

Monday, October 22, 2012

Dear Friends from Willow Creek,

It was a privilege to be with you in Barrington last week. Here is the summary I promised.

Full Engagement Energy Fundamentals

1. There are 4 interrelated dimensions of human energy:

- Physical
- Emotional
- Mental
- Spiritual

2. The Principle of Adaptation

Human beings develop and grow capacity by intelligently spending energy in any of these dimensions to the point at which they are just exceeding their current capacity and no further. If they then give themselves adequate recovery, they will adapt to meet increased demand.

This isn't just the way that muscles adapt and grow; it's also the way we learn calculus, grow our joy, and increase our capacity to express compassion and care for others. If we don't use a capability, it becomes weaker and eventually disappears. Any dimension of human energy deteriorates unless we place sufficient demand on it. Overprotecting people from stress causes them to grow weaker. Submitting them to excessive distress breaks them.

3. The Principle of Strategic Recovery

When we exceed capacity too much and/or too long, it is neither strategic nor admirable, it is irresponsible and leads to system shutdown. The key to effectiveness is oscillation (intensive energy expenditure followed by energy resupply).

When it comes to exercise, high intensity interval training (HIIT) is the best way to employ this principle. In the work setting, if you don't get adequate recovery you will eventually be forced to recover through illness, burnout or worse.

4. Fix Position and Correct Course to Live on Purpose

The goal is for you to achieve your purpose, your carefully considered, personal definition for a successful life. None of us is perfect, and there is no such thing as perfect energy management. All of us get off track and life is a process of continually assessing current position and correcting to get back on course. Other ways to express this are, "notice and adjust", or "sense and respond", "repent and renew". I hope you will regularly fix your position, make subtle adjustments to your course and live a life of extraordinary fulfillment and contribution.

The Power of Story and Ritual

The stories you tell about yourself are very powerful. They can fool you into remaining comfortable with the current situation or they can act as powerful motivators in implementing change. If you change your story, you change your life. The key to change is to employ the 4 concepts above by purposefully replacing old stories with new ones. By definition, old stories contain flawed emotional logic. Growth and positive change occur when we use the very limited willpower and self-discipline we have to form positive habits (rituals) that propel us to the realization of ultimate mission (purpose). Growth is the result of cutting off the air supply to counterproductive, self-destructive stories and habits and replacing them with compelling new ones by repetitively writing your new stories and using new rituals to trigger positive results.

Just before we finished our session I asked you to identify rituals that you will add to your operating routines. At the back of this paper I have attached a list of many potential rituals to help you move your ultimate mission from concept to action. They are only examples. The rituals you create will be even better than any I have suggested here because yours will be more specific and meaningful to your situation. Great performers have a compelling sense of purpose, they have constructive, adaptive stories and they consistently engage in great rituals.

If you have already started to consistently employ rituals that we talked about such as – regular exercise, strategic recovery and eating every 3 hours, you are already experiencing a significant energy lift, and I mean significant. By focusing on your purpose, replacing the myths in your old story with constructive truth, and implementing a small set of powerful rituals you will experience a huge rejuvenation and resilience advantage.

Finally I want to remind you to call your accountability partner once every 2 weeks for the next 13 weeks (90 days). Before you make each call be sure to re-write your New Story from a clean sheet of paper without looking at what you wrote previously. Here is a checklist for the call with your partner:

1. Have you thought more about your Ultimate Mission?
2. Have you rewritten your New Story this week?
3. Are you making progress toward the realization of your purpose?
4. How is it going with your rituals?

That's it. If your calls are too long, you won't make them. Make them brief, powerful and useful.

Complete the Mission that you might hear those wonderful words, "Well done good and faithful servant!"

Fred Harburg

Addendum of Rituals

Spiritual Rituals

Be clear on purpose, values, personal and professional contribution, and guiding principles. Collectively they create a clear sense of identity and life compass helping to answer the BIG questions: Who am I? Why am I here? How do I choose to live? Where am I going? What is in bounds and what is out of bounds for me? What am I here to do and to give? What am I here to learn? Spiritual routines include things like the following:

- Regularly review your Engagement Plan (Ultimate & Training Missions, New Story, & Rituals)
- Periodically review and revise your Ultimate Mission/definition of success
- Make regular time for reflection, journaling, and gratitude (3-minute drill before bed)
- Extend help to the less fortunate in your community on a consistent basis
- Consider your deepest values and think about how you might live out one of them today
- Think about how you may be violating one of your values and how to correct to course
- Regularly read and reflect on meaningful spiritual wisdom
- Take a few minutes to think about how to serve others who will be in your next meeting/call
- Rewrite a "New" Story every second Sunday evening, compare it with the previous one
- Consider a moral dilemma and think about how to do the right thing for the right reason
- Ask for forgiveness from someone you have wronged
- Give forgiveness to someone who has wronged you
- Install a new picture of your family on your screen saver every month
- Identify ways to put the needs and concerns of others ahead of your own
- Think about how to help others quietly
- Consider how you might leave a lasting legacy for a cause meaningful to you
- Reflect on the value and urgency of your mission statement within 15 minutes of waking
- Spend 20 minutes reflecting on the day's successes and failures relative to your purpose
- When you sense your off course say, "I see what I'm doing here!" and make a correction
- Regularly fix your current position by assessing the alignment of action on the 16 scale
- Identify three ways to be of service to others this week
- Meditate on writings of great wisdom and historic great acts of great kindness
- Consider random acts of kindness that others will never know came from you
- Exercise the courage to support people who hold beliefs opposed to your own
- Offer encouragement and genuine support for the disadvantaged or discouraged

- Find ways to share the abundance you enjoy
- Take 5 to 30 minutes either to walk, meditate, pray, listen to soothing music, breathe deeply, take a hot bath, do yoga, stretch or sit by yourself after work and before bed time to charge your personal batteries and to help make the transition between your work, family, and sleep
- Give someone else 5 to 30 minutes to do the same as above

Mental Rituals

Continually challenge your mind with learning. Consider unfamiliar but thoughtful ideas that are quite different and even opposed to yours. Move out of mental ruts by engaging a very different part of your brain than the one you habitually use at work. Music, dance, poetry, art, literature, sport, and nature are all great balancing domains to the one in which you spend most of your time. Mental routines might include things like the following:

- Return calls/emails at designated times during the day no, digital Ping-Pong
- Check e-mail/voicemail only once per evening at a time at least 90 min prior to sleep
- Work with colleagues to leverage the best use of each person's energy, skills, and talents
- Organize you day to take advantage of natural highs and lows in your energy
- Actively improve your work flow and the way you approach tasks
- Maintain focus on one task at a time for a significant and specific period of time
- Keep things organized to reduce the time and energy sink of searching for lost items
- Actively look for ways to avoid wasting time and energy – both for you and your team
- Multitask only when it is intelligently, safe, and productive (exercise w/kids, dance w/spouse)
- Ask for the talents, time, and expertise of other people on your team to achieve great results
- Use effective skimming and note taking to identify the key points from documents
- Use a simple scoring system to track progress on realizing your purpose and goals
- Have a clear plan for preventing or managing disruptions and interruptions
- Handle unpleasant tasks head on as soon as appropriate
- Give full authority to qualified people, collaborate, hold them accountable, celebrate results
- Consistently train yourself to concentrate fully and intensely for extended periods of time
- Consider the priority of tomorrow's tasks and allocate future time accordingly
- Think laterally - study things unrelated to your work (art, music, literature, religion, etc.)

- Learn another language or a musical instrument
- Look for the value in views that are opposed to your own
- Practice memorizing all the names of people at a party
- Learn to sketch or illustrate your ideas
- Read at least one challenging book each month
- Mentally rehearse for tomorrow's key activities or events
- Start each day acknowledging that it is a remarkable gift and you will invest it wisely
- Periodically review your purpose and how it is related to today's energy investments
- Take a minute to review your ultimate mission mentally within the first 30 minutes of waking
- Use "energy affirmations" such as "I love the way I feel after a good workout!"
- Complete daily training log or journal of progress before retiring each evening
- Download your Ultimate Mission on your screen saver
- Turn off your cell phone 10 minutes before arriving home prepare to make a world-class entry
- Change into relaxing clothes as soon as you arrive home
- Accept no phone calls during dinner
- Eliminate activities from a day the way you eliminate clutter from your desk or basement
- Assign jobs to others appropriately, respectfully, and in a genuinely empowering way
- Continually ask yourself if this is the highest and greatest use of your full and best energy
- Complete work during the day (sprint), after dinner – recover, read, go for walk, dance, enjoy a concert, film or a good book, talk with friends and family – put a boundary between day and night

Emotional Rituals

Solicit constructive feedback from others and offer appropriate disclosure to them. Continually increase the acuity and precision of your ability to feel your own feelings and to monitor the impact of your behavior on the feelings and behaviors of others. Emotional rituals might include items such as the following:

- Capture the feelings you experienced during the day in a journal
- Take time each day to breathe deeply, relax, & recover strategically

- Choose to be with people you admire, value, and enjoy
- Resolve issues with people and things to which you are losing energy
- Build regular connection with family and friends into your schedule
- Write an original note or email to each child before leaving for work
- Have a one-on-one with each direct report at a regularly specified time as appropriate
- When feeling defensive, take a deep breath, firmly say, "be courageous and open now!"
- Greet your staff first thing in the morning with genuinely embracing and positive emotion
- Visit or call rather than e-mail
- Turn away from your computer and give 100% focus when someone enters your office
- Make a date night with your spouse every other Saturday evening
- Turn your cell off and give 100% of your best energy for the first 30 min upon arriving home
- If you are married, stay that way – research shows amazing benefits
- Turn your cell phone off during dinner
- Tell bedtime stories to your children every night at 9 p.m.
- Call home at 8 p.m. (their time) every night you're out of town
- Phone call to parents every Sunday evening at 8 p.m. (their time)
- Establish and meet a minimum number of days you will be home for dinner every month
- When you start to feel impatient or anxious, do the following:
 - acknowledge the feeling
 - link a preferred feeling to your Core Purpose
 - take a deep breath with gratitude and exhale any stress
- Say something to build the confidence and trust in those around you
- Learn to consciously greet the morning with gratitude

Physical Rituals

Eat consciously; exercise consistently; recover faithfully. Physical rituals include items like the following:

Nutrition

- Eat breakfast every day within an hour of rising, never skip breakfast
- Eat no more than 5 handful of food at each of the 3 main meals of the day
- 5 handfuls = 2 of complex grains, 2 of fresh fruit and vegetables, and 1 of lean protein

- Eat until you're satisfied, not full, never overeat
- Apply the 80/20 rule at every meal (80 % of food is need food, up to 20% is want food)
- Eat every 3 hours to stabilize glucose/energy & prevent muscle loss
- Make snacks between main meals low to moderate glycemic, 100 to 150 calories maximum
- Sip water regularly throughout the day to avert dehydration
- Limit alcohol consumption to no more than two servings at a time

Exercise

- Enjoy 3 thirty minute cardio interval workouts per week
- Enjoy 2 resistance workouts per week
- Take regular breaks from your desk - move, hydrate, eat nutritiously to stabilize blood sugar
- Every 30 to 45 minutes, perform small movements
- Every 90 to 120 minutes perform major movements
- Expand energy to the feeling of discomfort to expand capacity
- Exercise at moderate to high intensity
- Ideal exercise length is never more than an hour

Recovery

- The last hour before bed, stop intense email, phone calls, and intensive news/entertainment
- Breathe deeply and slowly from the diaphragm to enhance energy recovery
- Go to bed and wake up consistently at the same times
- Go to bed early and wake up early
- Get at least 7 hours of sleep
- Write a 2 to 3 minute "gratitude journal" entry before retiring each night
- Sleep in a cool (18° C/ 65°F) room with no light and extra covers to be comfortable
- Schedule one long weekend per quarter
- Take all of your vacation
- Reserve 1 day/week or at least portion of day for complete recovery
- Make meals a time of enjoyment, renewal, and recovery
- Add laughter to the agenda