

## Bouncing Back From Burnout

### How do you know when you have reached burnout? And how can you get back to the business of leading?



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Stress, if it doesn't kill you, leads to burnout. How do you know if you're there? When those familiar feelings of post-lunch lethargy are no longer preceded by lunch, you're probably there. When simply saying the phrase, "Leadership Challenges", evokes a sigh, you're probably there. Energy is even more significant than time. Have you ever noticed when you have endless high-energy and excitement you are more alert, focused, positive and productive? I know, you may have to think back a bit. Energy is what makes time more valuable. Ergo, energy management determines successful time management. Time is a constant; energy is a manageable, renewable resource. What's eating your energy and what refuels it? Your answers will influence your strategy for energy management within the constraints of time.

So how do you integrate the concept of energy management with your everyday, "twenty things on your top-ten must do list" life? Consider this: every thought, feeling and action expends or restores energy. Since your thoughts greatly determine your feelings, start with thoughts. Beyond all the affirmation exercises, choose thoughts that are factually true and focus on reasonably possible, positive outcomes. For example: instead of, "We've cut everything we can, barely managed to survive the economic down-turn and now we're not sure what to do next; think, "We've discovered and eliminated hidden waste, simplified our financial picture, maximized our efficiency and created a "lean, mean fighting machine". The feeling that follows can't help being more positive! And, since feelings are influenced greatly by where, how and with whom you invest your time, be keenly mindful of each. Find or create a place where you can simply "be". One where you can go, virtually or actually, to release and re-set. Exercise – there' s a reason why this is always mentioned – your life, or at least quality of life, depends on it. Commit three to seven minutes, five times a day to simple stretching and low-impact exercise you can do at work (think jumping up and down, jumping jacks, a short walk, etc.) You may even give your co-workers and

yourself a chuckle with your antics – another healthy by-product. And, for more intense exercise (you know the drill): thirty to sixty minutes, three to five times a week as your body can tolerate. Finding someone to share in your office antics and exercise regimen can bring greater commitment and better results. To that point, with whom you choose to spend your time plays an often over-looked role in your energy equation. Like it or not, there are people that are emotionally exhausting and those that are a font of positivity. Limit your time with the former...and be mindful of which one you are.

High performing leaders are fully engaged: physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. This doesn't happen by accident. To a large degree, it happens through alignment. When you can align what you choose to do with how you want to feel and what you choose to think with your essential beliefs, you begin introduce alignment. When you create an environment that enables the people you lead to do the same, you ignite brilliance. So...where do you start?

- Leadership happens one conversation at a time. Slow down and ask better questions. Focus on thought-provoking questions over reports. In meeting prep, devote at least five minutes to think of three to five questions that will lead to a more productive, more thought-provoking meeting. These five minutes will save you hours down the road.
- Create internal alignment. Step back and ask yourself: What am I resisting? What am I judging? What am I attached to? Answer these three questions and you'll gain clarity, insight and a foundation for momentum.
- Get more sleep, take a hike, improve one diet choice or simply change environments. You may be dealing with sleep deprivation due to travel, or perhaps you're confined to a board room, or stuck with certain food options in the cafeteria, but you can tweak something. Take a stretch break, buy a piece of fruit instead of chips, or plan to leave the office earlier just one day a week to catch up on sleep and/or give yourself some much needed alone time to refuel.

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