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with *Barbara Best*

## Transcript: Changing Your Mind

Remember cramming for that exam in university, or pushing yourself in order to meet a deadline at work, only to feel mentally exhausted the next day? Today's podcast looks at why that is and offers a few tips and strategies to help you and your brain work smarter, not harder.

Hi, I'm Barbara Best and this is Humans Working Remotely, a podcast where I'll show you how to meet the expanding needs of your organization by utilizing alternative solutions for operational staffing. Through expert insight and meaningful conversations with business professionals, we'll talk about common challenges and proven strategies that will provide you with more time to focus on your organization's mission, relationship building and other high value growth activities.

The brain is usually seen as an ethereal realm that exists apart from the body and the laws of physiology. But did you know that grey matter tires well before the body does? Since almost all of us are doing mental work these days, likely more than we usually do trying to cope with everything, managing cognitive resources is not just a nice thing our body does for us; it's absolutely essential to our wellbeing.

The brain is like a muscle: you can strengthen it or deplete it. If you let this muscle recharge and replenish, you'll feel better mentally and see improvements in your performance. Regular refueling, or input, is a prerequisite for quality output because the brain is an energy machine consuming 20% of the body's calories, even though it comprises only 2% of total body mass.

Just like your heart, your brain gets fatigued from too much time-on-task. One study found that mental fatigue takes hold after three hours of continuous time-on-task, while other scientists say the brain needs a break after 90 minutes, the length of the "basic rest-activity cycle".

In the course of staying focused on a task, we use key cognitive resources: self-control. Studies show that regulating our emotions is taxing, known in research circles as "ego depletion". This holds that every time we exercise self-regulation, when we're paying attention or suppressing emotions or managing how we act in social situations, we use up limited regulatory resources, which leads to depleted energy and increased fatigue.

So, give yourself permission to take that mental break. When you're working, set the timer on your phone for 75 minutes and diligently go about working at your task. When the timer goes off, reset for 15 minutes and then get up, stretch, walk around, make a cup of tea, or whatever feels good for you to take your brain away from the task. When you're on a lunch break or a longer break, get outside for a walk as possible, or do some stretches or yoga poses to get your blood moving, and give your brain a break from the tasks you're working on. I get to bring my dog to work so I get

out for walks periodically throughout the day, and what a difference it makes in my productivity! Every time I get back to my desk, I feel refreshed and ready to start the next thing on my list.

Another tip is to give your brain a new thing to do. I recently discovered the joy of working on a Lego Architecture project. I never had Lego as a child, so when I received the London Skyline kit as a gift, it didn't take me long to get into it and I quickly realized how calming this type of project was to work on and my brain was actually refreshed! The key point here is to find you and your brain something new to do; learn a new language, learn how to make pottery, try an escape room with your friends, whatever it is.

Remember the saying “a change is as good as a rest” and it's true for your brain as well!

In closing, I'd like to thank you so much for listening today. I hope this information was helpful, and I look forward to providing more. I'm Barbara Best CEO of Virtual Works, Inc.

Here's a few action steps:

- Please feel free to leave me comments or feedback on this platform.
- You can always drop me a line if you'd like to be considered for a future podcast at [info@virtualworks.ca](mailto:info@virtualworks.ca)
- You can visit our website at [www.virtualworks.ca](http://www.virtualworks.ca)
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