

breathing space

Start your day off with less stress

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Simplicity in getting to and from work is important because if getting to work each morning is a major ordeal, you're going to feel more stressed. More stress invariably leads to more worries, reduces performance, and leads to complexity. The more simply and easily you can get to work, potentially, the better your whole day will go.

START YOUR DAY OFF RIGHT

Getting to work with relative grace and ease starts on a daily basis with rising each morning with grace and ease, which is dependent on the duration and quality of your sleep.

Get that thing away from your head. Don't sleep with your head by a telephone that can ring aloud. Remove the phone from your bedroom, or install an answering machine and switch the ringer from "on" to "off." Too many people sleep with their head by a phone because they have an aged parent or teenagers and are worried about the one possible call in fifteen years where they might have to arise at 3:00 a.m. There's not much you can do at that hour. You'd be far better off getting fifteen years of sound sleep.

Crash early. Once a week get to bed by 9:00 p.m. Your body will thank you. Let yourself go for nine, ten hours, whatever it takes. To get to old age with grace and ease allow yourself at least one week-night in which getting sleep is your only objective.

One Friday night each month, crash right after work and don't get up until the next morning. If you want to experience a fabulous weekend, this is the way to start.

Decaffeinate yourself. Avoid caffeine for the six hours before retiring. This means if you're thinking about going to bed around ten, you should refrain from any caffeine after 4 p.m. Also avoid alcohol in the evening. It'll put you to sleep quickly, but it tends to dry you out and wake you up before you're due. Then you have trouble getting back to sleep.

Retire on cue. Go to bed when you're tired, not when you think you ought to. Let your body talk to you. It'll tell you when it's tired. The problem you've had in the past is that you have ignored the messages.

Having your items already assembled by the door or in your car the night before will allow you to get going without stress. Give yourself a chance to leave with more grace and ease.

Stock your car. Instead of heading into the city without the quarters and dimes needed for parking meters and pay phones, stash at least 50 dimes and 40 quarters (a roll of each) in your car. Simply knowing you have them in place offers a measure of security.

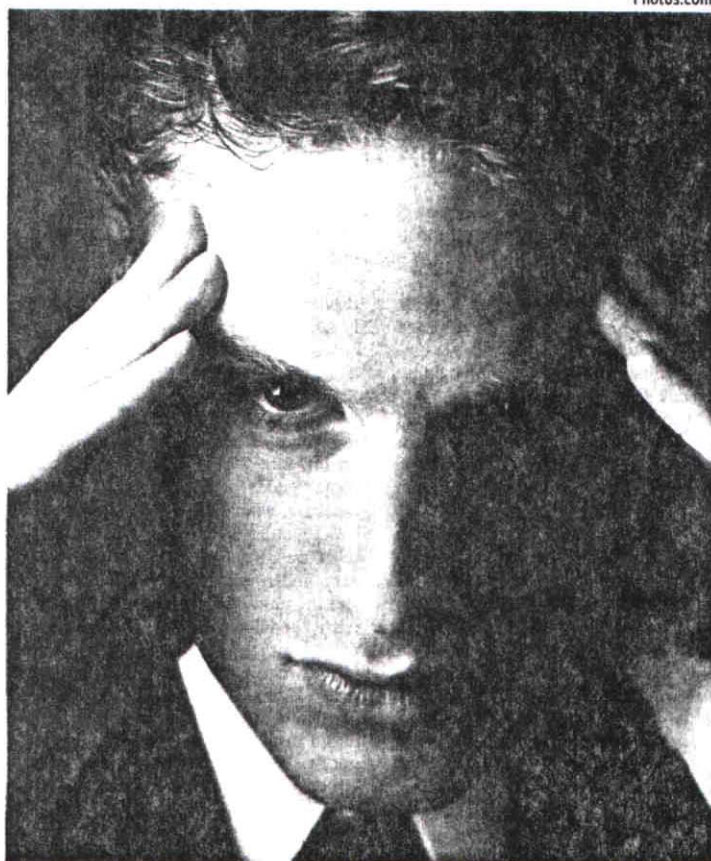
Carry a first-aid kit. It's always a good idea to stock a first aid kit in case you get into an accident, or in case someone else who has been in an accident needs assistance. It never hurts to have some ibuprofen or acetaminophen on hand in case of traffic jam headaches. You can buy pre-packaged car first-aid kits, or you can put together your own in a small fishing tackle box.

A MORE COMFORTABLE COMMUTE

If you drive to work using your own car, there are many things you can do to make your commute simpler and easier. Always keep your car in top shape. Take it in for servicing if you even suspect that something is askew. It's one thing to be stalled in traffic because some turkey's car conked out and is blocking 10,000 others. It's another thing to be that turkey. Assuming you keep your car functional, your next major move is controlling your indoor environment.

Go to college while you drive. If your one-way commute averages 25 minutes, in 11 weeks you could listen to the equivalent of a college length course. In a little more than a year, you could achieve the equivalent of having audited five college courses, hence an entire semester! You get to pick what you want to hear, you make an other wise meaningless commute meaningful, and there are no quizzes, term papers, or final exams.

Tune out the noise. Ride with the windows closed and the air conditioner on. You'll get at least the same miles per gallon as you do with the windows open and the air conditioner off. Your ride will be quieter with the windows closed, and you're better able to control your environ-



ment.

Reflect on the day. Use commute time to reflect on what you'd like to accomplish or how you'd like your day to go. Wean yourself off flicking on the radio the moment you step into the car, or listening to shock talkers who offer little to your life. If you're part of a car pool, ride to work with people with whom you enjoy conversing or simply spending time.

Get off the high wire. "The incidence of people doing double time while driving is increasing," says Dr. Thomas Havrilsky of Duke University. He has seen people on the road who attempt to shave, eat breakfast, or put on makeup; all while listening to the news; glancing at a paper; or listening to loud music. This commuter erroneously believes he'll arrive "having saved time," when he's more likely to arrive in a frenzy, without being able to have a handle on the day. Avoid potentially dangerous maneuvers such as shaving, putting on make-up, or conversing on a hand-held cellular phone.

Keep it clean. It's invigorating to drive a clean car. Also, spotless windows enhance your view, safety, and driving

ability. Countless accidents occur because of something as preventable as dirty windows.

Keep your ears on the road. Here's a valid reason to dislike those people with 1,000-megawatt car stereos that can implode eardrums from half a mile away. The loud music can hamper driving skills by interfering with information processing. When a driver's eyes are on the road but his ears are on Pearl Jam at 98 decibels, his senses get scrambled. At least you can hear these road menaces coming in plenty of time to get out of their path.

Hear that beat. You would never play music too loudly, would you? That means you can install a CD or tape player to safely control your environment to and from work. If you're always listening to something that relaxes you as you drive, the cumulative effect can make quite a difference in how your morning goes. ■

Jeff Davidson, based in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and on the web at www.BreathingSpace.com, is a popular conference speaker and the author of more than two dozen books.