

# **A Workout For the Mind**

**with Jennifer James, Ph.D.**



**AN ENTERPRISE MEDIA PRESENTATION**

# A Workout for the Mind

with Jennifer James, Ph.D.

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## Introduction

Welcome to the Action Guide to *A Workout for the Mind*. This Action Guide is designed to supplement the video and provide you with more information on the key concepts presented in the program.

Our world has experienced more change in the last 100 years than in any other time in history. One advance leads to another, forming the foundation for even more change. Change is pervasive. Technology has dramatically changed our lives. Laptop computers, fiber optics, the World Wide Web, automatic teller machines, fax machines, cellular phones—all have given us new ways of producing and delivering products and linking us to people of different nations.

Links between people of different nations have multiplied and extended beyond mere government communications. The world is interconnected as it never has been before. As global links increase and our lives become intertwined with the lives of people in what used to be “distant” areas of the world, we find that we need new ways to deal, cope and move beyond survival to creating a new world spirit and order. Dr. James reminds us to work toward acquiring the three sources of happiness: self-assurance, orientation away from self, and openness to new ideas.

For many, the rules seem to have changed permanently in this new economy. Why? A great deal of the problem is that our mind set is still rooted in the past. Jennifer James, author and specialist in change will provide you with five tools for surviving and thriving in this new economy. At the core of her presentation, we will see that if we think in new ways, we’ll be able to build new mind skills.

This program is designed to:

- Enhance your understanding of the changes that are occurring today and affecting us all.
- Present skills that you can use to effectively deal with these changes.
- Provide an interactive experience where you and others can actively develop methods for coping with the new economy.

*There are five skills outlined in this program, representing a distillation of the eight skills presented in Jennifer James' book. The five skills represented here integrate all of the eight skills in a more cogent format.*

# Program Outline

INTRODUCTION: Jennifer James frames the need to develop new ways of thinking. We are living in an era of unprecedented change, much of it driven by new technology. The new technology can be frightening, but it can also be tremendously personal. This program will give you tools for better coping with these perpetually changing times.

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## SKILL #1 - Seeing With New Eyes

In times of change it is vital to maintain our perspective. Perspective provides us with the ability to see what is actually going on. Unfortunately, we often add in our own social, cultural and situational filters to cloud our perspective. We must be aware of how issues of age, gender, class, information and self righteousness influence the way in which we view society and work. In this segment, Jennifer discusses skills for building perspective, so we can effectively assess what is occurring in our personal and professional lives.

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## Skill #2 - Recognizing the Future

Patterns...or trends...are the mental maps to the future. Once you can see the patterns, you can get a grasp on what will happen. Here are some trends that are happening now.

- A) Multitasking
- B) Miniaturization
- C) Customization
- D) Increasing Complexity

These trends don't just manifest themselves in high technology or medicine...you can also find them in all the new car models now on the market....

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### Skill #3: Harnessing the Power of Myths and Symbols

Myths and symbols tell us a lot about ourselves, our culture and our society. If you take a look at these different myths and symbols, you'll get a better idea of how they impact us. If we observe these myths, symbols and cultural trends, we'll be able to better understand the future.

We often get trapped by nostalgic visions of the past. Our vision of the past is often idealized and illusory. It is vital to build skills that help you break free of these traps. In this segment, we'll see how lodge cultures and corporate cultures can trap us. Releasing this vision of the past can often be painful, but it allows us to be more open to change.

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## Skill #4 - Mastering New Forms of Intelligence

There are tools that will help you interact with others and increase your effectiveness as a team, with your colleagues and with your students. In this section, Jennifer discusses the qualities of mind that influence every one of us with a particular emphasis on the issues of .

Information Retrieval and Synthesis

Problem Solving

Strategic Thinking

Communication

Teamwork/Relationships

Creativity/Innovation

Seeking Alternatives

Diversity

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## Skill #5 - Doing More with Less - Harnessing Energy

If you're like most of us, it seems that you're ambivalent and confused about this new era of change. How do you keep up? Here are a few keys:

1) Observe Energy - The give and take of positive energy is the key to peak performance. Look at who in your meetings and groups contributes energy; also observe who drains energy.

2) Technology as Friend - Think of how much energy that was expended when people did errands on horseback at the turn of the century, or laundered their clothes on a washboard. Technology has dramatically affected our lives for the better at home, work and in between.

3) Putting the Customer to Work - putting the customer to work, putting the student to work. Self serve, ATMs, and computers have put the customer to work, empowered the customer and saved energy.

4) Lifetime Education - Today, companies and individuals MUST continue to learn. That's why people are now speaking of the learning organization. If you keep learning, you won't become obsolete.

5) Sense of Humor - It is vital to have a sense of humor. Humor creates energy.

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## Conclusion

These skills will help you understand and manage our changing world. They will also help you envision the future. What is the future? We've been talking about pattern, perspective, energy and diversity – all of this adds up to a higher civilization. One of the characteristics of a civilization is improved communication - it is a society that puts people in touch with each other. Much of our increasing technological advancement is driven by improved communication. All of this improved communication requires changes in our myths and belief systems. We are creating new alliances, alternative ways to resolve conflict and more opportunities and ways to view the future.

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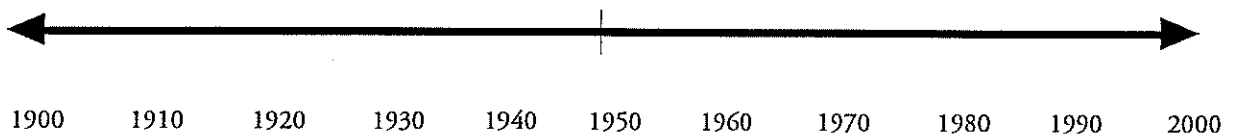
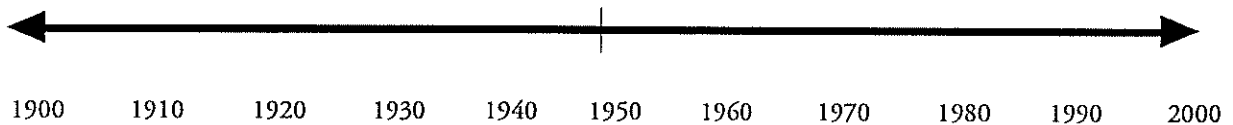
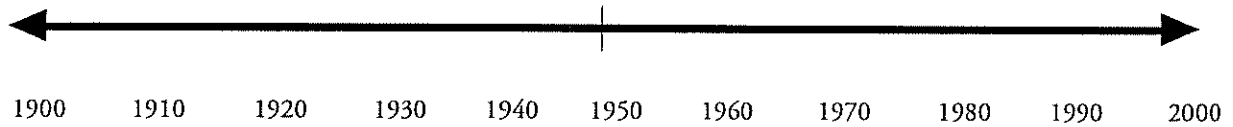
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# Timelines

In the program, Jennifer James will be walking you through several exercises using a timeline from 1900 to 2000. We have provided these blank timelines for your use during this presentation or during the post video discussion and exercises..



## Trainer's Notes

This is your guide for using the video *A Workout for the Mind*. This workbook and these trainer's notes should provide you with additional ideas for using the video and creating an educational experience around the message of managing change presented in *A Workout for the Mind*. This workbook will provide you with a recap of the key learning points, additional information on the key concepts as well as questions for discussion.

### Audiences

The accessibility and importance of the message in *A Workout for the Mind* makes this program useful for many different organizational settings and situations.

Audiences who will find the video particularly helpful include:

**Senior Management:** Jennifer James provides a compelling and clear framework for understanding the changes that most organizations are facing. Her presentation can provide a valuable tool for long term organizational strategic planning.

**Mid-Level Managers and Front Line Supervisors:** The organizational changes that mid-level and front line supervisors are facing can cause a great deal of anxiety and uncertainty. Jennifer James' presentation can help managers at all levels better understand these changes. The tools that she presents can help managers interact with their peers and manage the people in their departments with clear vision.

**Organization-Wide Training:** Change can be frightening and intimidating. Jennifer James provides a system for understanding change and for effectively coping with these changes. Her puzzle metaphor effectively frames discussion and

her conclusion gives a more optimistic view of the future.

**Public Sector Managers and Employees:** There is no doubt that the government has been undergoing significant changes in the past few years. Jennifer James' presentation will give public sector managers and employees tools for working together more productively and for better management of the changes that are on the horizon.



## How to use *A Workout for The Mind*

This video and print package includes a number of elements that can help you meet your training goals. It can serve as a valuable discussion and informational tool or be combined with a larger program on change management.

The following is a list of action steps you can take in planning and conducting a course using *A Workout for the Mind*. You may want to modify these items depending on your time constraints, intended audiences and training goals.

### Advance Preparations

View the program and review this action guide in advance of the training session at least once. Jennifer James presents a great deal of information in the video. It is important to be fully familiar with the material so you can effectively conduct discussions following the viewing.

Arrange to have a VHS videocassette player and a monitor available for this training session. If you have more than 20 people attending, be sure to order at least a 25-inch monitor. Test your equipment in advance of screening and adjust color, sound, etc.

- Obtain one guide for each participant.
- Encourage participation. The change issues presented here can trigger strong feelings and concerns as well as good ideas.
- Bring writing materials for each participant.
- Provide for action steps following the training exercise. Give people an assignment or allow them to create their own assignment following the program.

## Sample Training Session

Pre-Screening Preparation and Discussion: Welcome people to the training session and give them an overview of the program. Discuss your organizations efforts in relation to the changes in your workplace. Use the pre-screening discussion questions in these trainers notes for further pre-screening discussion and exercises.

Screening: Show *A Workout for the Mind*. You can watch the program in its entirety or you may want to start the program and have a discussion following each of the five segments. As this program is long in format, we have inserted a brief break so viewers can stretch during the screening. This can create an opportunity for you to break for discussion.

Post Screening Discussion: Use the timeline exercise and the *Good, Bad, Strange* exercise to formulate a discussion centered around your organization's goals and changes.

Exercises: We have proposed two possible exercise formats for furthering the goals of *A Workout for the Mind*. We recommend that you try to use the *Good, Bad, Strange* exercise and the *Timeline* exercise using issues relevant to your department or industry as a way to help focus Jennifer James's workouts on your own organization.

## Counter Reference

In order to facilitate the classroom process, you may want to set the counter on your VCR to move it to specific sections of the video. Most video machines have slight variations in their counter references. We have provided a time reference to facilitate your location and identification of specific segments from the film.

To use this process, you should first make sure your tape is fully rewound and the VCR counter is set to 000. At normal playing speed, or fast forward, run the tape and note the counter reading that corresponds to the beginning of each segment. We suggest that you use the Enterprise Media logo as the starting point.

Time Reading	Your counter	Section
000	000	Enterprise Media Logo
_____	_____	Program begins with an introduction from Jennifer James
_____	_____	Skill #1 - Seeing with New Eyes
_____	_____	Skill #2 - Recognizing the Future.
_____	_____	Skill #3 - Harnessing the Power of Myths and Symbols
_____	_____	BREAK
_____	_____	Skill #4 - Mastering New Forms of Intelligence
_____	_____	Skill #5 - Doing More with Less - Harnessing Energy
_____	_____	Conclusion

## Advanced Viewing Discussion Questions

The following three questions can form the foundation for discussion on the trends that are affecting your organization. Use these questions as a discussion opener in advance of the program.

1) One of Jennifer James' beliefs is that technology will help us cope with the future. Do you currently use new technology? What kinds of technology do you think will help you cope with the changes that are happening?

2) Tomorrow's realities will create new pressures at work. We have listed some implications for the workplace below. Can you add your own.

### Present Realities

Long-term employment

Paid for service

Homogeneous

Anonymous

Climbing the corporate ladder

Fixed work schedule

Defined workplace

Secure

Formal, impersonal relationships

Separation of work and home

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### Coming Realities

Temporary employment

Paid for contribution

Diverse

Visible

Opportunity hopping

Variable work schedule

Variable workplace

Risky

Informal, personal relationships

Integration of work and home

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3) This era requires us to use our minds in new ways and overcome the discomforts of the past. Another way of looking at this is to compare the new professionals versus the dinosaurs.

Professionals

Take personal responsibility

Create security

Confident, accept risks

Develop new skills

Comfortable with diversity

Productive

Communicate, negotiate

Create new markets

Motivate self

Patient with transition

Comfortable with chaos

Take the initiative

Create new ambitions

Dinosaurs

Wait for the system

Demand security

Afraid

Wait for requirement

Angry at diversity

Too much to do

Silent sabotage

Competition unfair

Worry about the turf

Nostalgic for past

Require order, predictability

Worry about rules

Resist any change

## Exercise #1: Good, Bad, Strange

In the program, Jennifer James discusses going through a good, bad, strange exercise. This exercise is designed to help you gain perspective on a specific topic that is confronting you or your organization. In this exercise, you choose a topic or trend and consider what is good about it; what is bad about it; and (most importantly) what is strange about it? For example, Jennifer James provided this insight into *Good, Bad, Strange* in response to a question from the audience.

- Q. What is good/bad/strange about emotional support networks via the internet?
- A. **Good** - anonymous, diverse, private, easily available, affordable, free of physical stereotyping, highly specific.  
**Bad** - anonymous, potentially disturbed participants without a counselor to intervene or divert, cannot rely on intuitive skills based on expression etc., minimum responsibility or accountability.  
**Strange** - using a computer contact, a stranger at first, for emotional support, intimacy through technology, no human visuals, no parameters, no beginning or end, fluctuating membership.

This exercise is an excellent tool for analyzing the trends and issues that are facing your organization. Use this same process as an exercise for your group.

Step 1: Pick an issue or series of issues that are currently facing your department or organization.

Step 2: Break up into groups of five to ten people. Have each group choose a group leader.

Step 3: Using a flip chart that is broken into three columns, have each group list the elements that are good, bad and strange relating to the issue(s) you have chosen.

Step 4: Rejoin the larger group and have each group leader present the results of your discussion.

Step 5: Discuss your answers in a larger group. What do your results say about the trends/issues you have chosen? What does it say about the future?

## Exercise #2. Building Perspective

**Purpose:** When the world speeds up or you feel personally threatened, you can easily lose perspective. Jennifer James discusses the importance of building perspective as a tool for building your mind. With perspective, we can be alert to distortion and can change the shape of our memories and minds. Test your ability to gain perspective on your work and to know where your talents and interests apply.

**Overview:** You hear about merger, downsizing, layoffs, cutbacks, or restructuring. Ask yourself what would you do if faced with one of these situations.

I. Break up into small groups and discuss the following:

1. List what can you do now to help you cope with the future (e.g. other talents, variations on your current job, consulting, teaching, etc.)
2. List what new career could you take on. Would you need to obtain additional training or education?

II. Return to the larger group and discuss these options. Consider the following in our group discussion.

- Rank each of your options on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being the least practical, and 10 being the most practical).
- Discuss what belief systems from your past (stories, myths and symbols) would get in the way of actually moving forward?



- Examine the technology and training that you will need to complete the above options.
- Do you recognize any trends in the skills you will need for the future?

Rule – Do not consider lottery, inheritance, spouse support, savings. Imagine you are on you own.

## Exercise #3: Timelines for the Future

In her program, Jennifer James uses a 100 year timeline to observe what's coming and what's going in the future. The following exercise will provide you with a series of timelines for your group discussion.

Step 1: Choose a topic or issue or trend that is facing your organization.

Step 2: Break up into groups of five to ten people. Have each group choose a group leader.

Step 3: Using the timeline charts provided, try and “map” the progression of the issue you have chosen. Have your group discuss what the trend implies for the future of this issue or topic. What will happen in the next 10 years if the trend continues?

Step 4: Rejoin the larger group and have each team leader present the results of your discussion.

Step 5: Discuss your answers in a larger group. What do your results say about the trends/topics you have chosen? What does it say about the future?

## Post Conference Group Activity

Have the participants complete the attached survey - either in small groups or in larger groups. These questions can be the basis for further group discussion.

The future will require a higher and more socialized process of reasoning and more sophisticated reactions. We once believed that reason and logical analysis could solve all problems. A rational mind was all that we needed. The old blueprint for intelligence may have served us reasonably well at one time. But not now, and not in the future. We need a new vision of intelligence, one that integrates the right brain of images and creativity with the left brain of words and calculations in the context of the social environment.<sup>1</sup>

1) When you look around at work, list three factors that limit your organization's intelligence.

1 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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<sup>1</sup> This section is excerpted with permission from Jennifer James's book, *Thinking in the Future Tense, Leadership Skills for a New Age*. 1996, Simon & Schuster

2) What is the maximum number of things you can do at once with the technology in your office (this question relates to the trend towards multitasking).

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3) Imagine your business in ten years. List the things that will be present and those that will not be present. For example (people working out of a home office, computers, etc.)

A) Things that will be present:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

B) Things that will not be present:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

4) Many different things can expand our intelligence, for example a trip abroad. What do you think has increased your intelligence in the last ten years? List, in order of importance, the 10 things that have increased or expanded your intelligence.

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. \_\_\_\_\_  
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4. \_\_\_\_\_  
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7. \_\_\_\_\_  
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8. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Resources for Further Reading and Research

Beck, Nuala. *Shifting Gears: Thriving in the New Economy*, Harper Perennial, Toronto, 1993.

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## About Jennifer James, Ph.D.

Jennifer James, Ph.D. is one of the top organizational speakers in the corporate and educational communities. Her lectures are designed to help people understand and manage the rapidly changing workplace. She is an urban cultural anthropologist and was an academic researcher and lecturer for twenty years. For the last twelve years of her academic career, she was a professor at the University of Washington Medical School. She now lectures throughout the world to corporations and organizations interested in the process of change and new thinking skills.

Dr. James is the author of seven books. Her latest book, *Thinking in the Future Tense: Leadership Skills for a New Age* was recently published by Simon and Schuster. James writes a popular syndicated column for the Seattle Sunday Times.