

The Power of Full Engagement

Jim Loehr & Tony Schwartz



Managing energy, not time is the key to enduring high performance as well as the key to health, happiness and life balance. The quantity and quality of energy is not fixed and this idea has the power to change the way you view your professional and personal life. The metaphor of an athlete in training is used as a lens to view how the “corporate athlete” can shape and adapt to an ever changing and fast paced business world. This is a practical and scientific book which uses tangible, real life examples of people implementing these strategies to incorporate purpose and value into their current contexts.



Fully Engaged: Fully Engaged:

Energy, Not Time is our
Most Precious resource



Holy Engagement Batman!!

To be fully engaged, we must be physically energized, emotionally connected, mentally focused, and spiritually aligned with our minds and hearts directed by a purpose which is beyond our own self-interest. Impossible you say to be so well balanced and in tune with the force...not according to these authors.

The authors use the metaphor of the athlete to illustrate how one would draw on four related sources of energy: physical, emotional,, mental and spiritual.

We are compromised in any activity we partake in. It all comes down to how we manage our energy.

Great leaders are stewards of organizational energy. As leaders we must we must invest, channel, renew and expand our own energy as well as the energy of others.

Well done, but you are not a Jedi yet!



Athletes spend much of their time training to build energy capacity which they use in intermittent bursts of energy. If you think of a hockey game players will exert themselves for a hard 40-60 second shift and each shift will be followed by energy renewal (on bench waiting for the next shift). Each player has conditioned his/her body to respond to short periods of stress.

Principles of Full Engagement

Principle #1

Full Engagement requires drawing on both physical energy capacity (measured in terms of quantity-high/low) and emotional capacity (measured in terms of quality)

Principle #3

Building capacity requires us to push past our normal limits. Stress has the potential to increase our physical, mental, emotional and spiritual capacity.

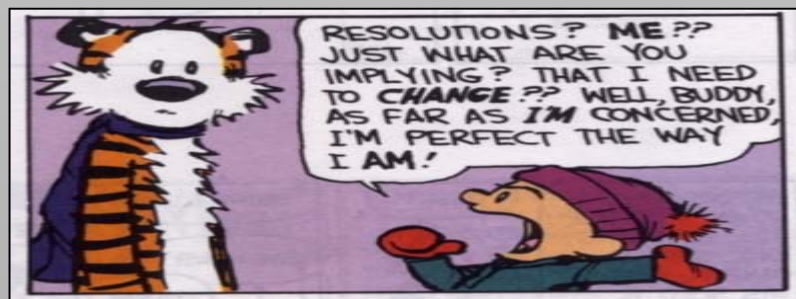
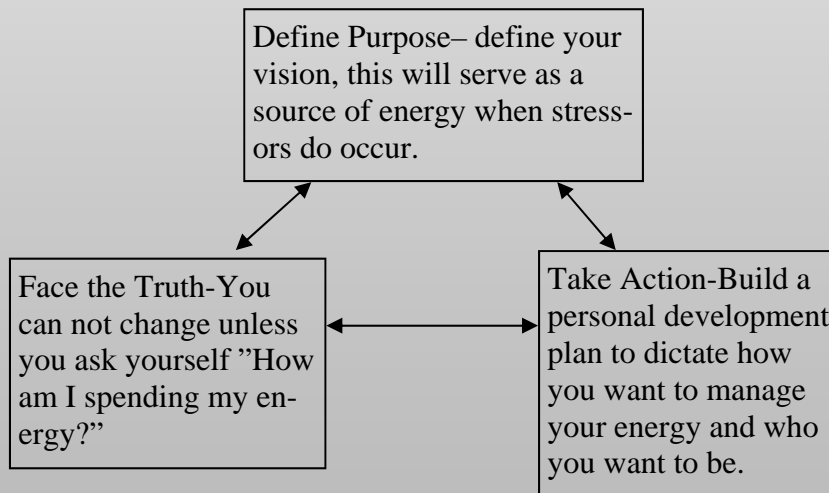
Principle #2

Energy diminishes with both overuse and under use, we must be able to fully engage in a task and disengage to seek renewal.

Principle #4

We must create routines for managing energy. A positive routine/ritual becomes automatic and requires little conscious energy, allowing us to focus energy in more productive endeavors.

Three Step Process

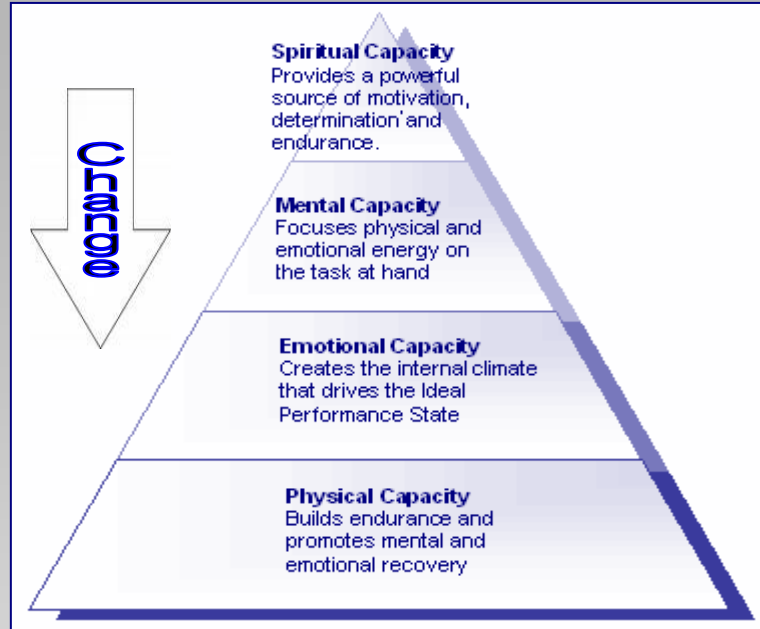


Balancing Stress and Recovery

Balancing stress and recovery is critical to high performance both individually and organizationally. The authors describe the expenditure and recovery of energy as our most fundamental need. The author calls this oscillation.

The opposite of oscillation is linearity. This refers to the fine balance between too much energy expenditure and not enough rest. The reverse is also true and a person can experience too much rest and not enough energy expenditure...shocking but true!

The building of spiritual, mental and emotional capacity can be built much the same way that the aforementioned athlete builds physical capacity. To reach peak performance an athlete must endure short term discomfort and push beyond his/her ordinary limits and to regularly seek recovery. This is when true change will occur. This same concept has been referred to as the zone of proximal development in education circles and students/teachers will not learn unless they too push themselves beyond their normal limits.



“Periods of recovery are likewise intrinsic to creativity and to intimate connection...It is in the spaces between work that love, friendship, depth and dimension are nurtured. Without time for recovery, our lives become a blur of doing unbalanced by much opportunity for being.” pg. 34

CHANGE

When the winds of change blow hard enough, even the most trivial of things become deadly projectiles.
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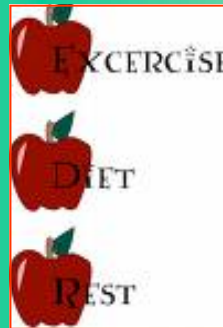
Fueling the Fire: Physical Energy

“Leaders and managers make a fundamental mistake when they assume that they can overlook the physical dimension of energy and still expect those who work for them to perform at their best”
pg 48

Physical Capacity: reflected in one’s ability to expend and recover energy at the physical level. This is defined by quantity of energy-measured by low to high energy.

BIG MUSCLES: heart & lungs, abdominals, shoulders & back, arms & legs

SMALL MUSCLES: sleep, exercise, diet, hy-



Interval training is a means to build more energy capacity and to teach the body to recover more readily.

Strategic eating and water consumption.

Sleep is a period where substantial growth and repair occurs.

Chapter Four



“Building strength and endurance and endurance requires pushing past our comfort zones and experiencing discomfort. It takes time before the obvious benefits kick in, and most of us quit before that ever occurs” pg 64

Emotional Energy



“In order to perform at our best we must access pleasant and positive emotions...Emotions that arise out of fear or deficit have a decidedly toxic feel to them...we must systematically build emotional capacity by devising rituals to push past our current capacity and then recover. Pg 72

BIG MUSCLES: self-confidence, self-regulation, interpersonal effectiveness., empathy & caring.

SMALL MUSCLES: patience, openness, trust, enjoyment.



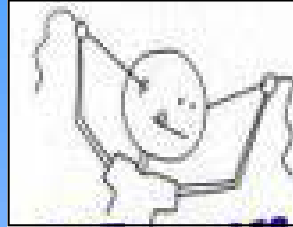
The ability to summon positive emotions during periods of intense stress and to communicate consistently positive leadership lies at the heart of effective leadership. Pg 75

It is obvious that leadership in organizations is crucial in determining the “depth or quality of emotional renewal. Whether co-workers find their work to be absorbing, enriching and enlivening depends largely on how you yourself manage your own emotional energy. Leaders must also help fellow employees experience a full range of feelings. The authors discuss how difficult it is to hold contradictory impulses and how our tendency is to choose up sides. One will often see this in schools when a teacher is working with a challenging student and they will over compensate with toughness when a student needs compassion and vice versa. Teachers are often asked to make quick decisions so this “holding opposites” can be difficult. I would imagine that when policies are developed, specifically around such things as contracts, transfers etc that groups would be reticent to engage full range of emotions. The implementation of interest based bargaining in many divisions may be an effort to remedy this.

The best leaders lead by example.
When that's not an option, brute
intimidation works pretty well too.
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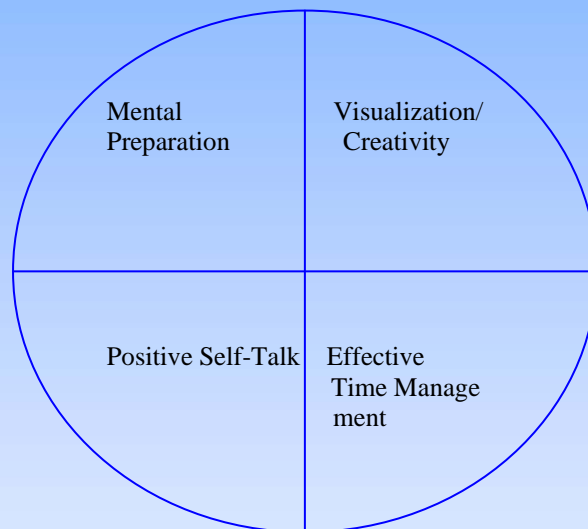
Mental Energy



Where are you
when you get
your best ideas?

To perform at our best we must be able to sustain concentration, and to move flexibly between broad and narrow focus, as well as internal and external focus. The highest form of creativity depends on a rhythmic movement between engagement and disengagement, thinking and letting go, activity and rest, right and left brain hemispheres. How is this capacity for the creative process implemented in your workplace? How would schools change if this process were followed? Would these ideas be implemented for students as well? How could you bring this philosophy in the development of policy?

Key Supportive Mental Muscles



To continue the athlete metaphor one must look at how we can systematically build mental capacity by once again pushing past our comfort zone then recovering. For many this can be as simple as new teaching loads, team teaching, new school or position. Many of us are continually in these positions but we lack the awareness or ability to engage in any significant recovery period.

Spiritual Energy: He Who has a Why to Live

Super Nietzsche



“He who has a why to live for
can bear with almost any how”

“The capacity to live by our deepest values depends on regularly renewing our spirit-seeking ways to rest and rejuvenate and to reconnect with the values that we find most meaningful and inspiring” pg 110. Character is the key muscle that drives our courage and conviction. Supportive muscles include passion, commitment, integrity and honesty. The authors believe that ones spiritual energy is sustained by balancing commitment to others with adequate self care. Many references to the tragedy of 9/11 are used and one could easily find examples from our own lives where we have committed ourselves to the advancement of someone’s own needs; whether it be countless hours of coaching, being a mentor for a staff member or student etc. Where education fails in this regard is contextualizing our values and beliefs. For example how many school mission statements are 5-10 years old, so old in fact that they have lost all purpose and meaning. Many division policies are created under artificial circumstances where operations manuals must be quickly created to meet urgent demands. Clearly a new perspective would need to be utilized in order to bring clarity to such processes

What practices do you follow to reconnect with your values?

Does your institution have rituals in place where such practices take place?

What parameters would need to be in place so that we are cognizant of the values that shall and will influence future policy direction?

You only see the tree by the light of the lamp. I wonder when you would ever see the lamp by the light of the tree.

G.K. Chesterton, from “The Man Who Was Tuesday”



Defining Purpose: The Rules of Engagement

How excited are you to get to work in the morning?

How much do you enjoy what you do for its own sake rather than for what it gets you?

How accountable do you hold yourself to a deeply held set of values?

“The most compelling source of purpose is spiritual, the energy derived from connecting to deeply held values and a purpose beyond one’s self-interest. Purpose creates a destination. We become fully engaged only when we care deeply... the search for meaning is among the most powerful and enduring themes in every culture...” pg 131

“Is the life I am living worth what I am giving up to have it? Pg 140

THE POWER OF RITUAL

The incorporation of rituals allows us to be able to translate our values and into all contexts of our life. Much like rituals we instill into an exercise program, positive rituals enable us to feel comfortable enough to take creative risks in whichever mission we are on in life. Not only are rituals enabling, they act as a safety net for when our will and discipline are lacking, creating an almost automatic process. This process allows us to be more consistent in having our actions fueled by our values.

As teachers we know the power of ritual and routine within the context of the classroom. Many times it seems that education is on such a pendulum where values are concerned. This swinging of popular opinion can be disruptive when one tries to instill a ritualistic process. Many teachers and students feel disconnected from what happens in the classroom and the learning process often degenerates into the proverbial stone skipping on top of the water resulting in a very superficial experience. If some stability was provided maybe some system level rituals could be put in place that would aid in bringing values to the forefront so that education would be more meaningful for the partners involved.

I believe the same holds true at the system level when policy and governance is taken into consideration, especially during times of amalgamation. It seems that the major emphasis is on maintaining and implementing the bureaucracy so that everyone has a predictable and comfortable basis to operate from. The authors of this book would argue that even a system would have to operate out of it’s comfort zone and experience some discomfort in order to truly begin to understand what is important to the people involved. Only when action is driven by that purpose (values) will legitimate and worthy change be experienced.

Critical Summary



This land like a mirror turns you inward
And you become a forest in a furtive lake:
The dark pines of your mind reach downward...
...and you are sinking, sinking sleeper
In an elementary world;
There is something down there and you want it told.

Dark Pines Under Water
Gwendolyn MacEwan

“The Power of Full Engagement” by Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz is at first a deceptively simple book. One need only glance at the four sources of energy discussed in the book; physical, emotional, mental and spiritual, to be reminded of countless self help and leadership books. Reference to the “whole” person after all seems like such a cliché, but one must stop oneself and ask how does a cliché become a cliché? Only time honored observations that have withstood years of use and scrutiny are ever given the title of a cliché. So if the message in this book has been used and expanded upon by so many others it must have some merit. Initially I scoffed at the book and dismissed it but I soon began to see the inherent truths and subtleties within. The book definitely took on an other identity entirely when I began to look upon it through the metaphorical lens of the Gwendolyn MacEwan poem that I have included here. Much like the pines, the concepts of the book are quite simple and predictable, pines are obviously trees and it is obvious that ones values drive their lives by providing meaning and context. It is only when you begin to follow the reflection of the pines into the water that the book begins to take on new shape and meaning. Much like looking through the depths of the lake one must look through their own depths and apply their own experiences to the principles stated in the book in order for it to take on a more substantial form. When the reader looks deeper and finds values inherent within themselves they will soon find that much like MacEwan they will find something that wants to be told.