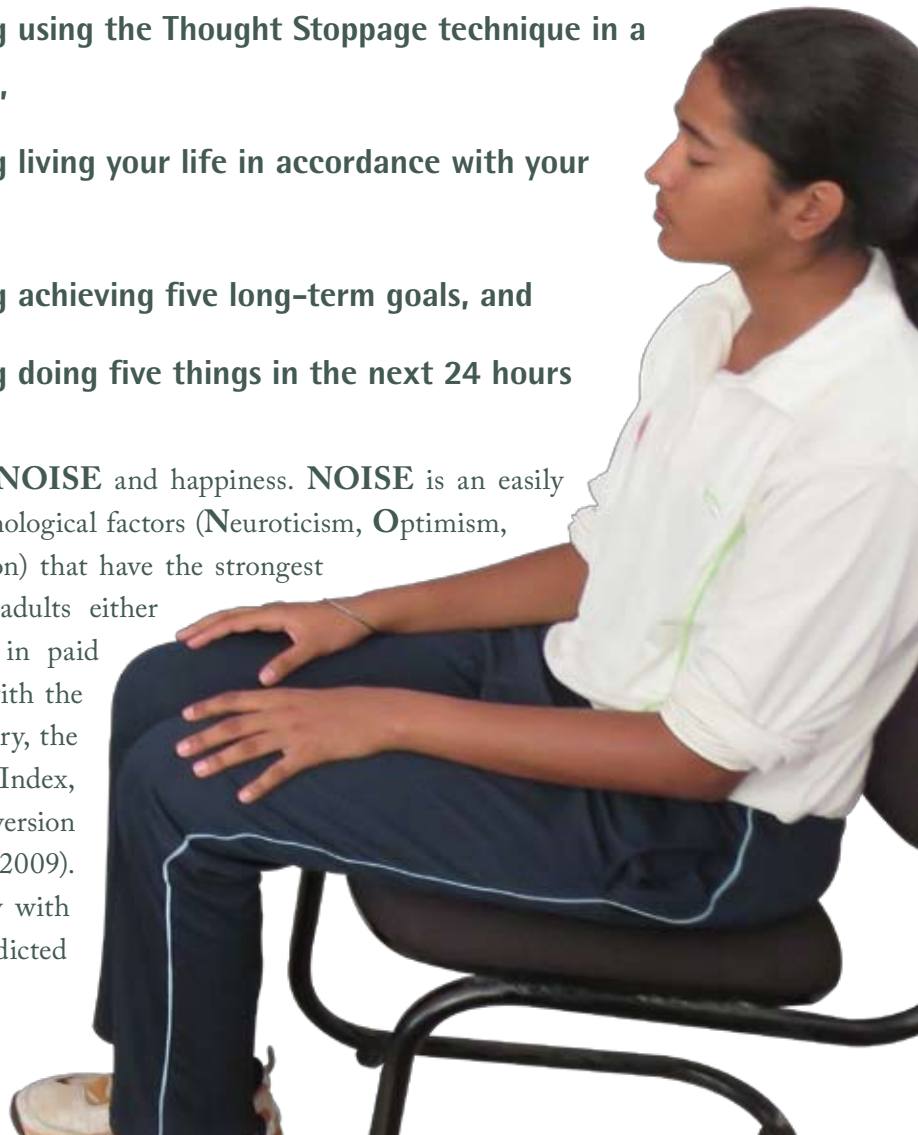


The Thriving Habit

The Happier Horizons™ Thriving Habit is an effective five-minute routine which incorporates several techniques (Affirmation, Diaphragmatic Breathing, Goal-setting, Meditation, Mental Imagery, Progressive Muscular Relaxation, Thought Stoppage) that research has shown helps individuals live a more thriving life. Although the routine involves eight steps, the Thriving Habit is completed in a continuous manner. *The eight steps (that are performed one immediately after the other) are:*

- step **1** Prepare for the Thriving Habit,
- step **2** 60 seconds of Diaphragmatic Breathing,
- step **3** 60 seconds of Whole Body Progressive Muscular Relaxation,
- step **4** 60 seconds of Meditation,
- step **5** 30 seconds of Visualising using the Thought Stoppage technique in a future difficult situation,
- step **6** 30 seconds of Visualising living your life in accordance with your most important values,
- step **7** 30 seconds of Visualising achieving five long-term goals, and
- step **8** 30 seconds of Visualising doing five things in the next 24 hours

The Thriving Habit is designed to improve your **NOISE** and happiness. **NOISE** is an easily remembered acronym that represents the five psychological factors (**N**euroticism, **O**ptimism, **I**nternal locus of control, **S**elf-esteem, **E**xtroversion) that have the strongest relationship with happiness. For instance, 231 adults either working and/or living in New York State and in paid employment, aged 19 to 68 years, were assessed with the Neuroticism scale of the NEO Five-Factor Inventory, the Life Orientation Test-Revised, the Internal Control Index, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, and the Extroversion scale of the NEO Five-Factor Inventory (McInman, 2009). All five **NOISE** variables correlated significantly with happiness. Together the five **NOISE** variables predicted 57.4% of these adults' happiness.





Aegina Island (Greece)



Pebbles Beach (Barbados)

Prior to beginning the Thriving Habit

Initially the best place to practice the Thriving Technique is a quiet place. Sitting on the edge of your bed with your feet on the floor is ideal. Some people, however, like to sit in bed or on the floor against the bed. Once you become proficient with performing the technique in these positions you can use it in more challenging situations, such as in your car while it's warming up, at work, or with family members. Sit in a comfortable position, ensuring that your back is fairly straight, your body is relaxed (especially your shoulders, head, and neck), your hands are in your lap and not on the arms of a chair (so that shoulders are not elevated), and your knees are bent so that your ankles are directly below your knees. Such a position will help you use your muscles with as little force as possible.

Step 1

PREPARE FOR THE THRIVING HABIT

Prepare for the routine by reading all relevant material that you will use in the Thriving Habit and look at your Colour Meditation picture(s). It would be useful to practice the Thriving Habit in front of a noticeboard that has a typed list of your most cherished values (and ideally their definitions) and your long-term goals, along with a hand-written list of your goals for the next 24 hours. Executives and business entrepreneurs would also be well advised to read their Mission Statements and Vision Statements. Likewise, everyone could read their own typed Personal Mission Statement and Personal Vision Statement. Until you organise a noticeboard, you could put the paper on a table in front of you. Once you have read these, then look at your meditation pictures. Ideally use either one or two pictures. Chose a picture of a place that you have been to, remember well, feel relaxed at, and like. Good pictures for Colour Meditation include pictures of the sea like those on Page 2, but you could use pictures of grass, farm land, mustard fields, or anywhere outdoors that's relaxing. The less complicated the picture, however, the better. Looking at the pictures now, before you close your eyes, will make the 60 seconds of Colour Meditation more successful.

Step 2

60 SECONDS OF DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING

The first three minutes of the Thriving Habit are designed to help you relax so that you can complete the more cognitive tasks that follow. During the first minute, you want to very slowly breathe in through your nose and let your stomach expand. Then without holding your breath, you want to breathe out through your mouth and let your stomach get smaller. Once you have been doing this for a few weeks, you will probably only take 2-4 breathes in the 60 seconds. This will decrease your muscle tension, help you relax, and thereby reduce the likelihood that you will experience any negative emotions. Diaphragmatic Breathing decreases blood pressure (Lee et al., 2003), increases peripheral skin temperature (Forbes & Pekala, 1993), decreases anxiety and blood pressure, while increasing peripheral skin temperature and oxygen saturation (Chang et al., 2009), and decreases asthma symptoms and asthma medication usage (Girodo, Ekstrand, & Metivier, 1992).

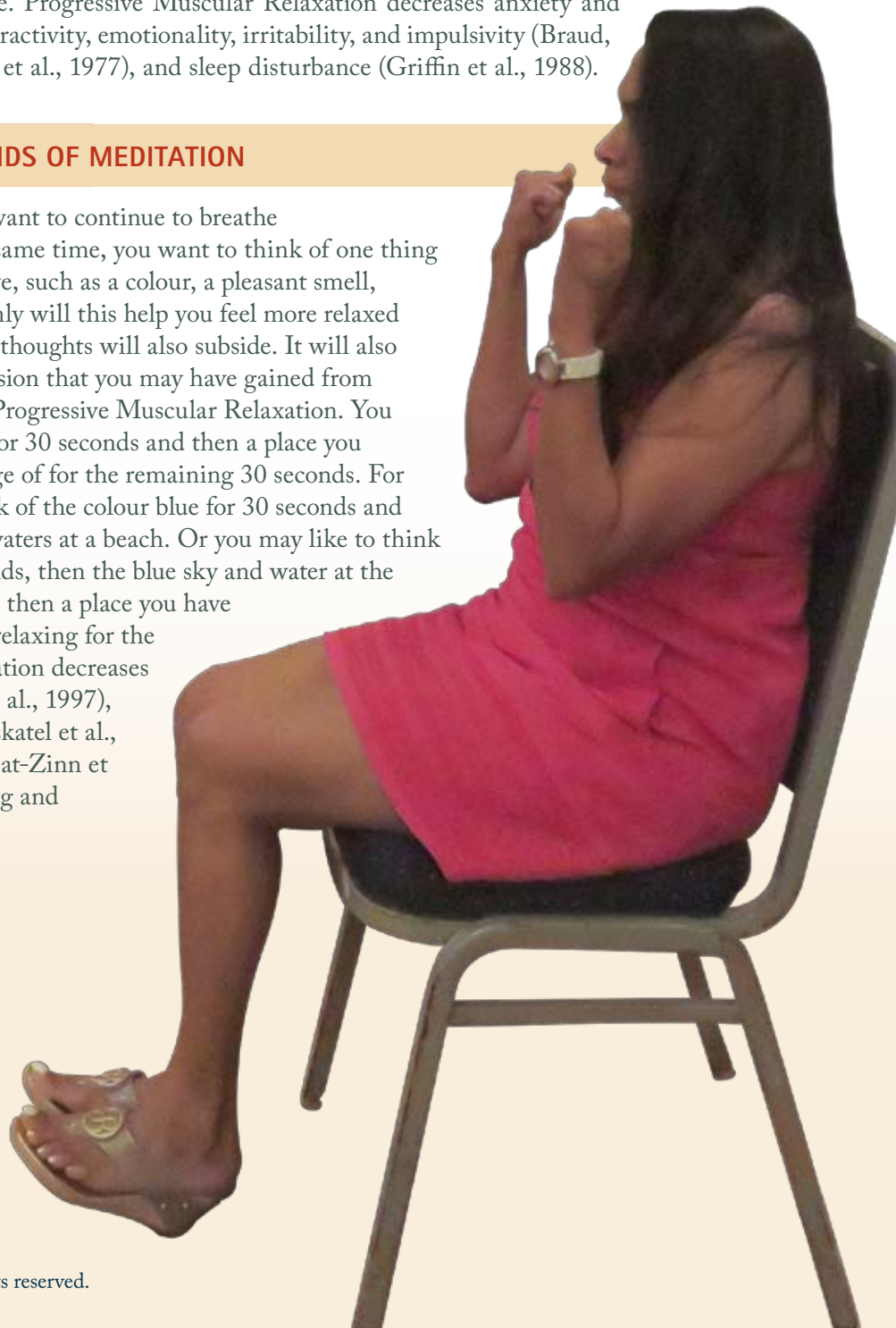


Step 3**60 SECONDS OF WHOLE BODY PROGRESSIVE MUSCULAR RELAXATION**

During the next 60 seconds, you will perform a Whole Body Progressive Muscular Relaxation routine two times. Begin breathing in very slowly. At the end of the in-breath, hold your breath for approximately three more seconds and also: 1) squeeze your knees and ankles together, 2) while keeping the heels of your feet on the ground lift your toes towards your head, 3) push your stomach towards your spine, 4) curl your fingers into a fist, 5) raise your fists to your shoulders by bending your elbows, 6) raise your shoulders towards your ears, and 7) close your eyes moderately tightly. Then breathe out slowly, and say “Release” to yourself in your mind and stop tensing. Now concentrate on the difference between the tension and the relaxation, feeling your muscles become more relaxed, soft, and warm, and continue breathing diaphragmatically. Ideally, this out-breath will take approximately 20 seconds. You may need to do one more diaphragmatic in-breathe and out-breathe. Once the 30 seconds are up, repeat this 30 second routine one more time. Progressive Muscular Relaxation decreases anxiety and nausea (Arakawa, 1997); hyperactivity, emotionality, irritability, and impulsivity (Braud, 1978); hypertension (Graham et al., 1977), and sleep disturbance (Griffin et al., 1988).

Step 4**60 SECONDS OF MEDITATION**

During this fourth step, you want to continue to breathe diaphragmatically, but at the same time, you want to think of one thing that is either neutral or positive, such as a colour, a pleasant smell, your breath, or a word. Not only will this help you feel more relaxed and refreshed, but distracting thoughts will also subside. It will also help remove any lingering tension that you may have gained from completing the Whole Body Progressive Muscular Relaxation. You may like to think of a colour for 30 seconds and then a place you like that you have a clear image of for the remaining 30 seconds. For instance, you may like to think of the colour blue for 30 seconds and then change to the image of waters at a beach. Or you may like to think of the colour blue for 20 seconds, then the blue sky and water at the beach for twenty seconds, and then a place you have been to before, like, and find relaxing for the remaining 20 seconds. Meditation decreases blood pressure (Wenneberg et al., 1997), impatience and hostility (Muskatel et al., 1984), anxiety and panic (Kabat-Zinn et al., 1992), and enhances coping and well-being (Ott et al., 2006).



Step 5 30 SECONDS OF VISUALISING USING THE THOUGHT STOPPAGE TECHNIQUE IN A FUTURE DIFFICULT SITUATION

Now for five seconds, think about a time in the future that you think will be difficult for you and imagine yourself saying something negative in that situation. Then immediately visualise yourself performing the following 2-step Thought Stoppage technique. First, visualise yourself saying in your mind (not aloud) “STOP.” Then you should visualize yourself taking a very slow, deep diaphragmatic breath, while saying to yourself an affirmation based on the NOISE concept and comprehending how your words are reflecting living with less neuroticism and more optimism, internal locus of control, self-esteem, and extroversion. If you have not created a NOISE affirmation, then say to yourself something positive that helps you feel less anxious. Research has shown affirmations are effective (Theodorakis et al., 2000) and Thought Stoppage decreases anxiety and helplessness (Ross, 1984), rumination (Parenteau and Lamontagne, 1981), and is helpful in treating obsessive compulsive disorder (Abramowitz, 1997).

Step 6 30 SECONDS OF VISUALISING LIVING YOUR LIFE IN ACCORDANCE WITH YOUR VALUES

While continuing to breathe diaphragmatically, for 5 seconds remind yourself what your most important values are. This is why it is a good idea to have them typed on a piece of paper and attached to a noticeboard that you leave in the area you regularly perform the Thriving Habit. Then for the remaining 25 seconds visualise yourself living your life in accordance with your values.

Step 7 30 SECONDS OF VISUALISING ACHIEVING FIVE LONG-TERM GOALS

While continuing to breathe diaphragmatically, for the next 30 seconds you should visualise yourself participating in and/or achieving five long-term goals. You might like to do this in 3 parts. First, remind yourself of your five most important long-term goals. Second, visualise yourself working towards achieving these five long-term goals. Third, visualise yourself achieving these five long-term goals.

Step 8 30 SECONDS OF VISUALISING DOING 5 THINGS IN THE NEXT 24 HOURS

While continuing to breathe diaphragmatically, for the next 30 seconds you should visualise yourself achieving five things by this time tomorrow. You should try to invoke from your memory all your senses (sight, sound, taste, smell, feel) in the imaging. Now you are relaxed, in a positive state of mind, and focused on making the day a thriving, happy one.



Once you know how to perform the Thriving Habit competently, try doing it with your colleagues, teammates, friends, or family



Botswana Football Association
(Gaborone, Botswana)



Accra Psychiatric Hospital
(Accra, Ghana)



Rajasthan Cricket Association
(Jaipur, India)



York Street Partners
(Colombo, Sri Lanka)

THRIVING HABIT DIARY

To help you make the Thriving Habit a genuine habit, record for 2-3 weeks in a Thriving Habit Diary the time you performed the technique, along with what the experience was like. For instance, write down how you felt, how motivated you were, and whether you were thinking positively or negatively before, during, and after the routine. After 14-21 days, write a summary of what the overall experience was like. Below is the Thriving Habit Diary of one of my 20-year old male clients:

DAY 1 *(Wednesday April 1, 11:30pm)*

I felt much more relaxed, calm and would like to interact with others because I was feeling happy (social). I started to think and realise that life is not that difficult and you can feel that whenever you are relaxed. I can achieve whatever I want to achieve, as long as I think positively.

DAY 2 *(Thursday April 2, 10:30am)*

I felt the diaphragmatic breathing was affecting my health positively due to the slow and deep breathing. I didn't perform it perfectly because I was afraid that someone might see me and that would be embarrassing. Actually, I did not feel good, as much as when I performed it yesterday.

DAY 3 *(Friday April 3, 2:00pm)*

This time before I started doing the technique, I wrote down some keywords to prepare for the Thriving Habit. Also this time the tension released and I planned to finish my chores early this weekend. I wanted to show up and hangout with some new friends.

DAY 4 *(Saturday April 4, 12:30pm)*

The Thriving Habit was awesome this time; it just went with the flow. I felt relaxed, calm, valued, confident, and pleased. During the meditation I really saw the color, the beach and the place I visualised in my mind's eye. I started to think positively about my goals for the next 24 hours.

DAY 5 *(Sunday April 5, 3:00pm)*

During the Thriving Habit I felt sleepy and a high level of relaxation. My tension released and I'm happy that I learnt this technique. I started to think positively that everything is possible; nothing is impossible. If I work hard and have a good plan, I will be whatever I want to be (scientist). Feeling relaxed is important to organise my plan and hence I can achieve my goals.

DAY 6 *(Monday April 6, 11:25am)*

I felt satisfied with all I have done with my life. I noticed that I have a whole lot of great memories in the last few years. I saw myself proud in a programme on TV due to an invention I made as a scientist. As a result, I felt relaxed, confident, and satisfied with who I am.

DAY 7 *(Tuesday April 7, 4:30pm)*

I became less tense after doing the Thriving Habit. I saw myself doing all next weeks' chores within this weekend; so I became happier. During the meditation I saw my ex-girlfriend and I in front of a beach overseas enjoying our time. So my muscles got softer and I released the tension inside.

THRIVING HABIT DIARY

DAY 8 *(Wednesday April 8, 7:30pm)*

Today I was exhausted. After I did the technique I felt less tense, thought more positively, my muscles became softer, I felt sleepy, and more relaxed. My future is going to be shining, as long as I am looking forward to achieving it. I think my dreams will be better, because I am relaxed now.

DAY 9 *(Thursday April 9, 9:50am)*

During the technique I got my plan ready for today, tomorrow and the future. I felt satisfied about what I have done throughout my life. I am proud of myself, because I am going to be a scientist in the future. After the technique, I decided to help my relatives clean their home. The diaphragmatic breathing helped me become substantially calmer.

DAY 10 *(Friday April 10, 2:45pm)*

During the Thriving Habit I imagined that I was overseas with my girlfriend. So I released my tension and set some great new goals. The technique made me happier and more confident, as all of these things encouraged me to get out and introduce myself to new people.

DAY 11 *(Saturday April 11, 11:20am)*

I felt more relaxed when doing the technique. I was so anxious and unsatisfied today, but with this technique I became more confident, satisfied with who I am, and worthy. I was so calm. I felt my muscles get softer, as I observed my future shining. I'm confident that my future will be great; I will be a scientist in my specialty.

DAY 12 *(Sunday April 12, 6:00pm)*

Before I did the Thriving Habit I was upset because my friend had shouted at me in a public place and I felt embarrassed. During the technique I relaxed and said to myself, "I will not get upset about this, because I have a good personality, a great family, and more things to make me feel happy." After the technique I felt satisfied and pleased more than any time before.

DAY 13 *(Monday April 13, 6:15pm)*

Today I was thinking negative before I did the Thriving Habit. When I was doing the diaphragmatic breathing I started to feel calmer and released all thoughts. Meditation made me think positively and put me at ease. As a consequence of doing the technique, I decided that I wanted to hang out with my friends and meet new people. I now feel happy and pleased with who I am.

DAY 14 *(Tuesday April 14, 7:30am)*

I felt more comfortable and less tense after doing the technique. Now I have a good plan to start off my day and am aware of what I am going to be in the future. I am happy, relaxed, and ready to interact with other people positively. I feel confident to go out and talk to others. I started to realise that life is perfect if I have a good plan and know what I am going to do in my priceless future.

SUMMARY OF 14 DAYS

It helped me control my anger and become relaxed within five minutes. If you do this technique regularly, your life will become worthier, happier, and more attractive. I learnt how to make life joyful, as it is a choice. Even though in the first few days I thought this technique was useless and would never help me, I soon realised that it is one of the most important things that everyone should know. I am very happy that I learnt this technique, because my life has become more organised. I am optimistic about my future and will work harder to achieve my goals.

WHAT PROFESSIONALS THINK OF THE THRIVING HABIT



“I like your Thriving Habit. It’s brilliant. It’s easy and short and it’s fun. It’s easy enough to teach. I like the connection between the different NOISE components. I’ve always been interested in each of them and used them in treatment plans, but I never connected them – put all of them together. I never would have thought of putting them together, even though these are things we tell the clients to improve.”

Kwayne Farrell

Counsellor, Verdun House
Barbados, Caribbean

“The Thriving Habit is very helpful (and even more so when it’s done as often as recommended!). I’ve known about the various components of the Thriving Habit, but your grouping is the most effective one that I know of: short, well-organized, and comprehensive. It is also easy to learn and conduct in front of (and with) a group and there are so many group situations that would do well to begin with the Thriving Habit.”

Glenda Garrick

Rehabilitation Counselor, Kingsboro Psychiatric Center
Brooklyn, New York, United States



“When I taught people the Thriving Habit and asked them to open their eyes they were so relaxed that they didn’t want to stop. It was quite easy to teach, as I was so relaxed myself. I can now teach the staff ward by ward. Midwives see a lot of tense patients, but that can change. We can teach the patients these techniques.”

Jane Nulenpaalah

Acting Matron, Narh Bitra Hospital
Tema, Ghana, West Africa

“The first time you got me to run your Thriving Habit in front of the group I was nervous. Gradually I gained the confidence to do it again until there was nothing to it. It was pretty okay. I could teach staff members in the orderly department and they need it. It is very relaxing and releases the tension from your body.”

Richard Forde

Orderly, Queen Elizabeth Hospital
Barbados, Caribbean



“The Thriving Habit was easy to learn and I found it easy to lead my staff with. It is something that elevates the mood and brings them out of the rat-race of their lives, and gives them a sense of direction towards happiness. Your workshops are very relevant and apt for business as not everyone is able to perform or be as productive as they should be.”

Jabir Shah Hameed

CEO, Lantern Software and Security Systems Company Ltd
Al Khobar, Saudi Arabia

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