



Managing Your Energy

by MARIE WALL

If you often think you need more hours in the day, a new approach may be needed. Learn to equip yourself to be more balanced and productive at work, and more relaxed at home. In *The Power of Full Engagement*, Tony Schwartz and Jim Loehrer have co-opted methods used with athletes to enhance performance for people from all walks of life. The power of full engagement focuses on building and renewing one's energy to enhance performance and have meaning in your life. According to the authors, energy is a capacity to work; high-positive energy is productive and efficient, allowing you to complete projects in a timely manner and providing you with more time to attend to the other meaningful life tasks. The four elements of personal energy are body, emotions, mind and spirit. Having healthy behaviours that enhance each of these aspects provide that high-positive energy. Creating rituals that make the behaviours integral to your day and your life will bring you into "the zone" you want.

Living in "The Zone"

Take a moment to consider personal energy on two axis – high-low and positive-negative. Each quadrant is an energy zone: high-positive is productive; high-negative is survival; low-negative is burnout and low-positive is recovery. Athletes are always striving to be in "the zone"; productive, positive and focused. In order to achieve "the zone" they will do very specific behaviours and rituals to accomplish their goal. While it is unrealistic to believe someone can be in high-positive all the time, there are definitely ways to create this full engagement as the most predominant zone for your life. Using intermittent renewal as a way to recover from high demands ensures more energetic, focused action. This can be true for any person in any walk of life, not just athletes. It is time to take back control of your life, to become more fully engaged on and off the job, allowing you to do more in less time with greater satisfaction.

Engaging the Body: Physical Energy

According to Schwartz and Loehrer, physical engagement means that employees have sufficient energy reserves to meet the demands they face. It is widely known that adequate sleep, good nutrition, and

daily exercise enhance one's ability to function well, yet knowing this is not enough. With the demands of work and home, many teachers do not prioritize their health and the consequence is felt in every aspect of their lives. The key is not to wait until you have the time to take care of these things, but to create daily rituals for building and renewing energy.

Consistent practice of healthy behaviours is counterintuitive for high demanding institutions and our extroverted culture. Schwartz says, "To recharge themselves, individuals need to recognize the costs of energy depleting behaviours and then take responsibility for changing them, regardless of the circumstances." Scheduling a bedtime that allows you seven to eight hours sleep per night is one of the most critical requirements to high functioning. "Strategic eating" means we plan for and eat healthy meals including breakfast. Eating smaller meals throughout the day is thought to be better for sustaining energy than a couple of large meals that will promote overeating and erratic energy levels. Being your best physically is the foundation for all engagement.

Engaging the Emotions: Connection

The authors state that emotional engagement means employees bring a sense of hope, opportunity and positivism to the daily storms of work. A pleasant atmosphere and positive perspective set the stage for positive emotional energy. As we are social beings the connection we have with each other and ourselves is crucial. Rituals that promote positive interactions, attitude and emotions are beneficial to oneself and others around you. When difficulties arise, being able to take a time-out will provide the opportunity to decide how you want to respond to a person or situation. This can go a long way in maintaining harmonious dynamics, whether at home or work. Expressing appreciation and acknowledging others for their efforts helps build esteem and good-will. Engaging the heart is emotional energy.

Engaging the Mind: Focus

Schwartz and Loehrer believe that mental engagement means employees bring focus, clear thinking and realism to the workplace. The demands for your

attention are constant – so much to do and so little time. You can get caught up in trying to do too much at one time which results in not getting anything done as you would like. Focusing on a given project cuts out the time it takes to refresh your attention. Every time you change your attention to take care of an email, add something to a different lesson plan, or visit with a colleague you will have to refresh and refocus yourself to the task at hand. Each time this occurs you will be taking more time to complete the task than initially required. This may go into the face of multi-tasking but there are indications that focused attention is both more expedient and rewarding. Engaging the head is mental energy.

Engaging the Spirit: Meaning and Purpose

In *The Power of Full Engagement*, the authors write that spiritual engagement means employees bring a sense of purpose, passion, commitment, character and integrity to work everyday. The human spirit needs attention, but you may wonder how when you have such high competing demands. Everyday life is an opportunity to attend to the spirit when what you do is consistent with what you value most; thus giving you a sense of meaning and purpose. Even with the requirements of you as a teacher it is important to remember the bigger picture – your family, the children you teach, the value of education, your colleagues. To realize the energy of human spirit you must be conscious of your priorities and make time for what matters most to you – family, work, health, friends – thus giving you the energy to attend to the other necessities in life. You also need to identify what you do best and enjoy at work, ensuring that this makes up part of your regular routines on a daily basis. The spirit energy is essential to all the rest.

Core Renewal Rituals

Renewal rituals are needed to restore high positive productivity. Having daily practices in exercise, nutrition and in sleep and relaxation for renewal are the rituals which will sustain your long-term energy reservoir. Rituals are a part of an established routine or according to Webster, “repeated acts or series of acts”. Those acts which become ingrained in your daily and weekly life do not require a decision because it is part of what you do. Decide to make changes in just one or two areas at a time and be highly specific about what you will modify. Remember, small changes are better than ambitious failure.

Energy Management is a way to pay attention to your capacity for output in your life, at home and at

work. Building and maintaining high levels of energy will enable you to have the satisfaction you desire in your life and for the priorities you hold dear. Start by addressing your physical routines. Get enough sleep, eat healthy, and exercise regularly. Once you have built the foundation of your energy supply turn your attention to your emotional wellspring. Take time to appreciate others and spend time with those who are important to you. Your mental energy comes from your capacity to focus on a given task and complete it. For every project you complete there is a level of satisfaction that feeds your energy. Lastly, being conscious of the meaning and purpose in your life is an overriding source that can often get you through the more difficult events in life or the menial tasks that need to be attended to. If you would like to know more about your energy levels go to www.hpoinstitute.ca/assessments_free.html for a free energy assessment and access to many more resources.

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