can refresh your brain  
in seconds**

Experts say that the rational brain can actually process about 6 bits of data on the spot or in any situation presenting itself. Should you find yourself in a meeting, for instance, your rational brain could be running through these pieces of information:

- 1) *What happened in your last meeting,*
- 2) *The issues that are now coming up,*
- 3) *Your goals,*
- 4) *The benefits of this meeting ending well,*
- 5) *Some attendees in the meeting showing signs of disinterest and*
- 6) *Your feeling of being edgy and uncomfortable.*

The experts go on to say that the rational brain then takes in these bits of data sequencing them any which way with each sequence creating a possibility for action or reaction. You know how many possibilities you can generate with these 6 bits of data sequenced anyway you want it? 720. Using the factorial 6, the math works out this way –  $6 \times 5 \times 4 \times 3 \times 2 \times 1 = 720$ . In other words you've got 720 ways of approaching, handling or managing this meeting. That's a rich fountain of options, compliments of your rational brain.

The Other Side Of The Coin – The Emotional Brain On the other hand if your emotional brain senses a threat in that same meeting, say, somebody shows signs of boredom, or couldn't-care-less gestures, threatening your self-worth, it will release stress hormones (adrenaline, cortisol and norepinephrine).

These hormones only have one job – to remove the complexity of the situation so you can make a quick decision that'll assure your “ safety ”.

These stress elements will flush out bits of information they'll regard as heavy and burdensome. When this happens – bits of data being flushed out of your rational brain – those 720 possibilities are reduced significantly. With just 1 bit of data flushed out, you're left with 5 factorial (6 bits of data less 1) and the math computation goes  $5 \times 4 \times 3 \times 2 \times 1 = 120$ . The 720 possibilities have been slashed down by 600. In short, high order thinking almost disappears. Your mindset gets into that do-or-die, now-or-never, make-or-break kind of thinking making it almost impossible to be creative or innovative or socially crafty or to engage in any sort of value formation.

## **2 Ways To Get Back Those 720 Possibilities:**

### ***1) Tap into your gratitude anchor.***

Expert psychologists say that when you focus on your gratitude anchor, it releases a surge of powerful feel-good hormones that beat and flush out those stress chemicals and gives you back your natural smarts. What's gratitude anchor? It's all of those sights, sounds, feelings and emotions you experienced when somebody helped to ease a pain or resolve a critical situation for which you were thankful as when a good friend extended financial support and saved your home from foreclosure.

## ***2) Get into some deep breathing.***

Your breath becomes quick and shallow when those stress hormones show up. Doing it the other way around – making your breathing slow and deep – tells your emotional brain you're no longer under threat, and this paves the way for the higher order thinking to come back.

Remember these two tips when you're stress. They're a good, effective way of refreshing your brain in seconds so you can access your knowledge, experience, talent and strengths and function at your best.



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## **Tips on how to be happy at work and bring down the daily pressure**

Somebody once quipped that the happiest workers in the world are traffic cops. They whistle while they work. An even wiser man said ... find a job you'll really enjoy doing every single day and you won't feel like it's work. Unfortunately, we can't all be loving our work like Tiger Woods, Roger Federer or Taylor Swift and make lots of money while enjoying a terrific rush swinging a golf club, a tennis racket or belting out a country song.

We, modern slaves of the bundy clock will have to be a little more creative and innovative so we don't drag our feet on the way to the office as if we're headed for the dentist. And, we're not talking of salary raises and promotions either. Of course, that helps too but that doesn't happen everyday.

Make the choice to be happy at work. Below are five of the most popular tips that are known to have had positive results among people who work under much pressure and stress:

- ***Being happy at work is essentially a choice.*** It's true. Think positively about your work ... how it contributes to the company and what important role it plays to the satisfaction of a customer or client. Focus on the facets of your job that you like doing. Go with co-workers whose company you enjoy. Psych yourself up. Even in the midst of pressure and deadlines, you can choose to be happy at work.

- ***Get rid of negativity.*** Making a choice to be happy in the office means staying away from gossip, negative talks and disgruntled people. You can feel positively great at work but negative people can have a dramatic impact on your attitude. Don't let these types of people get you down.
- ***Take responsibility for your own professional development.*** The person with the most to gain from continuing to professionally grow is yourself. So, take charge of your career growth. Don't stay put. Seek some meaningful help or feedback from your superiors and as you see them complementing your planned goals, work them into your plans.
- ***Strike a happy balance.*** Your job is only a fraction of your life. It is not your total life. You cannot and should not get into a go-to-work-go-home-and-back-to-work cycle. Outside of work, find and do something that interests you, a hobby or a sport, or Friday nights out with friends that'll serve as an outlet for relaxation and enjoyment.
- ***Create a pleasant work station.*** If you've got your own office, desk or cubicle, arrange your surroundings so it gets to be nice and comfortable for you to be there and work. Make your area pleasant. Tack on a few personal mementos, a cute little plant at the corner or Brad Pitt's photo if it'll make you happy. These will add warmth and meaning to your work station and ease up the daily pressure of the job.

If none of these ideas help to make you a bit happier at work after applying them over time, it would make sense for you to reevaluate your employer, your job or your whole career. You wouldn't want to spend the rest of your life in a job you can't stand in a work environment that's unfriendly. Go look for another job with a smile.



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**The new way to lead  
with compassion**

## **Leading with empathy, compassion: an authentic model where work and private life are in tune with real values!**

In business schools and corporate boardrooms, we were taught, or perhaps the better word is brainwashed, to lead with our heads not with our hearts. We're expected to be tough as nails, like a first class marine sergeant completely focused on bringing-in results. We're supposed to be these no nonsense, don't-mess-around-with-me- types of leaders obsessed almost with making our businesses a big success. But, following the September 11 tragedy that shattered the world, a new behavioral management pattern seems to have emerged on the business horizon. Leaders of big, prestigious companies and organizations in the US and in the western world are beginning to advocate and embrace a more humane, more compassionate kind of leadership ... leading with the heart.

### **The Change is Happening**

You see this change happening when leaders of giant firms devote precious press and radio/TV advertising budgets to either express their sorrow or empathy to families of victims of some tragic natural calamity or to express pride in the United States for some glorious, victorious event that made the country shine. You see this happening through corporate giving campaigns and fund raising events for some lofty, noble cause rather than sell a product or a brand extolling their benefits. In a day-to-day office setting, you see this happening when the GM drops by a low rank employee's work station to say thank you for a job well done.

No doubt, we shall see these compassionate leaders multiplying in the months and years to come. The sensitivities that come to play in this compassionate leadership are inevitably transforming into ***favorable, positive results.***

## **Compassion Is In Everyone**

It is from some special spot, deep within us that compassion lives. It's a gentle force that puts other people's needs before our own, or a soft thrust to sympathise with their needs. Such sensitivity was evidenced in former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani, when, during the September 11 tragic event, he took center stage to report and update the American people almost with every minute detail, news he was able to share, day after day. Governor George Pataki offered the support of New York State to help rebuild the city. Former president Bush shared hugs and handshakes with firemen and police officers with obvious empathy. Grown men wept openly on national TV. Who knows? Perhaps it's what triggered this new wave of leadership with heart.

Compassion is ***ever-present.*** Compassion is ***ever-natural.*** It's not going to cost a penny to be a compassionate leader. It's about being real and authentic with what matters to all of us.

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**Empathy at work to drive  
your business forward**

## What Is Empathy?

Empathy is the capacity to recognise and understand the emotions of other people. It's about putting yourself in another person's shoes, understanding his/her perspective and reality. You've heard about this often enough during call center and customer service trainings where the trainers tell you to "put yourself in the customer's shoes to better understand what's going on in the customer's heart and mind."

You might think that empathy is spontaneous. It's not. There's a little science to it. What happens is ... when you hear a compelling story or see a scene or a situation that hits your soft spot, our body releases **Cortisol** which helps us to concentrate on the subject matter. Simultaneously, the body also releases Oxytocin. This is sometimes called the "**Trust Hormone**" or the "Bonding Hormone". It's what makes us care about the subject matter and increases our empathy.

Recent research which had men undergo an aerosol shot of Oxytocin found that this group had exhibited emotional empathy in higher levels. All of us have these, but depending on genetics, our mood at the moment and how we relate to the other person, levels of our individual empathy varies.

## Why Empathy Is Important

*In Businesses, the ability to connect with and relate to people*, (in particular, prospects and regular customers of a business) is **true empathy**. It's a force that can move the business forward because empathy makes you think beyond yourself and your own concerns. The minute you begin seeing and understanding that side of the business, you'll realise there's a lot to discover and appreciate. This inevitably leads to **creativity** and **innovation** and **happy customers**.

To start applying empathy at the workplace more effectively, especially among employees who interact with customers, you as a manager might want to have them consider the following guides:

- **Get rid of your own perspective.** Instead look at things from the other person's viewpoint. As soon as you do this, you'll get to realize these guys aren't being wicked or unkind or difficult and unreasonable. They're just responding to the situation with the information they've got. This happens all the time with customer complaints.
- **Listen and listen well.** Listen with your ears (what is the other person saying? what kind of tone is he using?) Listen with your instincts (Is he communicating all the important issues? Is there something he's not telling you?). Listen with your heart (how do you think he/she feels?).

- **Acknowledge the other person's perspective.** Once you recognize why the other person believes what she believes, then acknowledge it. This doesn't equate to you agreeing but it's an acceptance of other people's opinions and they may have solid reasons to have those opinions.
- **Be flexible.** When interacting with your company's customers, be prepared to change directions as the other person's thoughts and feelings might also change.

Getting yourself and your team to develop an empathy approach at the workplace may just be the most relevant decision you can make to improving your business. When you start understanding others, they'd want to understand you too and that's how effective collaborative work goes.



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**Preventing employee  
burn out should be a top  
priority in your company**

In one way or another and in varying degrees, we've all experienced it—burn out. Work is overwhelming. With 1001 things to do everyday and not much help coming, you suddenly notice your enthusiasm, drive and determination going down the drain and all you'd like to do is get out! Whether it's you or your employees facing burn out, it's important to your business that you prevent this from happening, primarily because burnt out workers are unengaged, less healthy and ultimately become unproductive.

What causes burn out? The root causes of burn out are many but generally they'd fall into 3 categories.

- a) **Personality traits** – most likely to suffer from quick burn out are over-achievers, idealists and perfectionists and pessimistic people.
- b) **No balance between work and home.** Burn out happens when one of the other takes over an employee's life.
- c) **Work-related stress** as in terrible workload, ever increasing demands on the job without commensurate rewards or benefits, lack of recognition and loss of faith in the company's leadership.

For your customers dealing with burnt out people is going to be tough and difficult, simply because they would tend to be mostly irritable and tense. It's the kind of a situation you wouldn't want to happen in your business, right? Here's what you can do:

**1) Listen.** When an employee begins to show symptoms of burn out like anxiety, irritability, frequent absences and susceptibility to illness, meet with the person and try to get to the heart of the problem. If you listen well enough, you'll have a better idea of what action to take.

**2) Make sure the tools and equipment** to help employees do their job right are working efficiently. Frustration with equipment that doesn't work or is not upgraded can easily and quickly drive an employee to the burn out stage.

**3) Don't be unfair.** Burn out happens fast in the workplace when some employees are seen as fair-haired persons and are receiving preferential treatment or are getting credits for the wrong reasons. Inequality in pay, capricious recognition and even injustice create animosity and sometimes a sense of despair leading to burn out.

**4) Give them a say on what they do.** When an employee feels he's got no voice in organizational decision making, burn out is almost a natural consequence.

**5) Have fun.** Build a positive work environment. The guys who enjoy coming to work are bound to suffer less burn out than those who hate their job, dragging their feet, coming to the office. Put in some chocolates in the fridge or some nachos on the conference table. Give them a half-day off on the eve of a holiday. Have a private showing of a Marlon Brando film on a Friday night. All these will boost morale and keep burn out away.

**6) Make them feel they're needed.** Recognize their success, preferably publicly. A pat on the back or a memo on the bulletin board recognizing them for a job well done is a tremendous ego boost and goes a long way toward stemming the onset of a burnout.

Take these actions now. Don't wait for the burn out signs to come out.



MY  
HOLLAND

#HOMECOMING



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THOUGHT SHOW

VIETSUCCESS



MY HOLLAND

HOST: HẢI TRƯỜNG

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