

learning curve



## Keep in Mind

A Buddhist monk helps you increase your workplace well-being in the New Year.

In 1989 Pamela Weiss quit her office job to spend a summer at a Buddhist monastery outside Carmel, California. That summer turned into two years and, eventually, a new title: Zen Buddhist monk. Now Weiss offers mindfulness workshops to corporations like Genentech and Twitter through her company, Appropriate Response. Weiss, 49, believes that “bringing your whole self to work—mind, heart, and body—helps you find the best response to a situation.” (Better than, say, firing off an angry e-mail after a heated meeting or stressing out before a big deadline.) Here, she shares four ways to infuse your cubicle with calm.

—CHRISTA MARTIN

### Find your footing:

Next time you're feeling overwhelmed, press your feet against the floor. “By establishing a strong physical foundation, you bring a sense of balance to the body,” says Weiss.

### Become a beginner:

If you find yourself in an argument, don't argue—instead, start asking questions. “By being inquisitive, you uncover new ways of seeing,” explains Weiss. “That helps you get past roadblocks.”

### Name your mood:

Work can leave you frazzled—but there's a way to put your feelings in perspective. Every hour write down one word summarizing your state of mind. “At the end of the day, review your list,” suggests Weiss. “You'll see that even the worst feelings don't last.”

### Let it go:

Before leaving the office, imagine a box. Place the day's events inside, then visualize it floating away. Says Weiss, “Releasing these thoughts lets you engage wholeheartedly at home.”



McNeely took this photo of Camden, 5, and Olivia, 7, last year.

genius idea

# Worth a Thousand Words

A photographer captures the joyful spirit of kids with special needs.

FOR YEARS Marsha McNeely, a professional photographer who specializes in kids and families, struggled to capture her son's true personality in pictures. “When I took out my camera, Tynan—who is autistic—“squinted and became rigid,” she says. “But I knew underneath there was a kid who loved to laugh.”

With the advice of her son's therapists, McNeely, 39, experimented with ways to make Tynan, now 7, feel comfortable—like offering objects for him to hold or joking from behind the lens. “I was snapping moments where he was simply enjoying himself,” she says. When it dawned on her that other parents might be struggling with the same issue, she began offering free photo sessions through online autism support groups, and soon received a flood of inquiries. One mother of a 9-year-old told McNeely that the last good photo of her son had been taken when he was 6 months old.

McNeely named the project SpecialT Photography, in honor of her son. For these sessions, she chooses secluded outdoor settings and starts by taking a child's hand and walking around “until they're comfortable,” she says. “Sometimes it's half the session.” When a 9-year-old autistic girl wouldn't sit

still, McNeely lay down and began rubbing a lush patch of grass, encouraging the girl to join her. The child did. “She just lit up,” says McNeely, who often employs such calming sensory techniques, inviting kids to feel the texture of tree bark or using colorful pinwheels to create a visual focus. When a 6-year-old with ADHD became frustrated, McNeely showed her how to locate her mom in the viewfinder, and the girl cracked up. That night, when McNeely downloaded the images, she saw a smiling child in a field of yellow flowers. “These kids are walking a really hard road,” she says. “But in these photos, they're just peaceful, beautiful children.”

—JESSICA STOCKTON CLANCY



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