



Joy Breaks

Dr. Ann McGee-Cooper was a visionary business consultant, creativity expert, author, and lecturer. I know her best as the co-author of two wonderful books from the 1990s: *You Don't Have to Go Home from Work Exhausted!* (©1990, 1992) and *Time Management for Unmanageable People* (©1993, 1994). Her "Joy Break" recommendations will reduce stress and increase resilience and creativity. Here's how to identify Joy Breaks that are your very own:

Take a sheet of 8" x 11" or A4 plain paper; colored paper is fun, but white works just as well. Hold the paper landscape style and fold it in half and then half again. When you unfold it, you will have four columns. Put headings at the top of your columns: 2-5 minutes, 5-30 minutes, 30 minutes-½ day, more than ½ day.

Now think of things that are fun or relaxing for you. Write each one in the appropriate column. For example, you could listen to a favorite song in 5 minutes or less, a walk around the block might take 5-30 minutes, a massage likely requires more than 30 minutes, and a trip to Barcelona is definitely more than ½ day. Give yourself a little time to come up with ideas, and be sure to bring your inner child into your brainstorming. (McGee-Cooper points out* that 10-year olds can usually come up with more ideas for 5 and 30 minute activities than adults.)

Tip: Remember that you can "visit" Barcelona online for a few minutes any time you like.

In *Time Management for Unmanageable People* (p. 170) McGee-Cooper recommends paying attention to when your productivity begins to drop. That's when to pull out your list of quick joy breaks and jump right in: You realize you've been reading the same page of a report over and over; get up and dance or stretch for 3 minutes or drink a glass of cold water. Now go back to your report; either you'll breeze right through it or you'll realize you don't need to read it and can set it aside for something more engaging.

**You Don't Have to Go Home from Work Exhausted!* p. 53