

# Break through

by Cathy C. Bonczek

I woke up this morning after a few days away, assessed the level of my jet lag and glanced at the calendar to see what was scheduled for me.

My heart sank – my calendar today is a sea of red blocks, red indicating a meeting or coaching session. Now, seeing my clients is a gratifying and often, energizing experience, but seeing 7 or 8 clients in a row without a breath in between is an endurance test.

The fault is my own – in an effort to be available, I broke my own rule of allowing at least 15 minutes between meetings to reflect and refresh.

I discuss this with my clients all the time, because many of you reading this will have similar back to back days planned.

Here's what we are forgetting: we're not improving our performance by cramming as much as possible in – we are probably diminishing it.

Remember this when you are presenting to a group or a large audience. How often do we see speakers go long, eat into anticipated break times, and disrupt agendas? It's counterintuitive: the speaker wants to convince with all the details, but the audience is now inattentive, frustrated and perhaps even a little resentful.

**Cornell Health says it well: “Research shows that taking purposeful breaks (anywhere from 5–60 minutes) from studying to refresh your brain and body increases your energy, productivity, and ability to focus.”**

Think of it as an extension of the power of the pause. Taking a break in big and small ways increases participation, understanding and comfort – that's a better recipe for rapport and repeat engagement!

This note is shorter than my usual ones. (Yes, I am writing it between meetings!)

More to point, I encourage you to use the time saved in reading a shorter article – to take a break!

