



## “How can I fight attendee fatigue at my next event?”

Exercise expert Kim Bercovitz believes fitness breaks are the best solution.

**“SITTING SYNDROME” IS A COMMON PROBLEM** experienced by attendees who sit for a long time at meetings and conferences—muscles stiffen, posture becomes compromised and energy levels drop as the day wears on. The more tightly scheduled the learning events, the more tired attendees become, and these factors affect a person’s ability to focus and stay alert. So, what you need at your next event is an energy booster—something that re-charges the body and mind, as well as enhances concentration.

Traditionally, to most meeting professionals the term “energy booster” has translated into coffee breaks. But while coffee and snacks may be energizing for a short while, people end up feeling more fatigued once the caffeine and sugar wear off—and this type of induced fatigue is counterproductive to learning.

Research shows that exercise increases blood flow, pumping oxygen to the brain and keeping attendees awake and alert for extended periods of time.

Regardless of the type or size of meeting or event, fitness breaks are a better alternative to coffee and sweets, and the instruction can be delivered in-person (by an instructor) or by video. The benefit of a live fitness break, obviously, is that the instructor can be more engaging, particularly with small audiences. The instructor can circulate in the room, motivating participants and exercising along with them, giving the break a more personal touch.

There are drawbacks to live instructors though. Instructors are not typically available on a “stand by” basis, and there are added hassles and expenses related to hir-

ing multiple instructors for conferences that need simultaneous breaks in multiple tracks—and with large audiences, it is sometimes difficult to see the instructor.

An alternative option is video-delivered fitness breaks that offer more flexibility and visibility than a live person, and can be used as on-the-spot time fillers to fill unplanned program gaps. Videos can be played simultaneously in multiple rooms and translated into multiple languages, and can provide tremendous educational benefit.

A lot of people I speak with are worried about their attendees sweating through their business clothes. Don’t worry. Remember, research tells us all that is needed to boost brain power is to get blood flowing to the muscles and oxygen flowing to the brain, so the exercises I am suggesting are low-impact and sweat-free.

I also hear “I am already planning a yoga class every morning for my attendees.” That’s a great option for your attendees who are early risers, but early-morning fitness classes are typically not well attended, and the beneficial affects have worn off by the day’s first coffee break. By incorporating fitness breaks throughout the day, you are helping to combat “sitting and learning fatigue” and you’re including your entire audience.

We are in the business of creating memorable events, so if you’re wanting to keep your attendees actively engaged throughout the conference, try getting them out of their seats periodically to recharge their bodies and minds. ■



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