

LEADING MEETINGS THAT REDUCE STRESS

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- Start the meeting on time, whether everyone is present or not. (Creates “safe space” through keeping one’s word and honoring those who respected it.)
- Begin with a full minute of silence, allowing everyone’s brain to clear space, settle and “get into the room.” (Brains work best in a state of relaxed alertness.)
- Encourage everyone to take 3 deep breaths, eyes closed, to bring a fresh supply of oxygen into the brain.
- Have water available in the room for drinking.
- Ask each person to “check in” with what they are grateful for, what they appreciate, or what is going especially well. (“When you intentionally shift to a positive emotion such as appreciation, care or compassion, your heart rhythms immediately change, blood pressure drops, stress hormones plummet, the immune system pumps up, anti-aging hormones increase, and you gain clarity, calmness, and control. The effects are both immediate and long-lasting.” www.HeartMath.com)
- Ask each person to write on an index card how he or she wants to be treated during this meeting. Allow silence for writing. Then say, “Make a commitment that this is how you will treat others during this meeting. Refer to it if you feel anxiety.”
- Insist that people pause between speakers. This avoids the “jump into the fray” mentality, allows the brain time to process information, and gives people opportunity to choose a positive emotional state.
- Ask people not to speak if someone else has already expressed their idea, question, or thought in different words.
- Ask people to speak only if they believe in their hearts that their words will increase understanding. Avoid chatter. Honor silence as time to reflect.

- Stop the meeting on time. (Demonstrates respect for people's schedules and other commitments.)