

Mentoring for Change

executive mentoring and coaching, leadership, storytelling

Welcome to the Mentoring for Change newsletter. In this issue:

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- “A Mind Once Coached Never Returns To Its Original Shape”
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With best wishes

Mike the Mentor

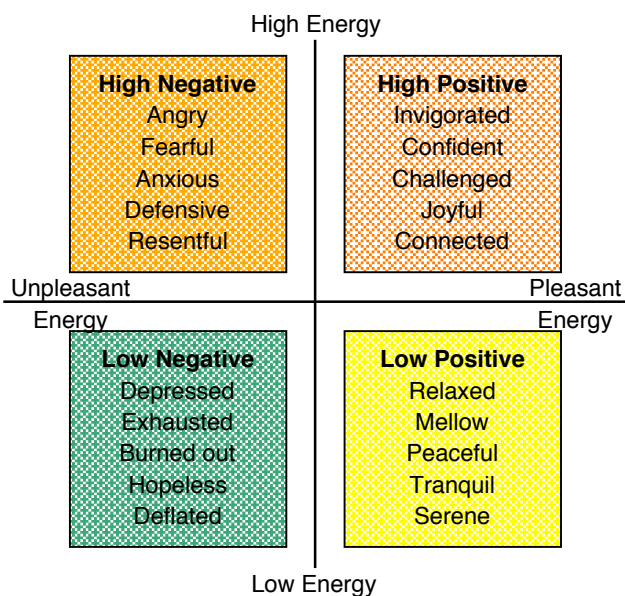


Energy

A recent book by Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz (*On Form*, Nicholas Brealey, 2003) asserts that “managing Energy, not Time, is the key to high performance, health and happiness”. They identify four separate but related sources of energy we each have access to:

- physical energy - the *quantity* of our energy
- emotional energy - the *quality* of our energy
- mental energy - the *focus* of our energy
- spiritual energy - the *force* of our energy.

The chart shows the dynamics of energy for the physical and emotional dimensions. Full engagement and maximum performance are possible only in the High



Positive quadrant. To sustain this and maximise our available energy we must:

- renew our energy to replenish our energy reserves - most of us are over-trained mentally and emotionally (not enough recovery)
- increase our capacity to store energy – most of us are under-trained physically and spiritually (not enough stress/stretch).

Energy Renewal

Core to energy renewal is recovery. Following a period of physical activity, the body must replenish fundamental biochemical sources of energy to recover the energy that has been expended. If we don't do this, our performance deteriorates. We can maximise our available physical energy by breathing deeply, smoothly and rhythmically; eating five to six low calorie, high nutrition meals to sustain our energy throughout the day; drinking 4 pints of water a day; ensuring we get enough quality sleep, doing regular strength and cardio-vascular training; and taking a recovery break every 90 to 120 minutes.

Recovery is just as important in the other energy domains.

- **Emotional:** In order to perform at our best, we must access pleasant and positive emotions. Any activity that is enjoyable, fulfilling and affirming serves as a source of emotional renewal and recovery.
- **Mental:** Mental capacity is what we use to organise our lives and focus our attention. The mental energy that best serves full engagement is realistic optimism - seeing the world as it is, but always working positively towards a desired outcome or solution.

“A Mind Once Coached Never Returns To Its Original Shape”

Shortly after I sent out the September edition of the newsletter, I received the following email with the title above from one of my subscribers:

... Anyway, my purpose for writing was to say that having spent many years in banking I discovered through coaching that my destiny lay elsewhere. (Myles and The School of Coaching course (including you) acted as the catalyst). After I completed that course I drove home very disturbed. I realized that working in banking had changed me, I had adapted to my surroundings, but I knew now that deep down I was not happy, I felt a long way from home. It took me a little while to pluck up courage and leave. By the time I left I was a managing director in a huge investment bank. A job many would dream of having, I hated it, particularly being away all week from my wife and family, we were slowly growing apart.

I left in 2001 with no real plan. My wife fixed up for me to spend some of that summer and some time each summer ever since working for a small circus

(www.giffordscircus.com), a long held dream come true. I did some coaching for a small Coaching and Leadership organisation and explored the world of NLP and even became an NLP practitioner.

At about the same time my wife and I imported some alpacas from Peru and started to breed them. We are now in the process of selling everything we have in the UK and buying a small ranch in Oregon where we will breed alpacas as our only source of income. I will miss the circus but not the bank.

If you ever want to tell my story to anyone who thinks that coaching can't achieve significant and lasting change in your life feel free.

You can't have everything you want but you can have anything you want.

All the very best

Adrian

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- **Spiritual** energy provides the force for all action in all dimensions of our lives. It fuels passion, perseverance and commitment. Spiritual energy is derived from a connection to deeply held values and a purpose beyond our self-interest.

Increasing Capacity

Whichever the energy modality, the way we increase our energy capacity is by pushing past our current limits and then allowing time for recovery. To build muscle strength, we must systematically stress the muscle, expending energy beyond normal levels. If we then allow the muscle to rest, it will grow stronger and better able to handle the next challenge. This principle is well known in developing physical strength, but it is just as relevant in building “muscles” in the other areas – from empathy and patience, through focus and creativity to integrity and commitment. The challenge in building emotional, mental or physical strength is that many of us shy away from the discomfort that pushing past our current limits causes.

In Praise of Ignorance!

I've written in an earlier newsletter of the virtues of incompetence – now its time to laud ignorance! As a recent article in Harvard Business Review (“Wanted: Chief Ignorance Officer”, November 2004) points out, ignorance is a precious resource. Whereas knowledge is infinitely re-usable, ignorance is a one-shot deal: once it has been displaced by knowledge, it's very hard to get back. And once its gone, we tend to follow the well worn paths in our thinking rather than striking out into the

unknown. But if we can cultivate a healthy ignorance, then we can increase our ability to be creative and innovative. So, how to do this? The article suggests four principles:

1. **Deferral:** Delay jumping to conclusions – or even to hypotheses. Instead hang out in not knowing.
2. **Prematurity:** Be willing to act before you have complete knowledge since critical learning often comes from adjusting to unforeseen circumstances.
3. **Irrelevance:** Seek inspiration from the seemingly irrelevant and look at things from unexpected vantage points.
4. **Waste:** Be like the natural world – expect only a few of your seeds to blossom.

Of course, to claim to be trying to develop our ignorance may not go down too well with our boss so instead we can talk of developing our “nescience” - which merely means the lack of knowledge but sounds so much more impressive! Paying attention to ignorance/nescience can remind us that, if we want knowledge that is worth managing, we have to create it first.

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