

After hitting the snooze button one too many times, you awaken with a startle and jump out of bed. You go wake the kids, get dressed, run downstairs to make breakfast, then rush out the door, certain that you have forgotten something. You drive over the speed limit to get to work on time, clock in, grab some coffee, and hurry to your office.



The Energy Game: Creating Balance in Your Life By Julie Fuimano

Whew! That's a lot of hurrying. I'm tired already. How about you? All of that rushing creates stress and causes your body to release adrenaline, the body's natural response to the perception of harm. You know it as the "fight or flight" mechanism. Many people habitually use it every day to give them the energy they need to get through the day. It is very draining, however, and taxing to the systems of the body. If you are constantly living in this hyped up mode, you may be feeling as though life is just passing you by, like you are not an active participant. Spiraling downward and out of control, you feel like something must give.

Imagine having a peaceful life where you could get things done with much less effort. What would it look like? How would it feel to get up refreshed in the morning? How would it be to have more time to spend with your family and friends – and yourself? Learning how to live without the hype takes some time and effort; like any habit, it will take vigilance to learn a new way to be fully present without the "rush." Here's how to get started.

What's Draining You?

Identifying the areas in your life that rob you of energy and increase your level of stress is the first step in creating more peace in your life. Are you driving too fast, participating in too many projects, or accepting responsibility for other people? What other

things can you identify that drain you of energy and concentration?

Do you worry about what others think of you? Do you set goals based on your own standards or on other's expectations? Do you have any unresolved issues that distract you from being fully present? Are you a procrastinator or a perfectionist? Do you often run late? Are you the type of person that thrives on a chaotic environment, creating crises in order to get hyped up? If any of these situations sound familiar, there are ways to help slow down the pace and begin finding balance in your life.

What Can You Do?

Accustomed to creating stress and thinking of everything as a stressor, you have created a life where control is at the mercy of the circumstances of the day. Blaming everyone and everything from management to your parents for how you were raised is not effective. Take control of your life and how you live it!

The first thing you can do is breathe! Take in a few healthy breaths and decide to stop the adrenaline-triggering behaviors. Then replace the unhealthy things you do with healthy alternatives. Investing in a new way of being and living takes time; go easy on yourself. Give yourself permission to experiment.

The Good Stuff

Slow down. Purposefully do things in your life that force you to move at a slower pace. Drive slower. Don't procrastinate. Eliminate unnecessary projects. Don't let other people "should" on you. If you are saying 'should, ought to, supposed to or have to', ask yourself whether this is your goal or someone else's. Create your own standards by which to live. Say no to requests that you do not want to do or that are not your responsibility. This will give you time to say yes to the things you enjoy.

Do things you enjoy and enjoy what you are doing at any given moment. Stop creating chaos and frenzy in your life and at work, and don't participate when others do it around you. Learn to recognize the feelings associated with the chaos. Ask yourself, what do you gain from creating or participating in that frenzied environment? What does it do to others?

What is missing in your life? Get it filled elsewhere, not at the expense of others. Be honest – always. Not being completely honest with yourself or others robs you of energy. If you have unresolved issues from your past, enlist the help of a specialist and deal with them.

What makes you feel good? What feeds your soul? Perhaps it's music, touch, good books, time with friends and family, nourishing food, etc. Your body needs regular maintenance just like your computer or your car; otherwise it too will break down. Exercise regularly; you cannot afford not to do

something physical. Spend some time alone each day; you are a human being not a human doing. Get to know yourself.

Each morning, have a routine that is nourishing and deliberate. Have something to look forward to in the evening. And at night, have a relaxing bedtime ritual (music, reading, touch, etc.) so you fall asleep with a smile on your face.

The Challenge

On an airplane, the flight attendants instruct us that if something happens, we should put our oxygen mask on ourselves first and then assist others. If we don't, we will pass out. We are entitled to design our lives around things that make us happiest and bring us joy. Putting ourselves first on our list of priorities is how we will ensure that we do more than just survive; that we actually have time to live. If we don't do it, who will? And if not now, when?



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