

The 8-Point

Check-Up

“Mental Maintenance”

Introduction

When driving a car, it is necessary to stay within a certain speed limit. Legal issues aside, driving too slow on the highway will put yourself and those behind you at risk, driving too fast and you might lose control and crash.

Or try physical exercise: training too little might not make any difference—besides wasting your time and possibly money—and training too much will burn you out and you might injure yourself.

The point here is not only that in most areas of life you have to stay within a certain zone between “too much” and “too little” (the *golden mean*), but that—as in driving a car— you have to check regularly that you are staying within that zone.

Your speedometer, for example, is there for you to check that you’re not driving too fast or too slow—and it makes a world of difference.

So what am I trying to achieve with this new e-booklet?

I believe that we have to (mentally) check certain parameters of ourselves—our minds, our bodies, our thinking, etc.—so that we can stay within that zone that allows for maximum physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health.

What I am proposing is a short check-list of things you need to be made aware of regularly in order for you to function at your highest possible level, to succeed and be happy in life.

These are simple things which we are told in every second self-help and self-improvement book we read, and we mostly see the practicality and wisdom of doing that—but never really go through with.

This is no intricate ritual, but a short, one-minute (or less) check-up which you might want to do frequently throughout the day to maximize the benefits you receive.

I will present this checklist below, and then explain each item to the best of my abilities.

THE 8-POINT CHECK-UP LIST

1. AM I DREAMING?
2. WHAT ARE MY FEELINGS?
3. WHAT ARE MY THOUGHTS?
4. AM I RELAXED?
5. HOW’S MY HEARTBEAT?
6. HOW’S MY BREATHING?
7. AM I SMILING?
8. WHAT ARE MY GOALS?

The program here is to make going through this checklist a regular part of your day. I will explain my choices in the next section.

The Details

1. AM I DREAMING?

If you have read my “*Very very short Guide to Lucid Dreaming*”, then you know the significance of this item. Regular questioning of your state of mind will eventually lead you to utter this phrase in one of your dreams, making you aware of the fact that you are dreaming.

If you are currently not on a mission to have lucid dreams, or have no desire to become lucid in your dreams, I suggest that you either check this particular item—making your 8-point check-up a 7-point check-up.

Dreams are a valuable tool for self-improvement and self-discovery, and lucid dreams doubly so because you get to be in control of the dream.

A valuable thing to have this question first on the checklist is that in dreams, you will automatically continue asking the rest of the questions, and being emotionally calm, and physically and mentally relaxed, will prevent you from waking up prematurely.

So ‘step 1’ is to question whether you are in a dream or not. Do a few short checks to make sure, like jumping up and down, reading something—like the ‘*reality check-card*’ in your wallet!—or trying to change things around.

Once you are convinced that you are not in a dream environment, go to the next item on the checklist.

2. WHAT ARE MY FEELINGS?

With this item you are taking stock of your feelings at the present moment. Sometimes we carry negative emotions around with us all day long without really noticing it—and it tends to ruin our day.

So what are we going to do about it?

Check and Release!

Anybody familiar with *The Sedona Method* will know what *releasing* is. For those who don’t, I will give you a bit of background and a few instructions—it really is very very simple!

There are two things people tend to do with emotions. *Suppression* and *expression*. With *suppression*, what you are doing with your feelings is “bottling them up” inside. This may make unpleasant emotions go away for a while, but you’re really just holding

on to them, accumulating a lot of pent-up feelings over time. Often when people do something annoying to you again and again without you doing something about it and *suppressing* those feelings of anger and frustration, at some point you are going to just *snap!*

Emotion is *energy in motion*. When you are suppressing them, you are in effect building up a huge amount of energy ('bad vibes') about that thing inside. When you finally can't take it any more and *express* that energy, it's coming out of you with a vengeance. Imagine years of suppressed negative feelings about your husband's or wife's constant nagging suddenly erupting! People tend to get very much overwhelmed by that extraordinary amount of energy—talk about a 'blind rage' or 'seeing red' from anger. It may also cause some physical manifestations in the form of high blood pressure and ulcers among a host of other things.

In *expression*, people tend to just take that energy and hurl it at somebody or something else in form of screaming, arguments and physical or verbal abuse. Abusive habits like smoking or binge drinking or (too much) sex are also forms of *expression*. While this is healthier for you than suppression, think about what is happening to the person you are expressing towards. Screaming at your significant other after a frustrating day at work may relieve your stress, but it certainly doesn't help your partner, who might him/herself have had a bad day at work!

Releasing is the third alternative to *suppression* and *expression*. It quite simply means that you are *letting go* of the feelings you have—or have had—on the spot. You can simply *choose* to let go of any feeling you have. In effect you aren't doing anything with the emotional energy you have—you let it go and *dissolve*. And here's how it's done:

It's a simple five-step formula:

1. Focus on an issue that you would like to feel better about, and then allow yourself to feel whatever you are feeling at this moment.
2. Ask yourself this question: "*Could I let this feeling go?*"
3. No matter which question you started with, ask yourself this question: "*Would I?*" ('no' is an acceptable answer!).
4. Ask yourself this question: "*When?*" (This is an invitation to just let it go now.)
5. Repeat as often as you like.

While this may seem to be a bit involved at first, as soon as you get the hang of it, you will be able to let go of any feeling on the spot. It's pretty simple: *Be aware of what you are feeling—"Could I let this feeling go?"—"Would I?"—"When?"—repeat*

You automatically release. You can release on both negative and positive feelings. After releasing on an issue for a while the end result should be a profound sense of inner *peace*.

If you want to learn more about "The Sedona Method" you can get the (excellent) book from Amazon.com (**Hale Dwoskin**: [*The Sedona Method*](#), Sedona Press, 2003) or a (pretty expensive) audio course from the [Sedona Method website](#).

So that's 'step 2' of the 8-point check-up:

Check your feelings, find an issue that is bothering you, and let go of it!

You don't have to spend a long time just standing there and releasing. I would suggest that you do some releasing when you are at home and have some time, but the goal here is just to do away with any negative feelings you experience at the time, and dissolve them so they're not bothering you or get in your way anymore for the time being.

Right—on to item number 3!

3. WHAT ARE MY THOUGHTS?

This is very much like #2, but you're focusing on your thoughts instead. The value of positive thinking is stressed almost everywhere you look (or read).

After removing the emotional charge from your thinking with *releasing*, you will be able to see your thoughts more clearly. Look inside and quickly look for the things you have been thinking about since your last 'check-up.'

The goal here is to become aware of your thinking. You can't undo any 'negative' thoughts, but you can remind yourself that your purpose is to think *positively*. Are you dwelling on the negative aspects of your day so far? Are you worrying about something? Are you thinking about your problems rather than about your goals?

Once you've become aware of your thinking, remind yourself that it is much more productive to think about your goals and dreams; about the *good* things that have happened so far—and the *good* things that can happen in the future.

Look at your problems logically and without emotional attachment. If you can do something about them, write down possible solutions when you've got some time. If you can't do anything about them anymore or in the future, don't dwell on it and make the commitment to think more positively.

So there's 'step3':

Become aware of your thinking and 'adjust' it accordingly.

If you find that you've been thinking about the good things in life then congratulate yourself and move on.

4. AM I RELAXED?

The beneficial physical and mental consequences of regular relaxation are well known. A relaxed person is much less likely to overreact to some emotional event, or let them-

selves be overwhelmed by nervousness or stage-fright during exams, for example.

A regular relaxation routine benefits the mind as well as the body, lowering blood pressure, heart rate, and strengthening the digestive as well as the immune system.

In this step, you quickly go through each major part of your body and relax it. This doesn't have to be an involved regime, but a quick check that your muscles aren't overly tensed. During everyday life and especially during stressful situations, we tend to subconsciously contract our muscles. This very often continues throughout the day without our awareness and leads to general feelings of tension and discomfort which can make us irritable and tired, as well as keep us from falling asleep and staying asleep!

So when you reach step 4, you quickly check through the muscles, from the bottom to the top or from the top down (depends on what you prefer).

For example:

... *checking my feet*

... *calves*

... *knees*

... *thighs*

... *hips*

... *stomach*

... *lower back*

... *chest*

... *upper back*

... *hands*

... *lower & upper arms*

... *shoulders (let them droop a little)*

... *neck*

... *head & face*

You can go through your body very fast, releasing any tension or discomfort along the way. You can imagine your muscles surrounded by white light, or just *feel* them relaxing, or feel warmth, or any way you prefer.

5. HOW'S MY HEARTBEAT?

This and the next step are somewhat of a continuation of step 4. After going through your muscles, check your most important muscle—your *heart*. Relaxing your major muscle groups will have lowered your heartbeat to some extent, but becoming aware of your heartbeat can tell you a lot about your current situation and frame of mind.

A rapid heartbeat may be good and beneficial during athletic activities, but our heart also starts to beat faster in stressful situations as the body prepares for a fight-or-flight response in a modern world where neither fighting nor running away are an appropriate response.

If you were a cave-person facing a sabre tooth tiger, your body releases adrenaline, producing lots and lots of energy for you to either fight the animal or run away from it. Doing one or the other will eventually expend that energy build-up. But when you are sitting across your boss wishing to speak to you, your body is still doing the same thing it did with the cave-person. Energy is quickly built-up, heart rate and breathing quickens in anticipation of some kind of action. Neither fighting your boss, nor running out of the office are good responses. So now your body doesn't really know when to stop. Since there's no wild fighting or fleeing action going on, it must come sometime in the future, right? Well, it doesn't.

All that energy is now stored inside you and you go through the rest of the day still all pumped up: your heart is beating fast, your breathing is in your chest and quick, and your muscles are tense from anticipating some kind of physical response.

This carries on into the evening and night, and then you're all tense and can't fall asleep.

Relaxing your muscles in step 4 will tell your body that there is no longer a need to fight or flee, and remove tension. While you may not be in a tense situation everytime you do your check-up, it is still very much beneficial to relax frequently.

We can control our heartbeat to some degree, which is what you are going to try and do in step 5.

Step 5, in short, is to become aware of your heartbeat and try to slow it down. You could just *feel* it slowing down, or use some kind of affirmation like "*My heartbeat is slow and strong.*" To get your heart to relax a bit. Sometimes even awareness alone will make your heart slow right down.

6. HOW'S MY BREATHING?

Breathing is something we can very much control, and it makes *a world* of difference in our daily lives.

After steadying your heartbeat, focus on your breathing, and adjust it so that it is *deep, diaphragmatic* breathing. That's all.

Many people breathe with their chests. The secret to proper breathing is to breathe into the belly. To check that your breathing is ok, put one hand on your stomach and one on your chest. Only the hand on your stomach should be moving.

Correct breathing is an action of the abdominal muscles, not your chest. When you breathe in your diaphragm will expand automatically without any help, while during the exhalation your abdominal muscles contract so that your diaphragm gently pushes the air out of your lungs.

When you breathe with your diaphragm rather than your chest, you get much more air into your lungs with less effort, which slows down your breathing and relaxes you.

Your goal for 'step 6' is to *become aware of your breathing and make it deep, diaphragmatic breathing.*

Physical relaxation has a lot of benefits, and what we are trying to do is to make this short relaxation routine automatic and regular. This short bit of relaxation will remind your body to *stay* relaxed throughout the day and you won't be all tense and uncomfortable at night. A relaxed body also makes for a relaxed mind, which lets you see things more rationally and you will be able to respond and act with more confidence and maturity.

If you wish to learn more about relaxation, I would recommend the book "[Total Relaxation](#)" by John Harvey.

7. AM I SMILING?

A smile is *powerful*. Not only can it determine kind of first impression a stranger gets from you, or the attitude of a person towards you, but it also has other benefits.

A smile releases *endorphins*, a kind of feel-good drug your brain produces naturally. It will change your thinking from being negative to being positive. Just intentionally smiling for a while might even make you laugh out loud; and laughter is good!

Smile just for a few seconds and see what happens. Make it an *honest* smile—don't just expose your teeth. A smile comes from the eyes! Make your eyes smile first, your mouth will follow.

Step 7 is: *smile!!*

8. WHAT ARE MY GOALS?

I think we all can talk about goals all day long. There are as many different techniques of goal-setting as there are motivational speakers. The fact is that setting goals is absolutely essential for your success and happiness. How can you hit a target you can't see?

I will try to keep this section pretty short and simple. I'll give a few guidelines and tips to get you started and help you with your 8-point check-up.

Here's a very powerful exercise:

- Write down anything you want. All the stuff you would like to have, everything you'd like to do, everything you want to achieve. Put it all in writing—hold nothing back, no matter how "improbable" or "impossible" it might seem. The fact is that most people don't know exactly what they want. When you do this list, be as exact as possible without being too detailed. If you would like a new car, don't just write "a car" but also the kind of model you'd like, the colour, and by when. Set specific dates so you give yourself a deadline to work with. Write as much as you like.

- Edit this list anytime you want.
- Read it at least 3 times per day. Visualize each item as if you'd already have it.

For our purposes, as the last item on the check-up, go through your goals quickly. You don't have to meditate on each item—that's for when you've got time to do it.

Your mind is free, your body is relaxed and you've got a smile on your face—the ideal way to start manifesting the things on your list into your life!

While I didn't create the check-up specifically for the purpose of manifesting what you want, I think this is a big part in life and we should use every opportunity to think about your goals when you are in a *positive frame of mind*.

So the last step is: *Quickly go through your goal-list in your mind.*

Conclusion

How do you use the *8-point check-up*? What will it do?

I think two good ways of scheduling your check-ups is 1, on a regular timetable throughout the day. A short check every hour would be best, even three times per day will be beneficial; 2, everytime you do something specific. For example, before and after each class at college, or shortly before and after each meal; or each time you pick up the telephone to call someone. Or just when you feel stressed out.

Since you are doing this quick check mentally, you have complete privacy and you can do it anywhere and anytime you choose.

The purpose of the *8-point check-up* is to get you in control of yourself and your life. The importance of a relaxed, focused mind uninhibited by destructive emotions such as rage or fear, deep breathing and a clear focus on your goals cannot be overstated.

One *8-point check-up* shouldn't take more than a minute. At first the check-up may seem pretty complicated and lengthy, but after a while it will become second nature, like checking the speedometer in your car. Your body and mind will remain in the state you put them with the check-up for longer periods of time. Deep breathing, being relaxed, and *released*, are great states to be in throughout the day.

Make this 8-point check-up a regular part of the day, and you will reap all the benefits associated with it.

I appreciate any feedback, all contact info is on my website—Xehupatl.com

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