



Blink Breaks

Okay. I confess. If you haven't heard of blink breaks before, it's because I made it up. In an effort to increase productivity in the workplace, a Chicago based company invited me to share healthy body and mind exercises with their management team. It was here that I had the chance to test out my theory on the effects of stressed eyes and how the practice of "blink breaks" works to relieve stress not only in the eyes, but the whole body.

Sound strange? Think about it for a moment. We know stress is taking a toll on our bodies, but what role do our eyes play? Our eyes are constructed to be flexible and move freely between their ability to focus and to see peripherally. Because we are spending long periods of time with our eyes in only a focused state, studies show that our eyes are becoming less flexible and we are losing some of our ability to see peripherally. Another effect of long periods of intense focus, especially at the computer, is the lessening of blinking. Studies show that we normally blink 15-20 times per minute; however, when glued to the computer screen, blinking diminishes to half that amount. In this forward moving, success seeking and often driven society, we are straining our eyes almost constantly.

Knowing this, I began a program in the company with which I was consulting. The program, called "blink breaks", was designed for the management team to break periodically and relax the eyes, letting the effects spread to the body. Sticky notes went up on bulletin boards and pop up reminders went up on computers. "Blink breaks" became a hot topic of conversation as well as the butt of many jokes. Despite the fun, there was a marked improvement in people's fatigue levels throughout the day and their reported sense of well-being.

It's true. "Blink breaks" can improve the quality of your life. But don't take my word for it, try it for yourself. Begin by blinking your eyes gently 10 times. Then breathe and allow your eyes to rest softly back in their sockets. Do this for 5 breaths. At the same time, allow your brain to rest with your eyes by focusing on your breathing. When you open your eyes, pause to "take in the scenery" so to speak, and see what is happening around you. Breathe again, and enter back into your work more relaxed, more refreshed, and happier to be there.

Deborah Adele is an engaging, lively, and thought-provoking speaker who is not afraid to share stories from her own years of living and learning. She facilitates thoughtful and tangible ways of showing up to life in new ways, leaving participants with a dynamic combination of hope, inspiration, and practical knowledge. She is

the author of *The Yamas & Niyamas: Exploring Yoga's Ethical Practice*, 2 CD's: *The Art of Relaxation and The Practice of Meditation* and authored a regular wellness column for the Duluth News Tribune.