

ENERGY RENEWAL

Managing Your Energy at Work

Have you ever known people who come to work looking exhausted and worn-out and by the end of the day, even worse? Maybe that person is you. Yet, there are also those people that no-matter how much they do, they always seem to have the energy to do more. What makes the difference?

According to Tony Swartz of *The Energy Project*, while some aspect of a person's energy level is genetic, a lot has to do with how they run their day - what behaviours are energising and what behaviours are depleting their energy. It can be helpful, therefore, to have an understanding of where we derive our personal energy, **what fuels our capacity to work**, and what habits we need to adopt to manage our energy on a day-to-day basis.

It is generally understood that the human body has rhythms that direct our energy levels, alertness, concentration, moods and so on. Like the planet has seasons, humans have circadian rhythms. These can vary with individual differences but you may know, for example, if you are a 'morning person' or a 'night owl' - these times in the day when you feel most energised and alert. However, these rhythms can be even more defined in what is known as ultradian rhythms – those cycles less than 24-hours, such as eyes blinking, respiration, heart beat, and sleep patterns.

One of our ultradian rhythms is the BRAC cycle: Basic Rest-Activity Cycle which ranges from 80 – 120 minutes. 90 minutes is the average, with the first half of the cycle allowing us to be more energised, alert and focused. The second half is characterized by brain activity that slows and causes us to feel a little dreamy. This understanding prompts us to find ways to renew our personal energy cycle every 90 minutes.

There are at least four primary ways we can renew and maintain our energy: through positive thoughts, uplifting emotions, looking after our body, and behaviours that nurture the spirit.

Here are some energy renewal suggestions for each category.

Thoughts: Focusing attention on one thing at a time (better scheduling and prioritising); reframing a challenge; using the solution focus; thinking of positive aspects within difficult situations; appreciating people, animals or things; knowing your core values.

Emotions: remembering something funny to invoke laughter; imagining something exciting; invoking feelings of gratitude, love, freedom or joy; being kind and interested in other people's lives.

Body: making time for better nutritional habits; more regular exercise; moments for rest and relaxation; eliminating night-time behaviours that prevent good sleep, (late-night screen time.)

Behaviours: focusing on meaningful activities; surrounding yourself with supportive people; doing work that brings enjoyment and a sense of purpose; being in nature; developing positive rituals, such as practising mindfulness meditation every day; aligning your behaviours with your values.

YOUR PERSONAL ENERGY AUDIT

Please tick the statements below that are true for you, right now.

Thoughts

- I have difficulty focusing on one thing at a time, and I am easily distracted during the day, especially by phone calls and e-mail.
- I spend much of my day reacting to immediate crises and demands rather than focusing on activities with longer-term value and high potential for positive change.
- I don't take enough time for personal or professional reflection, strategising, or creative thinking.
- I am often in a bind, thinking about how to improve my work-life balance.

Emotions

- I frequently find myself feeling irritable, impatient, or anxious at work, especially when work is very demanding.
- I don't have enough time with my family and loved ones, and when I am with them, I am somewhere else in my mind.
- I am frustrated have too little time for the activities that I most deeply enjoy.
- I don't stop frequently enough to express my appreciation to others or be grateful for the people and things in my life.

Body

- I don't regularly get at least seven to eight hours of sleep, and I often wake up feeling tired.
- I frequently skip meal times, or I settle for something quick and convenient that isn't nutritious.
- I often don't exercise enough (movement for cardiovascular and strength)
- I don't take regular breaks during the day to truly renew and recharge. For example, I often eat lunch at my desk, if I eat it at all.

Behaviours

- I don't spend enough time at work doing what I do best and enjoy most.
- There are significant gaps between what I say is most important to me in my life and how I actually allocate my time and energy.
- My decisions at work are more often influenced by external demands than by a strong, clear sense of my own purpose.
- I don't invest enough time and energy in making a positive difference to others or to the world.

How is your overall energy?

Total the number of statements ticked: ___

Guide to scores

- 0–3: Excellent energy management skills
- 4–6: Reasonable energy management skills
- 7–10: Significant energy management deficits
- 11–16: A full-fledged energy management crisis

What do you need to work on?

Number of ticks in each category:

Thoughts __

Emotions __

Body __

Spirit __

Guide to category scores

- 0: Excellent energy management skills
- 1: Strong energy management skills
- 2: Significant deficits
- 3: Poor energy management skills
- 4: A full-fledged energy crisis

Focusing Question: What is the ONE THING you could commit to doing right now, to improve your energy management, that would make the BIGGEST DIFFERENCE to your life? For example: you might set up a ‘renewal room’ at work and start taking regular renewal breaks every 90 minutes.

(Note: You may see opportunities for doing more than one thing, but starting with one for now will strengthen your momentum for change when you experience how it can improve your wellbeing).

My ONE THING to improve using energy management in my life right now is:

Focusing Question: What inspires you to want to make this change? What is your big WHY? Perhaps a Consequence Stretch might be helpful here?

Make a note in your action pages for ideas you want to use and share with others.