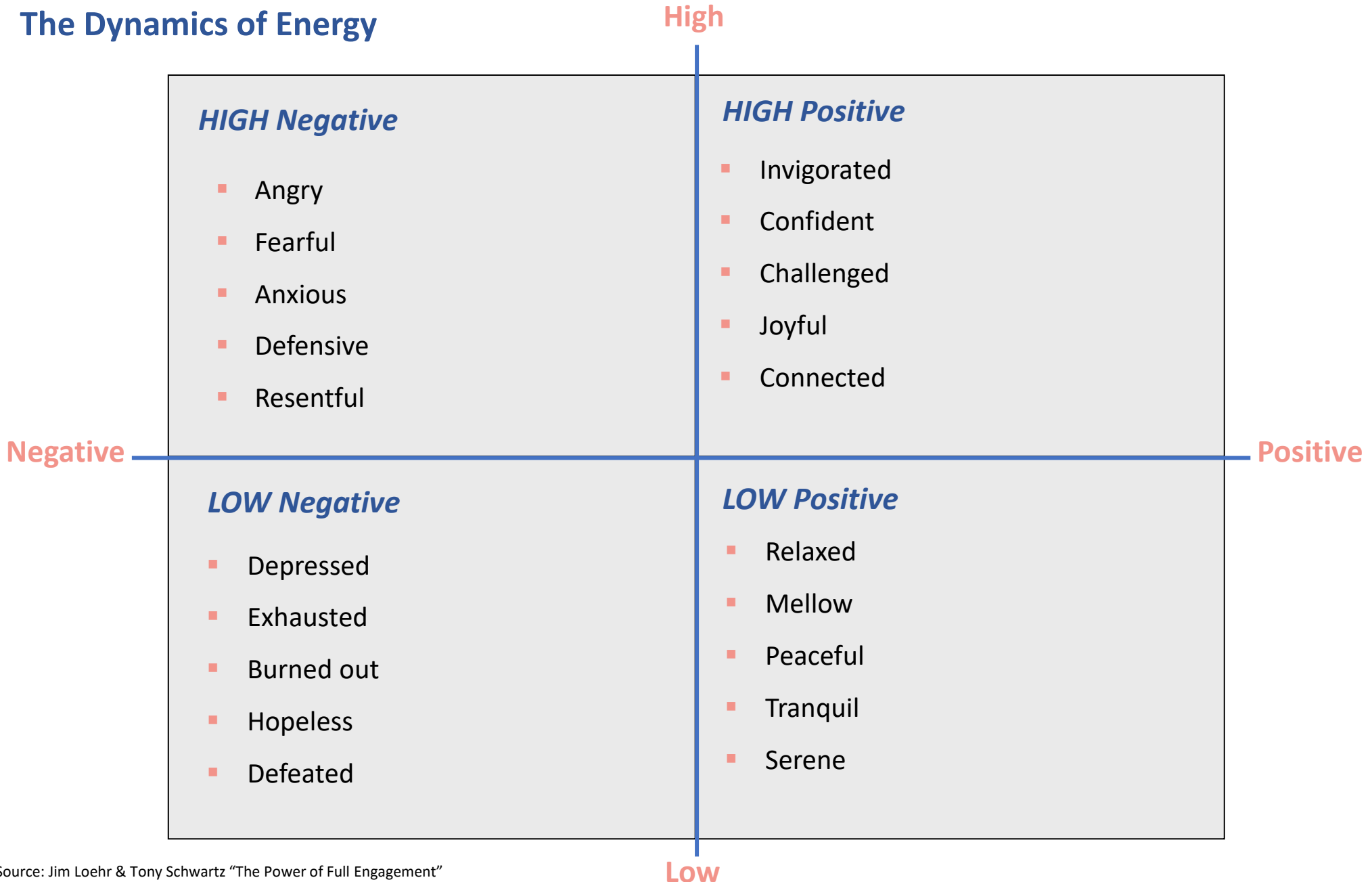


Energy Management for Performance

The Dynamics of Energy



Source: Jim Loehr & Tony Schwartz "The Power of Full Engagement"

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Contextual Sources of Energy that support our Performance and Wellbeing

Social

This is the ability to cultivate close friendships, a network of friends, family or others (co-workers, carers) for support.

And balancing their time to incorporate social, fun activities along with obligations

Cultural

Those who are culturally well, suspend judgement of others and strive to recognise, understand and accept differences among people.

They are also conscious of their personal cultural affiliations and are willing to co-exist with persons from cultures they are unfamiliar with .

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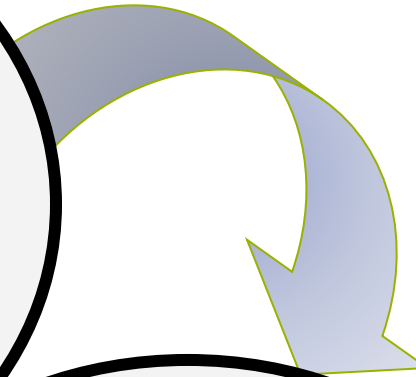
Engagement – the New Paradigm

Old paradigm

Manage time
Avoid stress
Life is a marathon
Downtime is wasted time
Rewards fuel performance
Self discipline rules
The power of positive thinking

New paradigm

Manage energy
Seek stress
Life is a series of sprints
Downtime is productive time
Purpose fuels performance
Rituals rule
The power of full engagement



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Physical

QUANTITY of energy

- Physical health
- Strength
- Fitness
- Vitality
- Endurance

Mental

FOCUS of energy

- Ability to focus
- Clarity
- Whole brain thinking
- Creativity – both rational and intuitive
- Ability to learn

Emotional

QUALITY of energy

- Positive mood and feelings
- Ability to manage upsets/ pressures & stressful situations
- Confidence
- Connection with self & others

Spiritual

FORCE of energy

- Sense of purpose & meaning
- Commitment to deep values
- Passion
- Integrity
- Inner peace



Energy Management for Performance

The Pulse of High Performance – Balancing Stress and Recovery

Before moving onto the opportunity to reflect on our own situation when it comes to our management of energy, and thus the stress that is present in our lives, it is useful to understand the balance between stress and recovery.

The concept of maximizing performance by alternating periods of activity and rest was first advanced by Flavius Philopstratus (AD170-245), a writer of Greek athletic training manuals. Russian sports scientists resurrected the idea in the 1960s, and today “work-rest” ratios lie at the heart of elite athletes' throughout the world today. This process is called “periodisation”, such that following a period of activity the body must replenish fundamental biochemical sources of energy. This is called “compensation” and when it occurs the energy expended is recovered. As the intensity of training or the performance demand increases, it is necessary to commensurately increase the amount of energy renewal. Failure to do so will see the athlete’s performance deteriorating.

Just like athletes, we all need energy to perform and recovery is more than the absence of work. It also impacts health and happiness. Balance is the key. We can quite easily fall into under or overdoing on one or more of the four dimensions, and both can have performance consequences over time. This is because when we expend energy, we draw from our reservoir, and when we recover, we fill it back up. Too much energy expenditure without sufficient recovery leads to breakdown and burn-out. Too much recovery without sufficient stress leads to atrophy and weakness (use it or lose it).

This rule applies not only to the physical – which is where we probably are more used to seeing it – but also to the emotional, mental and spiritual bodies. How does this work for each?

- Emotional depth and resilience depends on our active engagement with other and with our own feelings
- Mental acuity diminished in the absence of ongoing intellectual challenge
- Spiritual energy capacity depends on us regularly revisiting our deepest values and holding ourselves accountable in our behaviour.

When applied across all four, this rhythmic wave oscillation, represents the fundamental pulse of life. And, the more powerful our pulse, the more engaged and fully alive we will be.

To the degree that we are caught in habitual patterns of continuous work, whether attending hours and hours of meetings, or long days followed by expectations from self and/or others that we will work evenings and on weekends – performance is compromised over time. Practicing intermittent renewal not only inspires greater commitment, but also generates greater productivity. However most of us tend to live more linear lives. We assume we can spend energy indefinitely in some dimensions – often the mental and emotions, and that we can still perform at peak without investing energy in the others – most commonly physical and spiritual. We become ‘flat liners’.

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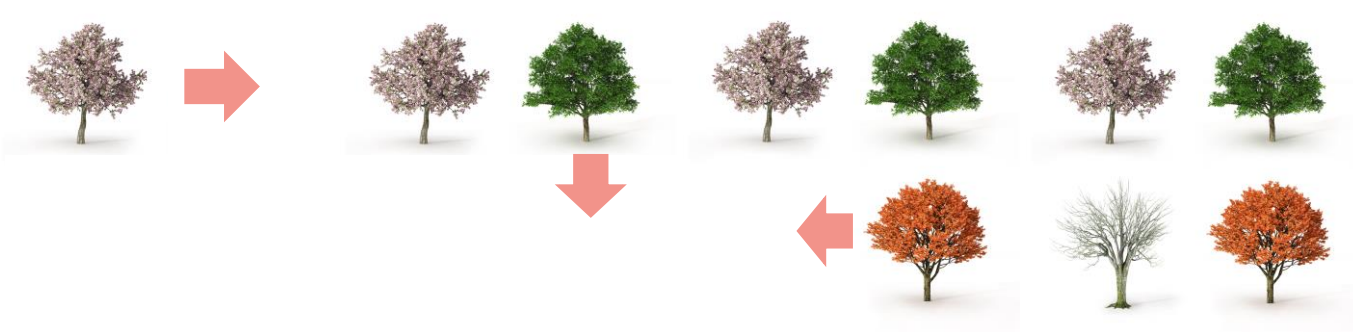
The Pulse of High Performance – The Pulse of Life

All of nature has a pulse and flows to a rhythmic wave-like movement that shifts naturally between activity and rest. Examples are:

Ebb and flow of the tides



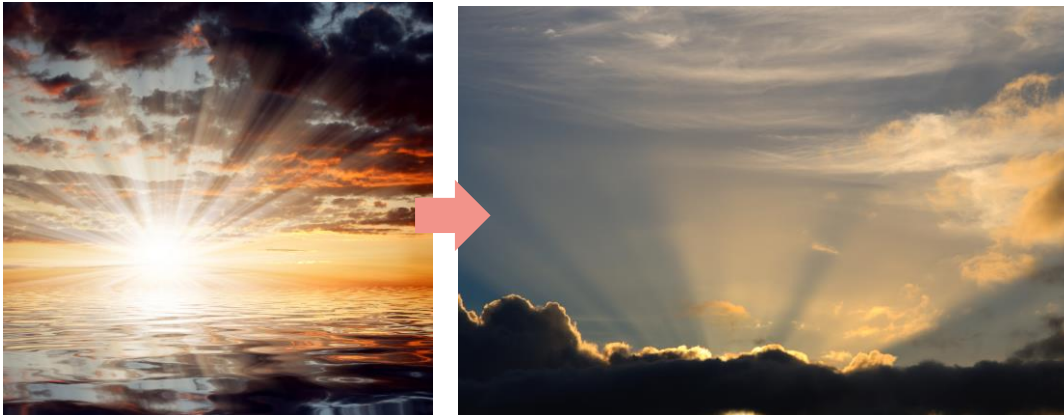
Cycles of the Seasons



Migration and Hibernation



Daily Rising and Setting of the Sun



Energy Management for Performance

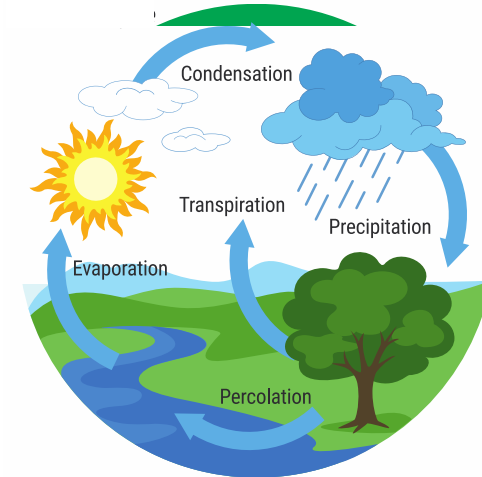
Gathering Nuts for Winter



Swimming Upstream to Spawn



The Water Cycle



Humans are also guided by rhythms, dictated either by nature or encoded in our genes. Seasonal adaptation, breathing, brain wave patterns, body temperature, heart rate, hormone levels, blood pressure, dreaming/sleep, etc. all have healthy (and unhealthy) rhythmic patterns. In the broadest terms, as humans our activity and rest cycles are tied to the circadian rhythm (circa dies ‘around a day’). Lets take a look at a how some of this operates. Starting with the sleep cycle.

- Sleep cycles range from 9—120 minutes, moving from light sleep when the brain activity is intense and the processing of stress occurs through the advent of dreaming, to deeper sleep when the brain is more quiescent and the deepest restoration and healing of the body occurs. Surprisingly this same cycle also operates in our waking state. These are called ultradian rhythms (ultra dies ‘many times a day’), and they help account for the ebb and flow of our energy throughout the day.
- Physiological functions such as heart rate, hormone levels, muscle tension and brain wave activity all increase during the first part of the cycle – driving higher alertness. After an hour or so these functions start to decline and somewhere between 9—120 minutes the body begins to crave rest and recovery. It manifests as a desire to yawn, stretch, hunger pangs may arise, increased tension, difficulty in concentrating, inclination to procrastinate or day dream, a higher incidence for making mistakes.
- We are capable of overriding these natural cycles, but only by summoning the fight-flight response and flooding our body with Adrenalin and Cortisol, the stress hormones. (Which are actually designed to help during survival emergencies). If this continues over the longer term, toxins build up within the body and we can only push so hard, for so long, before breaking down and burning out.
- Stress hormones that circulate chronically in our bodies may temporarily energise us, but over time the prompt symptoms such as hyperactivity, aggressiveness, impatience, irritability, anger, self-absorption, and insensitivity to others, and ultimately disease sets in, in the form of heart conditions, cancers and other stress related illnesses.

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The Pulse of High Performance – The Pulse of Life

- Getting to the point of not having sufficient energy to meet demands, we tend to turn to stimulants such as caffeine, cocaine and amphetamines. When we can't relax naturally due to being 'over-hyped' we rely on alcohol, marijuana or sleeping pills. Drinking cups and cups of coffee of a day, followed by a number of glasses of alcohol of an evening is simply masking the linearity that is occurring.



The Time between Points

Observing as a performance psychologist, and seeking to understand what put the greatest tennis competitors apart from the rest. Jim Loehr, spent hundred of hours watching tapes of top players. Frustratingly, he could detect almost no significant differences in competitive habit between top players and others. And, it was only when he had an ah-ha relating to what the did **between** points that he realized what the distinguishing factor was.

Whilst most were not consciously aware of it, the most consistently best players had formed a set of consistent moves, routines that were exactly the same between points. These included such things as; the way they returned to the baseline after a point, how they held their heads and shoulders, where they focused their eyes, the pattern of their breathing, and even the way they walked. He realized, that these players were instinctively using the time between points to maximise their recovery, this compared to lower ranked players, most of whom had no routine at all.

He hooked the top players up to EKG machines, enabling him to monitor their heart rates, making a startling discovery. In the 16-20 seconds between points in a match, the heart rates of the top competitors dropped as much as 20 beats per minute. Thus, by building highly efficient, and focused recovery routines, the players derived extraordinary energy renewal in a very short amount of time. Lesser competitors, with no routine maintained high heart rates between points and throughout their whole match, irrespective of their level of fitness. The performance consequences became obvious over the course of the match – there may be equal talent and fitness, but in the 3rd hour of a match, the player with the recovery between points, is far less physically fatigued. For the other player greater fatigue has a waterfall effect. The tiredness making them more susceptible to negative emotions, which will push the heart rate even higher, lead to greater muscle tension, and create less ability to mentally concentrate.

There was a direct correlation between how linear or unvarying players hearts rates were and the quality of their play. Too much energy expended, resulted in heart rates becoming chronically elevated, and likewise if heart rates were chronically low, this indicated they were not committed enough or had given up.

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The Pulse of High Performance – Recovery in the Work Situation

Fast Company asked a series of successful professionals about how they avoided burn out in highly demanding pressurised roles. Nearly every one described very specific routines that they had instituted that allow regular renewal. Some examples shared were:

- Maggie Wilderotter – (President Wink Communications) created a “lion hunt” where by she would prowl through the office for about ½ an hour, asking people she wouldn’t normally talk to, what they were working on. This had the effect of taking her from her push-push-push schedule, and step into a different world.
- Carisa Bianch – (CEO of advertising company TBWA/Chiat/Day) built recovery into her frequent travel. Never working on aero planes, but relaxing with books, magazines and listening to music. Things she didn’t normally have time to do.
- Joe Gibbs – (former pro football coach and now racing car company owner) schedules vacation time to get away with his family, in advance, including a four-day weekend each month.
- Bill Norman – (Executive VP of furniture company Herman Miller) meticulously manages his schedule to maximise productivity on the job by minimizing distractions – these include voice mail, and cell phones. He stays focused and schedules time for the things he enjoys like photography.

A World Hostile to Rest

Physiologist Martin Moore-Ede, author of the book ‘The Twenty Four Hour Society’ explains that ‘at the heart of the problem is a fundamental conflict between the demands of our human-made civilization, and the design of the human brain and body. Our bodies were designed to hunt by day, sleep by night and never travel more than a few km in one day. Now we work and play at all ours, plug into the global time clock where the pace of technological innovation is outstripping our ability to understand the consequences of our life styles.

We are ‘slaves to the machine’, and focused on the optimization of technology – rather than on the human-centered optimization of human alertness and performance. And, as the ability to be fully engaged depends on our periodic disengagement, life ends up becoming a marathon that doesn’t end until it ends for good, or we suffer some life altering crisis. The advances in technology, designed ostensibly to help us instead has resulted in the unintended consequence of never being able to disconnect. The natural rhythms have been overridden and our challenge is to consciously and deliberately create new boundaries – stopping points in our day where we step back and cease processing the bombardment of information and activity we are hit with. Shifting our attention from achievement to restoration.

“The busier we are, the more important we seem to ourselves and, we imagine to others. To be unavailable to our friends and family, to be unable to find time for the sunset (or even to know that the sun has set at all), to whizz through our obligations without time for a mindful breath, this has become the model of a successful life. However as we have lost connection, it is an unsustainable one.” Wayne Muller – Sabbath.

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Stress Addiction

Working at a feverish pace without breaks becomes an addiction. The stress hormones, adrenaline, noradrenaline and cortisol fuel arousal and create a seductive rush – the so-called ‘adrenalin high’. In effect we get stuck in overdrive and are unable to turn off. This can result in feeling guilty when not working with thoughts such as ‘I really should be doing something productive!’. And as the addiction takes hold it results in the inability to live in the present. There is no full engagement with what is being done at any moment, due to the drive to finish up and then get onto the next thing. The result is a sort of skimming along the surface of life. Workaholism is an obsessive-compulsive disorder that manifests as self-imposed demands, and inability to regulate work habits, an overindulgence in work to the exclusion of most other life activities. And unlike other addictions, workaholism is often admired.

Death by Overwork (Karoshi – in Japanese)

It is not the intensity of energy expenditure that produces burn-out, impaired performance and physical breakdown, but rather the duration of expenditure without recovery. 10,000 deaths per year are attributed to Karoshi in Japan – usually from heart attacks, cancers or stroke. Research identified five key factors that impact this:

- Extremely long working hours that interfere with normal recovery and rest patterns
- Night work that interferes with normal recovery and rest patterns
- Working without holidays or breaks
- High pressure work without breaks
- Extremely demanding physical labor and continually stressful work

In such conditions the human being resembles a mouse running helplessly in a rotating wheel in order to avoid electric shock. This is considered as being highly linear stress. Which also shows up in athletes who over-train, pushing themselves relentlessly with very limited recovery. Amongst its symptoms are:

- Increased resting heart rate
- Decreased appetite
- Disturbed sleep patterns
- Higher resting blood pressure
- Irritability / emotional instability
- Loss of motivation
- Increased incidence of injuries and infections



Energy Management for Performance

When what you have is not Enough

Regularly renewing energy reserves insures the ability to sustain the state of full engagement – this is as long as the demand remains constant. But what happens when increased demand overwhelms this capacity and a full tank is not enough? The answer is a paradox. To increase capacity – it is important to systematically expose the self to more stress, following it with adequate recovery. Just like the challenging of a muscle in weight training, past its current limit, prompts the phenomenon known as ‘supercompensation’, which has the body respond by building more muscle fibres in anticipation. Exposing a muscle to ordinary demand will not grow it !

The same is true for all of the ‘muscles’. Physical, emotional, mental and spiritual. There is however a catch, in that pushing beyond the comfort zone generates resistance as we seek unconsciously to maintain the status quo. However expanding capacity requires the willingness to endure short term discomfort in the service of long term reward.

“The best moments in life, usually occur when a person’s body or mind is stretched to its’ limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile”. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi – Author of Flow.

And, as much as there might be fear around change, the deepest fulfilment and satisfaction is generated through the willingness to expose ourselves to new challenges, engage in novel experiences and move through them. Where there are underlying issues of security however, and there is a lack of fuel in the tank, the tendency is that we hoard what energy we have in the service of self protection. This is called ‘defence spending’.

Voluntary and Involuntary Storms

Throughout a lifetime, we all face storms of varying intensity in all dimensions – physical, emotional, mental and spiritual. When that force is greater than we can physically handle for example, the result might be a broken bone or heart attack. And, the first imperative is to protect the limb or organ from further stress. But such protection cannot last too long as inactivity will cause atrophy and loss of strength. The process of rehabilitation is a systemic rebuilding of capacity, through gradual and incrementally increasing exposure to stress. Push too hard and there is likely to be further hurt and damage.

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Voluntary and Involuntary Storms

This is true of a broken arm or damaged heart and it equally applies to the other dimensions as well.

EG. Being a victim of a violent crime, loosing a loved one, getting fired from a job all have their first need as being – healing, recovery and taking time to recoup. The rebuilding requires a gradual re-exposure to the demands of that world that dealt the set back up to us. And it is often possible to build capacity past previous limits as a result. The same principle applies to the building of capacity through conscious choice.

When threatened we tend to retreat. Recovery is a means of detoxifying and refuelling in order to return to the storm with renewed energy. When we have the mindset of seeing the challenge as a growth opportunity as opposed to a threat, we are more likely to extend ourselves, even if it means there is risk and some discomfort in doing so.

The key is thus, to push beyond the ordinary limits, AND to regularly seek recovery, which is when growth actually occurs. And this means auditing where we might be pushing ourselves too hard without recovery as well as where we are not pushing ourselves hard enough. Balance across all four dimensions is the key.

Thus maintaining healthy oscillatory rhythms at all four levels of what is called the ‘performance pyramid’.

