

Building Personal Resilience™

Guide

HeartMath® Skills
for Personal Effectiveness

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Introduction

Your HeartMath coach or mentor will use this guide to introduce you to simple, practical techniques that can help you de-stress from challenging situations, big or small. You'll learn strategies to build your resilience and boost your ability to "take charge" of yourself by better regulating your energy throughout the day, a key in building and sustaining your resilience. Exploring the energy-management concepts can help you see where you may be draining your energy and depleting your reserves, which can keep you from being your best. You may discover in some cases the source of your stress is not what it may appear to be.

Of primary importance is practicing the science-based techniques you will learn that change the way your body's physiology responds in stressful situations. Then, automatic stress reactions won't dictate how you feel, respond or perform, whether you're at work or at home.

It's important to recognize that we all experience moments when we feel in sync and "on top of the world," when we enjoy projects and interactions with family, friends and colleagues. Certain events and interactions, though, can disrupt those feelings. The techniques you will learn can help you get back in sync and back on track faster, right in the moment. No one will even know you're using them!

We'll ask you to practice these techniques often during the program so they become more familiar and automatic, which will help to build your resilience and give you the ability to maintain your composure and clarity, even in more challenging situations. We'll help you understand when and how to apply the techniques. We'll also see how to Prep for, Shift and Reset and also how to Sustain yourself during and after any challenging situation or interaction.

There are three keys to getting the most out of this program:

1. Review the *Building Personal Resilience Guide* frequently. It contains all the resilience-building techniques and important concepts covered in the program.
2. Consult with your coach or mentor, who is here to support and encourage you as you learn how to apply the techniques to your specific challenges and situations.
3. Make a commitment to yourself to practice the techniques recommended.

Let's get started by first looking at resilience and energy management so you can better understand how to optimize your performance and respond appropriately to any situation, even the tough ones.

Coherence

Overview:

Goal: Understand the concept of coherence and how it relates to resilience and performance.

Key Concepts:

- Coherence is an optimal state of functioning.
- Coherence is the key to building your resilience capacity.
- The more coherence you build and maintain, the more energy you build and store in your system. You create a new baseline of resilience.
- Renewing emotions create the measureable state of coherence.
- Negative emotions are costly and inefficient and deplete your resilience capacity.

Gaining and maintaining the coherence advantage

There are times in our lives when we have experienced periods of being in sync and flowing with a sense of ease through whatever challenges come our way. When we are in that coherent flow, things that come up just don't seem to get under our skin. We are firing on all cylinders. That is what coherence is all about: The heart, mind, emotions and body are all working in sync. When this happens, we are able to "take charge" of ourselves and maintain our composure. We have more energy, time seems to pass by quickly and we seem to flow through or around issues. When challenges come up, we can think more clearly, keep our cool, do what we need to do and move on. We have more energy and more stability.

Our ability to stay in an inner state of ease and flow through the day is determined by our ability to self-regulate our emotions and stop energy leaks. The first step to intelligent energy self-regulation is identifying where the biggest areas of unnecessary energy expenditure are occurring.

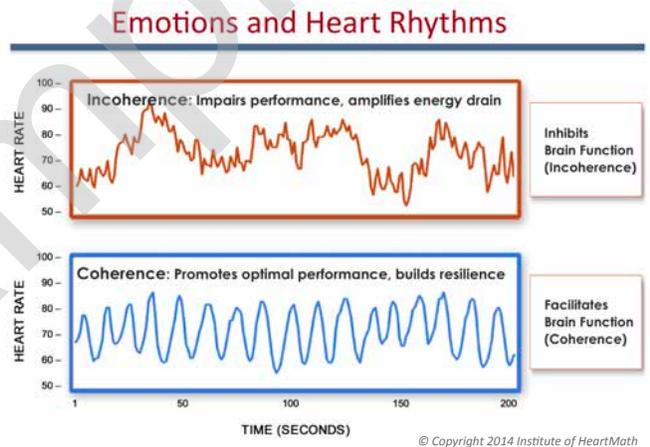
Think of energy as water in a bucket. If there are holes in the bucket allowing water to leak out, you have to know where they are before patching them. It makes sense to plug the biggest holes first.

From an energy-management perspective, depleting emotions are costly and inefficient. They are the big holes in the bucket. The bigger the stress reaction, the bigger the drain is on our energy. The accumulation of smaller reactions throughout the day can have a significant energy draining affect and waste more energy than a big blowout. Refer to the exercise you did on page 6, Energy-Draining Situations.



There is important research showing that when you're under stress and experiencing depleting emotions like frustration and anger, you generate incoherent or chaotic signals in your heart rhythms. This limits the brain's ability to process information affecting decision-making, problem-solving and creativity. Reaction speed slows and coordination is impaired. This helps explain why it's difficult to think clearly and respond effectively when you're feeling angry or irritated: It's because you have drained a lot of energy and because the heart is sending chaotic signals to key brain centers.

These graphs illustrate how stress reactions and positive states affect the nervous system differently. **Top graph:** the typical heart-rhythm pattern that occurs when we are frustrated or stressed. The chaotic and jerky pattern shows that the signals in the nervous system are out of sync. This negatively affects mental functions and reaction times. **Bottom graph:** the typical heart-rhythm pattern that occurs when we are in a positive state such as appreciation, creating a coherent system.



You can learn to generate coherent or “smooth” signals by experiencing renewing emotions like appreciation and patience. Coherent heart rhythm signals coming from your heart actually help the brain process information more efficiently. In other words, you can think more clearly and make better decisions when you are coherent.

The *Emotions and Heart Rhythms* diagram above shows two actual heart-rhythm patterns of a man. The top, chaotic-looking image, called an incoherent pattern, reflects when he was feeling frustration. The bottom image, or coherent pattern, was generated when he felt appreciation. The techniques you are learning will enable you to make that shift from an incoherent heart rhythm to a coherent rhythm, which is the foundation for intelligent energy self-regulation, optimal performance and mental clarity.

Remember, it's renewing emotions that add energy to your reserves, but it takes more than thinking positive thoughts. Actually *feeling* positive or regenerative emotions is what creates coherence. When you use the energy-management techniques in this guide, you will begin plugging leaks and recharging your battery. Generating coherence even for a few minutes brings your physical, mental and emotional systems into alignment.

Coherence, an optimal physiological state, is the essential key to building resilience and is one you can self-generate using the tools in this guide.

Benefits of Coherence:

- Plugs energy leaks
- Builds resilience capacity for faster recovery from physical, mental and emotional stressors
- Optimizes performance
- Develops faster reaction times and better coordination
- Helps increase capacity to be in charge of reactions
- Aligns the body's systems to work in sync with less wear and tear
- Increases ability to think more clearly, stay focused and make better decisions
- Enhances ability to recover more quickly from physical, mental and emotional stressors
- Facilitates better sleep

The following techniques can help create a feeling of greater ease and balance while plugging energy leaks by creating more coherence in your system. We'll also show you how to make the most of the energy-renewing situations and the feelings you associate with them that you identified earlier.