

CAREER HEALTH

Are You Working Too Much?

By Jeff Davidson, MBA, CMC

More and more individuals are reporting increased stress in their lives as the level of information and communication we endure continues to rise. Many career professionals place undue pressures on themselves and are working longer hours. After a certain time, different for everyone, the effort that you are putting into your work becomes counter-productive. With a little calculation, you can determine your overwork quotient—how many extra hours per day and week you can work before it begins to be counter-productive.

Suppose as a starting base, working an eight hour day is well within your capabilities. Notice then how you felt on days when you work 8.5 hours, 9 hours, 9.5 hours, and perhaps 10 hours. For many people, someplace between 8.5 and 9 hours begins to feel uncomfortable, and certainly beyond 9 to 9.5 results in noticeable differences in energy level, enthusiasm, and joie de vivre.

I begin my work day usually at 7 a.m. and end sometime a little after 5 p.m. During that time I eat a good lunch for 30 to 40 minutes, and usually sleep about 20 minutes. Thus, my average work day is nine hours. On Fridays, it's probably closer to eight hours. Occasionally, I also will work from one to three hours early on a Saturday morning. So, my typical work week is 46 hours. If I average an extra half-hour a day Monday through Thursday, I immediately begin to feel it in terms of energy loss. In other words, while I'm fine at 46 hours, at 48 there's a slight but noticeable difference. At 50 hours, there's a distinct difference. At 50 to 52, or more life takes on a different perspective for me. Working too much upsets the delicate balance that I need to remain happy in both my work and non-working life.

Your situation may be completely different. For you, a 10-hour day may be the norm, five days a week. Hence you're putting in 50 hours, and maybe you're doing some reading on Saturday and Sunday that is work-related for an average of 52 hours a week. Perhaps you can go another four hours with no real downside. I doubt it, but maybe you're special.

Conversely, maybe a 40-hour work week is your cup of tea, and even a half-hour after that throws you out of whack. This isn't to say you're a wimp, or don't have the intestinal fortitude of others. Perhaps you're simply comfortable with a 40-hour work week, do a whale of a job during that time, and don't want to do any more work than that. People in government positions or situations in which they punch the clock could easily fall into this category. After years of working a fixed number of hours per week, your body and temperament has become accustomed to it. It's understandable that a variation in the pattern could result in problems. Working too few hours per week for some people can also cause problems.

I feel good when I've put in a nine-hour day Monday through Thursday and an eight-hour or shorter day on Friday. If I only get six or seven hours of work in during a day, when I intended to do nine, sometimes that's a little stressful. If I only intended to do six or seven in a day and I do the six or seven, that's fine.

Considering start and stop times, lunch, and other breaks, add up your typical number of hours worked per week and then in the coming weeks begin to notice what your overwork quotient is. Your overwork quotient might be as little as 15 minutes a day, although for most people that won't register much on the Richter scale. It's more likely to be between two to four hours per week.

Once you have the number and it's right for you, you can align your days and week so that you stay within the comfortable range for you. Your goal then becomes that of working productively within those hours so that you don't increase stress by trying to get more done with less time, thereby off-setting any gains you achieved in stress reduction by not working the longer work week.

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8 Tips to Boost Energy & Banish Tiredness

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8. Supplements – A variety of supplements claim to boost energy levels. Co-enzyme Q10 is good for improving stamina. Acetyl-L-carnitine and alpha lipoic acid taken together may result in increased energy by boosting mitochondria. Some people find taking iron supplements also beneficial.

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“Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, magic, and power in it.”

-Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe



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VALUES – BASED QUALITY OF LIFE™ Newsletter

Because Making Smart Choices About Your Money Impacts The Quality of Your Life

Over the years, we have found that there are elements of your life that are more important than money. These elements - Physical Health, Relationship Health, Inner Health and Career Health - cannot be delegated.

We hope that you find these articles to be of value in improving the quality of your life.

PHYSICAL HEALTH

8 Tips to Boost Energy & Banish Tiredness

By Danette Hibberd

If you are feeling physically and mentally drained, or simply lacking energy for a large part in your day, the problem needs resolving. These constant feelings of tiredness and lethargy become more prominent in mid-life and our energy levels can be boosted in order to sustain alertness and improve concentration.

The following tips will assist you to boost energy and banish tiredness.

1. Eat a balanced diet – A nutritional breakfast is a must to sustain energy levels throughout the morning, followed with a high protein lunch containing only a small amount of good quality carbohydrates. High carbs such as white bread or pasta produce sleep inducing hormones which will result in lethargy and bloating in the afternoons.

2. Fresh air – As stale air encourages stagnation, work and sleep in a room where you can open the window. If this is not possible, take short breaks throughout the day and walk outside. Take deep breaths of fresh air to rejuvenate the system.

3. Turn down the heat – Your brain slows down when it gets too warm and in turn promotes tiredness

4. Replace sugary snacks with lean protein – Sugary drinks or snacks will only provide short term energy boosts, but within an hour you will feel even more tired. Try yogurt, nuts, seeds and fresh fruit instead.

5. Exercise – To feel instantly revived, march on the spot, run up and down stairs, skip or dance for a minute or two. Your circulation will increase oxygen to the brain.

6. Drink two litres of fluid each day – Water is best. Both mental and physical performance is affected when the brain is only 3% dehydrated.

7. Take a short break – Research has shown that many people who take a 5 minute nap or shut eye during the early afternoon, perform better for the rest of the day than those who don't.

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RELATIONSHIP HEALTH

Improve Your Communication - Say What You Mean

By Clare Evans

For me, communication is important to many things in life. Particularly in the relationships we have with the people around us at work and at home.

How often do we misinterpret what's been said or done, just because we don't know how to communicate properly? Making assumptions based on our own, perhaps narrow perspective and not taking into account what other people might be feeling or thinking.

How to communicate is something we learn early on in life and if we don't know how to do it properly or we get it wrong, it can lead to poor communication throughout the rest of our lives. We fall into bad habits, feel uncomfortable having difficult conversations, avoid conflict or arguments and prefer just to keep quiet.

Learn how to talk and how to say what you feel is important in maintaining good relationships, not just in your personal life but with the people you work with. If you can't tell someone how you feel, how can you expect them to know? None of us are mind readers.

It can seem uncomfortable at first if you're not used to it and it may not come out quite as you intended. Be genuine you will be able to get the message across, as long as the person is open to what you are saying.

Always be clear in the words that you use, the tone of your voice and your body language. Think about the message you are trying to get across.

In this age of technology, with emails and text messages being used as a regular

and accepted means of communication, there is even more chance for confusion and misinterpretation.

You can't communicate feelings or humour in an email or a text. You need to know someone reasonably well to know whether a comment they've made is genuine, sarcastic or insulting. I've seen many an email or text discussion being totally misinterpreted because it's been taken out of context and without the underlying feeling being known.

“Good communication is as stimulating as black coffee, and just as hard to sleep after.”

-Anne Morrow Lindbergh

You can interpret a simple statement in a number of different ways just by changing the emphasis on a particular word. Using a different tone would give it a totally different meaning.

Don't use email or text for discussions where emotion is an important part of the communication. Pick up the phone or arrange for a face-to-face discussion.

An important part of communication is not only speaking but also, listening and listening properly, not just waiting for them to stop speaking so you can jump in. Really listen for what they are saying, forget about how you might be feeling, put yourself in their shoes for a moment.

Whether it's in a work or personal situation, if you have something important or difficult you want to say then:

- Set aside some time specifically to discuss it, when you're not going to be distracted or interrupted.

- Explain what you're feeling and what needs to happen or what you would like to happen.

- Ask for their reaction - how do they feel about what you've said.

- Don't be judgemental - accept what they are thinking and feeling.

- Allow time to adjust. Reacting in the heat of the moment is not always the wisest action.

- Make any serious decisions after you've had time to think things through.

Above all be honest. There's nothing worse than being told what someone thinks they want you to hear, and then finding out later they were being less than honest with you or with themselves. Perhaps they didn't want to hurt your feelings, but in the end it doesn't help either of you.

If you're not sure whether you've understood something correctly - ask. Many misunderstandings arise when people make assumptions about what's been said or what someone means. Your interpretation of the world around you is different from someone else's based on your background, views, behaviours, beliefs and values, so what you're thinking may be different too.

I will always prefer to assume “positive intent” when communicating with someone and I recommend that you do too. On the whole people aren't out to get you - so allow them to clarify if you think you may have misinterpreted or misunderstood what they've said.

Give people the benefit of the doubt and make your communication clear and direct.

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INNER HEALTH

Forgiveness: A Time For Letting Go

By Michael Bovenes

Next to love, forgiveness is the most misunderstood word in the human language. Forgiveness has been twisted by a lack of awareness as to how it functions. To forgive does not mean we must rejoin with our ex-lovers, free criminals from prisons, return to old jobs or anything else absurd. We are taught to believe that if we are to forgive the one who hurt us, it must manifest in some form of behavior and it reflects weakness. Forgiveness is a function of love that seeks to understand the negative impact of another person and then to release the pain and find inner peace. When you choose to forgive somebody this does not mean that you acknowledge their cruel behavior as acceptable, for doing this would be dishonest. Above all, it does not mean that we assume a superior (holier than thou) attitude to pardon the sins others.

Let's explore the truth of forgiveness. The meaning of the verb forgive, translates into “to let go”, which is the act of forgiveness. Forgiveness is the releasement of negative feelings given to you by another. It is your responsibility to let go of the hurt that another produces for you. The other person can apologize to you for their negative impact, but you still have to let go of the hurt feelings in order for forgiveness to become a healing experience.

What makes forgiveness so difficult, for so many? The greatest obstacle in the living of our life is the negative ego, which loves to hold onto a grudge and is our greatest source of resistance toward forgiveness. Our negative ego is what blocks our happiness and peace of mind. We hold within us grudges, bitterness and resentment which later manifest in stress, ulcers and poor health conditions. Ultimately, we have a choice to support our EGO or our SOUL, to be RIGHT or find PEACE.

Forgiveness like all other soul qualities (peace, love, innocence, respect, oneness, and passion) does not require a type of behavior. It begins with a relinquishing of emotional baggage and the choice to function from your Soul vs. your negative ego. Forgiveness is a willingness to perceive everyone, including yourself, as either expressing love or feeling a need for more love. It is a relinquishing of a harmful train of thought.

Forgiveness offers freedom to live a full and harmonious life.

The bi-product of forgiveness, is our own willingness and ability to forget. If we can not seem to forget then we have never completely let go. Holding on to pain only weakens us and produces misery. The purpose of forgetting is to prevent the mind from becoming a battle field. Negative feelings evaporate whenever they are looked at calmly and honestly and are dealt with responsibly. Often this process is gradual. The desire to function from your Soul and to live your life with peace of mind is the motivation for forgiving another.

If you feel that forgiving adds one more grudging obligation to your life, you are functioning from your negative ego. Understanding that forgiveness is the doorway to your happiness is the choice to

“Forgiveness is a funny thing. It warms the heart and cools the sting.”

-William Arthur Ward

function from your Soul. When you are attacked by another, you must first deal with the hurt feelings that you honestly feel. Too many try to forgive without releasing their anger and hurt. That mistake only represses the anger and it putrefies into resentment down the road.

A great habit to cultivate is to pause whenever you are having difficulty releasing an upset from your mind. Look directly and, in detail, at the contents of your thoughts. Dissect your emotions. Step back from them for a moment and gain new perspective. Write them down in a journal to gain clarity. And give yourself time to forgive; it doesn't have to be instantaneous.

A person who claims they never feel hurt by others are not more spiritually evolved, but more likely emotionally repressed. To be spiritual doesn't mean you have to like the ego of everyone that crosses your path, for you would then become transparent and lose your individuality. Liking somebody and

letting go of someone's negative impact upon you are two completely different issues.

Steps to Forgiveness:

1. Release the charged emotions: Take a legal pad and write at the top of the page, the person you wish to forgive. Write out all your feelings about the situation that you are forgiving. Release the anger, hurt, frustration or any feelings you have due to this experience. Take your time and feel your words as you write them down.

2. Forgive Yourself: Close your eyes and relax. Mentally repeat, I forgive myself for allowing myself to be hurt/disappointed by this experience with _____.

3. Express Yourself Meditatively: Express your thoughts and feelings to the person you are forgiving. Let them know how much it has hurt you and how upset you are emotionally. If you are so angry you want to hit them, then do it (IMAGINATIVELY) express yourself in your imagination. NOTE: Your intention is to release the feelings around this person and to forgive them. That is where the energy will go. You will not be sending this person negative energy unless that is your intention.

4. Forgive Them: With your eyes still closed, sense a light coming down from above you. It is a warm healing light that surrounds you and creates a safe environment for forgiveness. Visualize the person you wish to forgive, and see them inside the light. Mentally repeat, I forgive you for hurting/disappointing me in this way. Mentally reaffirm what you are forgiving them for. Then release them into the light.

When you finally understand that you can generate the healing of forgiveness, which you have been seeking outside of yourself, you become the master of your life. It will never happen until you take full responsibility for every facet of your life and your relationships with others. When you stop looking for love, security and peace outside yourself, and find it within, you are finally set free and the magic of forgiveness has worked its spell.

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