

Boosting Your Physical and Mental Energy

The Challenge

“**H**aving energy” can appear elusive and complicated. We certainly remember a time when we had loads and we can still have our great days. Holidays do help but too often we simply come down with the flu. An extra coffee is OK in a meeting but one in the evening spoils our sleep. We don’t allow the kids cola, so why do we knock it back several times a day to try and keep alert? And sometimes we’d like to push back on a daft idea in the marketing meeting but to be honest we simply can’t be bothered. Yes, that mental buzz and that physical drive seem horribly elusive.

In this first section, let’s simplify the concept and understand how it can be within your grasp.

The Detail

Firstly, the two kinds of energy, mental and physical, are interrelated. So the good news is that anything you can do to improve physical will help mental and vice versa.

And for each kind of energy, there are four main drivers or initiators of great energy.

Firstly, physical – the drivers or components of great physical energy are:

- 1. Sleep.** Ask your family doctor what's the biggest worry for which his/her patients seek help and they will reveal that it is "TATT" or "tired all the time" syndrome. And that's because for an increasing number of us, sleep is not doing what it's meant to, i.e., taking a pleasantly tired body, allowing it to drop into that wonderful state called sleep for around eight hours and waking up totally refreshed and ready to face an exciting brand new day. Instead, sleep has become a troubled, low-quality experience, which seems increasingly problematic as we get older and/or take on more responsibility. We're going to show you how to get great sleep, consistently. And thus boost your daily energy reserves.
- 2. Exercise.** This won't surprise you. You know how fitness not only gives you strength and stamina, but also helps you feel good. But there are so many challenges: finding the time, the possible expense of a gym and/or pool and not least, the "pain" of getting fit again. We'll show you how to overcome every one of those apparent problems and much more easily than you might currently suspect.
- 3. Diet.** Most of us would probably agree that too much alcohol the evening before an important

busy day is not a wise move. But if alcohol is the most obvious one, what else affects your energy? What does boost your energy without “cheating”? (A coffee, as you will see, is an example of a cheat. Nothing wrong with that so long as you are aware.)

- 4. Meditation.** Time out. Increasingly recognized as critical in a world of interrupt, distraction and too little time to just “be”. We show you a simple form of meditation and answer all of your questions. From “I have no time with my young children” to “you won’t catch me doing something as weird as that”. It will also be revealed that meditation is a particularly powerful energy booster in that it not only helps you to feel physically better, but mentally, too. So it really does bridge the two approaches.

Each of these processes supports the other; just a little moderate exercise will help your sleep. With sound sleep you find it easier to resist junk food. A balanced, integrated approach is far better than going overboard on any of these. We have all met people obsessed with one particular approach, be it running or a certain food or the latest yoga. A healthy, well body will provide stacks of energy and it’s pretty straightforward. We’ll actually look at these in the order Meditation, Diet, Exercise and Sleep and will refer to the “MEDS” approach.

And mental – the drivers or components of great mental energy are:

- 1. Switch perspective.** We’re naturally going to talk about stress and you’ll be aware of how much harm

it can do to your mental energy i.e., your focus and will and simple sense of perspective. However, there is a powerful tool, which is often intuitive but with practice can save you so much heartache and that is to switch your perspective, to change your perception. Thus: it's the biggest argument ever with your girlfriend about mismanaged finances (debilitating) or it's an opportunity to sort out your shared money and responsibilities and start saving for the future (enlivening). Mmm . . . powerful! But perhaps you are thinking, it's not as easy as that though is it? Stick with us.

2. **Hands on, brain off.** One of the many attractions of alcohol is that at the end of a demanding day we can “get out of our head”. More and more of us do spend our days in our head. Staring at screens and PowerPoint slides. Handling email. Huddled in meetings. Reading the *Metro* or a book on our iPad mini on the tube. It was never meant to be so. We're a mind-body creature. We love the physical side of things: we need to bake more bread! Seriously? Sort of; much more coming up about how getting more physical paradoxically gives us more mental energy.
3. **Understand the bigger picture.** It's tiring when you feel you are merely a cog in a machine. You become dulled: you commute, you drink coffee, you go to the gym. But what's it all about? We need a bigger picture. No – *you* need *your* bigger picture because when you do, you'll fully come alive. TBC!

4. **Group connect.** A friend or two. A lover maybe. Possibly some family. A listening ear, a sympathetic word, a supportive hug . . . these are the people who put things in proportion; keep you grounded; help you get through the tricky times. Everybody needs to connect. More in a later section.

Again, each of these processes supports the other: some “hands-on”, e.g., baking bread can help keep your mind from overworking and generating extra anxiety. With some work on your bigger career goals you will find you are much calmer about the coming re-org at work. And again, a balanced, integrated approach is far better than going overboard on any of these: ruthlessly setting goals which **MUST** be hit for every aspect of your life will simply set stress levels soaring rather than what you had hoped. We’ll actually look at these in the order Hands, Understand, Group connect and Switch and will refer to the “HUGS” approach.

MEDS will support HUGS and vice versa. If you do a little on each of the eight directions there is no reason why you cannot get the healthy reserves of energy you seek. And if any particular aspect is having a hard time, e.g., there is a newborn in the house and sleep is understandably broken, then the other strands of MEDS and HUGS will compensate.

The Story

Marcus is tired. He's tired of life. Tired of his job. Tired of his teenage kids. But most of all he's tired of feeling tired. And he doesn't know what's wrong. He remembers himself as a graduate trainee starting out some fifteen years ago in corporate banking as someone who could drink anyone under the table and still do a stunning pitch and win the deal at 9:00 am the next morning. But no longer. Life is about airports, email, PowerPoint and quarterly reviews. And his demanding teenagers; did he mention those? Er, yes he's married. Sort of.

Marcus is tired. Sometimes he can hardly get out of the business lounge chair, join the conference call on time or be bothered to celebrate his own birthday. Oh, what he would give for some serious energy.

But we're going to help.

The Q&A

You haven't mentioned illness at all. Surely that affects your energy?

You are right of course. What we can say is that if you follow the strategies we will talk about in MEDS and HUGS you'll have more energy to fight such illness. And if you do go down with the flu, you'll bounce back up more quickly.

Of course when you are ill the main thing is to respect that illness and if you feel tired, then that is for a reason: the body seeks rest, so rest!

The Solution

1. Decide that you are going to get your energy back.
2. Or increase it.
3. Or make it more consistent.
4. Be willing to tackle both the mental side.
5. And the physical.
6. Start.