



Episode 54: How to Quickly Relax Your Brain

Welcome to In the Right Direction podcast, where we believe you get to choose what's on your plate, you can manage the overwhelm, and that change is possible. I'm your host, Deb Elbaum, and I'm here to share insights and strategies to increase your happiness, one baby step at a time. Let's dive in.

Hi everyone, it's Deb. Let's start with a brain check in. How is your brain today? Working hard?

Our brains work hard for us every day. In addition to keeping us alive by constantly monitoring all of the processes in our body, our brains think, worry, vision, strategize, listen, and make sense of the world around us. That's a lot of work.

With all of that, it's easy for our brains to get stuck in patterns of overthinking and over-worrying. After all, there are an abundance of things in our lives and in the world to think and worry about: jobs and relationships and other people, to name a few.

Here's what I know. When we think about what we need more of in our lives, it's usually not more worry. Most of us have enough of that already. So, if we do not need more brain worry, then what do we need?

More brain calm.

Most of us could benefit from moments – even micro moments – of mental peace and relaxation. What we need are ways to relax our brain, let go of the worries, even for a moment, to invite a bit more relaxation and peace into our brain, body, and thoughts.

Because here's the big idea. How we feel internally is directly connected to our thoughts, communications, and actions.

When our bodies are tense, our thinking stays limited. When our brains are anxious, our conversations come from a place of anxiety. When our breathing is shallow and constricted, it's hard to let ourselves vision and dream.

The state of our nervous system in the moment influences how we think, and our thoughts create our reality. When we move our bodies, our thoughts can flow more. When we breathe deeply to give our brains a mini reset, it allows us to potentially shift our thoughts in a new direction.

Moving and breathing are great ways to relax our body and brain. In addition, there's a thinking way to invite immediate calm and relaxation to the brain, and that's our coaching strategy today.

Today's tool for immediate brain calm and relaxation is a type of powerful question that we can ask ourselves and others. Our brains love answering questions. They are question-answering machines. To make our brains think in a certain way we can feed our brains certain questions.

Asking our brains intentional questions to ponder is a tool for refocusing our thoughts and shifting our thinking. This invites us to feel, think, and see the world differently.

When we think differently, possibilities emerge. We can bring more curiosity, we can take confident and bold action, and we can move through the world with more ease and joy.

The type of question that can help us relax our brains are what I call the What if? Questions.

These are questions that start with the words “what if,” and have a flavor of dreamy optimism – all in a way that feels potentially true. Here are three examples:

What if the universe has my back?

What if I did know the next step?

What if I were deeply loved?

What if questions are an invitation to possibility and potential. They invite your brain and body to connect to and tap into your inner wisdom, your inner guide, your higher self, and the possibilities of the universe.

Essentially, they’re a way to feel supported and reassured wherever you are in life. When we ask ourselves a what if question, we are reminding ourselves, in this moment, I am OK. I can trust. I am supported.

I know I always need more moments reminding me of those things.

Here’s the cool thing about the what if question. The power is in the asking, not the answering.

As you ask yourself the question and let it wash over you, you’ll likely notice that you immediately feel more relaxed. What I notice is that the tension in my shoulders loosens. I naturally exhale.

When I ask myself, What if the universe has my back? I feel my whole body and being loosen. I notice my thoughts come to a place of peace and stillness in that moment.

And when our thoughts come to a place of peace, that’s the moment of possibility. Other avenues of thinking and other ideas immediately open up.

What if questions invite hope, dreaming, confidence, possibility, and ultimately action.

Here’s an example from a client about how to use what if questions to relax the brain and move forward.

A client of mine wanted a promotion and was starting to have conversations around this with her various stakeholders. In our coaching call, she was describing those conversation. As she talked, I could hear the pressure she was putting on herself, her worry about the outcome, and her second-guessing what others were thinking.

We tried out some different what if questions. She really liked this one: What if I could trust in the expertise of my HR business partner?

When she fed her brain that question, she noticed that she immediately felt more relaxed. The worries lessened, and her mental to-do list around the promotion disappeared. For the moment, she could lean into trust. For the moment, she was at peace.

Now, of course, after a few moments, her promotion-focused thoughts returned. Because they do. And, after the what if question, her thoughts were noticeably different. There was less ruminating and more focus on action. After asking herself, What if I trusted the expertise of my HR business partner? my

client was clear about some next steps she could easily take to confidently move the conversations forward.

That's the power of the what if question. It provides a respite of peace, it quiets our thoughts, it connects us to a knowing and support outside of ourselves...so that we can come back into our thinking from a more empowered, clear, and confident space.

Let's bring this to you. Although I've been talking about what if questions, these are actually feeling questions. Every person is different, and every person gets to find the what if questions that relax their brain and body.

In order to find the what if questions that will help your brain relax, it helps to try out different ones to see how they immediately feel in your body and brain.

Let's try some different ones now so that you can see how they feel for you. As I share each one, I invite you to repeat it after me out loud or in your head, and see how it feels in your body.

Let's say you're working with someone and feeling like you need to micromanage them. Instead of worrying about their capability, you want to feel more trusting.

You might use this what if question: What if they could figure this out?

What if they could figure this out?

Let's say you're worried about business growth. Instead of feeling scarcity, you want to feel abundance. You might try this one:

What if new business was on its way right now? What if new business is on its way right now?

Or suppose that you have a strong inner critic, and too often see your faults. Instead of being self-critical, you want to give yourself grace.

You might try this question: What if I was doing OK? What if I was doing OK?

If you tried these questions, how did they feel? What did you notice?

When we let our brains relax, our thinking can shift, which frees us up to take different action. If I leaned into the idea that new business is on its way right now, I might worry less and do other things. I might reach out to people I hadn't spoken with in a while, or dust off an old idea and do some brainstorming.

What if questions help us show up differently to ourselves, with others, and in the world. And that creates possibility and magic.

Thank you so much for listening and being part of my community. If you would like help creating a list of what if questions that help your brain relax, please reach out. Email me at deb@debelbaum.com or go to my website debelbaum.com to schedule a consult. I look forward to it. I'm here to help you create your best self at home and at work, so that you're confident you're moving in the right direction for you.

Until next time!