



NATURAL PRODUCTIVITY

Honour your natural rhythm for improved energy and productivity. *By Laura Green*

Would you like more energy, to be more productive in your day, to feel less tired and stressed? Then reconnect with your body's natural rhythms. Rhythm is something we all naturally have, something we are born with – and like our own personal metronome it is this rhythm that sets the pace at which we are most comfortable. Honour your body's natural rhythm to reduce stress and improve productivity.

My own natural rhythm is slow and steady. As a child my mother used to grumble at me saying "you never hurry yourself" and still to this day I can't see what the rush was. Yet my mother's natural rhythm is fast and furious - ask her to slow down and she gets irritable; ask me to speed up and I feel harassed. Reconnect with your rhythm and let it set the tone for your day. Here's how:

Energy management

In honouring our natural rhythm we can more skilfully manage our energy levels and stamina as we go throughout our day. As Jim Loehr wrote in *On Form*: "Energy diminishes both with overuse and with underuse." It's a simple shift of perspective to manage your energy, as opposed to time. For instance: you feel most energised upon waking? Great, go to the gym before work, or do the household

chores, you'll get them done quicker and better than if you leave it to the end of the day. Or does it take you longer to get going in the morning? No worries, start your morning slower with some gentle yoga, meditation or journaling and schedule the more energetic activities later in your day.

You set the pace

Does your 'To Do List' set the pace for your day? With societal pressures to continually do more, achieve more and accomplish more the 'To Do List' is always getting longer and invariably dictates the pace. It is normal to resist slowing down and allowing our natural rhythm to set the pace as we fear we won't have enough time to meet all the demands. But trust me, you do. A slower more integrated pace by no means affects your productivity; in fact, the opposite is true. The more you can regulate your pace the better you can manage your energy levels keeping an abundant store of steady energy all day and all week. You wouldn't set off for a long distance run at a sprint pace thinking that this way you'll run further.

Connect with your breath

Tune into your breath: that continual natural rhythm has so much to teach us. In yoga we see the breath as the inner teacher.

Observe your breath first thing when you wake up, set the rhythm of *Samavritti* - same length inhale as exhale. This even rhythm brings steadiness and ease to the mind and helps to keep the nervous system balanced. As you sit up in bed take a few gentle stretches and start to count your breath, let a natural pace establish itself, it will probably be somewhere between 2 to 4 counts. As the breath gets more full and deep follow the lead of your breath as you get out of bed and stay in this even and steady rhythm as you go about the rituals of the morning. Continue to feel the pace, rhythm and depth of your breath so you notice when you have shifted out of your natural pace. You begin to rush when you can't find your car keys - your breath becomes quicker and shallower. Or you get stuck in slow moving traffic - your breath slows and gets shallower, starving the body of oxygen, leading to a yawn (which instead of interpreting as the body's cue for you to breathe deeper you instead take as an indication of tiredness and low energy and down the spiral goes). Yet when you are aware you can start an intervention, take control over your pace and energy levels by returning to the breath, returning to *Samavritti* and letting your natural breath count re-establish itself. ॐ

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