



Optimal Energy

Forget time, it's all about energy! Health Watch's **Teya Skae** tells us the focus has shifted as we grapple with the demands of the 21st century.

In our increasingly pressured lives, people are craving more time and energy in order to get more things done, or even just to get through their everyday routine. In fact, time and energy are now commodities. Buying "time share", for example, as in holidays or gym memberships, or trading options to achieve the most profitable outcome in buying or selling a commodity are based on the concept of buying, negotiating or extending time. But can we buy energy?

The answer is probably, in the form of energy drinks, energy bars, or increasing energy through meditation, yoga or exercise. Yet this is clearly not sustaining enough, as most people are still craving energy despite their hard earned efforts at increasing it.

Why is this so? If we understand that time is outside of ourselves and energy is within us all, we begin to understand that energy is our own currency for living and being. Without energy, we can't perform and do much in our life, even if we can buy time.

As philosophical as it may sound, this realisation is very practical and has huge implications in the way we use and value our Number One resource – our energy.

The old paradigm for getting things done emphasised Time Management; now the Human Potential movement sweeping across the planet and particularly across corporate America (so much so that it now underpins leadership training programs for Google staff) takes as its basic template for living your life, the need to balance your energy. So the new paradigm is all about energy and how we use it, and, most importantly, renew it.

It's ironic to realise that the "new

paradigm" of managing our energy in order to survive the frenetic pace of the 21st century, and indeed thrive, is not really new. In fact, its foundation lies in the wisdom of the ancient texts of Upanishads and the Vedas, and Traditional Chinese Medicine, a self contained 5000 year old system for living in harmony. All of these bodies of ancient wisdom recognise that energy is the fundamental principle of life, and if it is not harnessed or renewed, major struggles, symptoms and imbalances manifest in our daily life.

It might sound a bit nebulous, yet energy transcends time, space and dimension, as quantum physicists would attest. Simply put, when you manage energy, you are, in fact, managing time.

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In the New York Times bestseller, *The Power of Full Engagement* co-authors Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz (corporate coaches to top ranked professional athletes and corporations) demonstrate how managing energy, not time, is the key to enduring high performance, as well as health, happiness and life balance.

As the authors and management leaders summarise, "We live in digital time. Our pace is rushed, rapid fire and relentless. Facing crushing workloads, we try to cram as much as possible into every day. We're wired up, but we're melting down. Time management is no longer a viable solution.

"The number of hours in a day is fixed, but the quantity and quality of energy

available to us is not. This fundamental insight has the power to revolutionise the way you live your life."

Have you ever questioned why you might not get the results you would expect, even though you have put time and effort into your endeavours? It's very likely that you are not managing your key resource, your energy, on physical, mental, emotional and spiritual (electromagnetic) levels.

The key to sustaining high performance in any area of life is to make the experience engaging and enjoyable, so it can be recreated again and again without us becoming "burnt out". While our customary busyness may have the appeal of suggesting high productivity or being successful and in demand, it can also mean avoidance and energy drain.

The key to being fully engaged and productive in life is to utilise the four key sources of energy – physical, emotional, mental and spiritual – in the most engaging and appropriately balanced way, so as get things done more efficiently, and with more enjoyment.

Let's remember energy is within us and time is outside of us. So it makes sense to focus on managing energy, as we have direct access to it. It is this multidimensional energy combined in its most balanced and fully engaged state, that makes the difference in being fully alive, healthy and content.

The differences in focus between managing time and managing energy can be expressed in these ways:

Old Paradigm	New Paradigm
Time management	Energy management
Avoid stress	Seek stress and train recovery
Life is a marathon	Life is a series of sprints
The power of positive thinking	The Power of Full Engagement – by using the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual sources of energy combined
Downtime is a waste of time	Downtime is productive time
Time is finite	Energy is renewable
Time is outside of us	Energy is inside of us

If we remind ourselves, that energy is the capacity to do work and to perform, how can we maximise our performance and enjoyment in life? The answer lies in the renewal of the four key sources of energy.

Renewal of your energy is the most important idea to put into practice. Balancing energy is not so much about endurance, but rather, disengaging for short bursts of rest and recovery from everything. It's easy to grasp this idea when we see life as a series of sprints instead of a marathon to get somewhere.

How can we put this idea into practice? By introducing daily rituals or activities in the right amounts by finding time for rest, relaxation, fun and play, emotional connectedness, mental relaxation and spiritual realignment daily and in short bursts.

1. Physical energy

We can achieve this goal through:

- **Quality and quantity of sleep.**
- **Appropriate nutrition in order to have balanced blood sugar levels throughout the day.** It isn't possible to be productive and perform well with low blood sugar. It is impossible to even think with very low blood sugar levels as it literally leaves you feeling "brain dead". Appropriate nutrition means managing your insulin spikes and choosing live, fresh, enzyme-rich foods for the best fuel for your physical body, your engine.
- **The right exercise and this does not mean excessive cardio.** In fact, short intense exercise is far more beneficial and doable.
- **Short bursts of rest in between rushing around or performing endless tasks around the house or work is far more productive.** Think of yourself as a "corporate athlete" – sprint and recover instead of working all day long without regular rest and recovery. Little breaks can be anywhere from 1-5 minutes, as long as it you totally disengage from your activity.

2. Emotional energy (emotional connection)

In order to perform at our best, we need to access our positive and uplifting emotions such as enjoyment, adventure, opportunity, challenge and feeling inspired. Appreciating others and, in turn, feeling appreciated is the key.

When we dwell on negative emotions such as hostility, resentment or anxiety, the quality of our energy is hugely diminished.

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Over time, running on negative emotional energy at work or in any other area of life is a huge energy drain, which leads to chronic tiredness, perhaps even Chronic Fatigue Syndrome.

This is because emotions that arise out of fear or deficit or anything that threatens our survival in any way, produce an extremely toxic effect by stimulating our adrenal glands to release cortisol, the stress hormone. In small amounts, cortisol is beneficial, but when it pumps into the bloodstream for too long, it leaves a trail of destruction and eats away muscle tissue.

3. Mental energy (mental focus)

Any way of quietening the mind and its constant chitchat, such as meditation or activities that focus on the breath like Qi Gong, allows us to renew our mental energy. This makes us far more intelligent and productive in the long run.

To perform at our best, we need to sustain concentration and be flexible in our thinking, with appropriate focus and realistic optimism.

Regularly engaging in creative visualisations enhances the mental flow of energy.

Spiritual energy aligns our actions, motivations and ambitions, with the end result that we feel more alive, engaged, connected and able to judge more clearly our next step. At this level, we are able to access and use our innate gifts and talents, so that we have a source of “energy on tap”.

Spiritual energy is the most powerful source of our motivation, perseverance and direction; it makes sense to use it daily.

Life is not so much just about acquiring things and living from one experience to the next, but rather being fully engaged and enjoying what we are doing at any given time. And the key to being more engaged in all aspects of life is to balance our four key sources of energy – physical, emotional, mental and spiritual – with intermittent energy renewal.

Just as nature has its own natural pulses and rhythms – the ebb and flow of tides, the lunar cycle, the seasons, the daily rising and setting of the sun – we also experience wavelike movements between activity and rest.

Our breathing, brain waves, body temperature, heart rate, hormonal levels and blood pressure all have healthy and

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Mental capacity is derived from expending and renewing energy – in practical terms, if we spend too much time in overthinking, overanalysing, and focusing heavily on practical outcomes, we are not allowing for creative possibilities and new ways of experiencing. If we adopt this approach habitually, it can lead to boredom, a very destructive outcome.

4. Spiritual energy (finding your path)

Knowing your soul or life purpose is not enough – taking little steps to actualise it and align your life with it is the key to maintaining overall balance. Why? It is not widely understood that while the most fundamental source of energy is physical, the most significant is spiritual.

If we are aligned with our spiritual energy, it directly flows and replenishes the other three interconnected sources of your energy bowl, physical, mental and emotional.

“unhealthy” rhythmic patterns. Daily rest and renewal is the key to balancing our four sources of energy. If we have more energy, we have the capacity to do more and enjoy life even more. If we can achieve a balance of being physically energised, emotionally connected, mentally focused and spiritually aligned, we are well on the way to health and happiness. ●

In Wellness!
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DISCLAIMER: The views expressed in this column are those of the writer and are intended as an informed contribution to people seeking to pursue holistic health and lifestyle. For medical advice, always be guided by your own healthcare professionals