

Maintaining and Creating Energy

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“Success is almost totally dependent upon drive and persistence. The extra energy required to make another effort or try another approach is the secret of winning.”  
- Denis Waitley

It's hard to imagine the paradoxical nature of a starving baker. Think of someone who bakes and sells food all day. Surrounded by food, yet they neglect and forget to eat. Commonly, this is a pitfall for leaders. They always tend to other people and prioritize others over themselves (Elmore 2012).

The baker analogy comes from the book, *Habitudes* by Elmore. Imagine a small bakery opens down the street. This shop is run by only one baker. He runs all the operations from open to close. It happens that his bagels taste incredible. You, along with everyone in your neighborhood, begin to frequent the shop. Word gets around town, and suddenly, the bakery becomes the most famous bagel shop in the area.

As more customers buy bagels, the lonely baker has trouble keeping up. He's too busy working the shop to find and hire someone else. Over time, the baker begins to slow down. He starts to tire and wear out. The bakery loses quality, the service slows down, and the lively atmosphere dies down. You, as a loyal customer, attempt to find the reason behind the dramatic change.

As you might have guessed, you find out this baker doesn't eat in this hypothetical situation. He is too busy feeding his customers that he forgets to feed himself.

Through the high demands of leadership roles, people have so much laying on their shoulders. They put all their energy and resources into solving problems and serving other people. Leaders often fail to tend to themselves and cannot help the people around them because of burnout and exhaustion. While they are leading others forward, they are driving themselves straight into the ground. The baker opened his shop, and instantly, it was a hit. His energy and enthusiasm for the art of baking and customer service attracted significant interest. As time went on, he used up that energy, neglecting and forgetting to recharge. When he dwindled, so did his bakery, and so did his customers.

## Energy

Think of energy as the money in your bank account. The more you use, the less you have. When you make a deposit, you have more money to spend. Elizabeth McGregor says, "Personal energy

is the amount of willpower you have. It's the amount of effort you are capable of giving, within your mind and body, to things, people, or challenges" (2019).

The energy at your disposal can fluctuate. If you have high energy, you can give more effort. If you give more effort, you lose more energy. If you give too much energy, you burn out. Falling into burnout is catastrophic.

You have probably heard all your life, "the wealthy get wealthier." That's because it takes money to make money. It's much easier to create a business when you have capital to fund it. It makes sense to say, "the energetic get more energized." With more willpower, drive, and effort, it is easy to put in the work to create more energy. People who sleep well have the energy to go to the gym, cook nutritional meals, and put in consistent effort. Consistency compounds; each repetition creates more and more success.

The amount of persistent effort a leader puts into a project heavily influences their success. When they succeed, their brain fires off dopamine and makes them feel good for doing well, and now they are more motivated to do more.

Bank Account	Energy Reserve
Deposit money	Create energy
Spend too much and go bankrupt	Use too much and burn out
The wealthy get wealthier	The energetic get more energized
No limit on the size of your bank account	No limit on the amount of energy you have
Spend less than you deposit	Use less than you create

Think about the bank account again. You can take money out and deposit money in. Taking out too much money without replenishing it can lead to that account hitting bottom and burning out. Of course, that would mean zero dollars in the account. Neatly, it doesn't work the other way. You can't add too much money. There is no ceiling on the amount you can deposit, and there is no ceiling to the amount of energy you can hold.

Energy can be used up, but there are no limits to the amount in your reserve. Leaders need to make sure they have the most at their disposal. They do so many things that dry up their energy. Luckily, it is possible to use those reserves efficiently and create new energy reserves that add to the limitless supply.

## Using what you have

Individual leadership involves "a process through which people influence themselves to achieve the self-direction and the self-motivation necessary to perform" (Chung et al. par 13). Logically, this concept seems like something everyone at least has a decent understanding of. A 'decent understanding' does not cut it for a leader who has a copious amount of projects. People with substantial amounts of followers and responsibilities need to perform at the highest level possible. One option is to try harder, put in overtime, or multitask. However, this will increase the likelihood of burnout.

As previously mentioned, putting in consistent effort leads to success. Keeping up the consistency by pushing harder and putting in more effort won't last very long. Like overspending on a credit card, it is not a good idea to put in more effort to achieve a task if you don't have the energy to spare.

To maintain consistent work and increase effort, either you can optimize the energy you already use or create new energy.

## Maintaining Energy

"Maintaining" is a term for keeping energy levels consistent and optimizing the use of energy. Maintaining money makes sure you do not spend more than you have, and maintaining energy makes sure you do not use more than you create. Companies keep their finances consistent by tracking their spending and profit, making sure they don't lose money. They optimize their finances by cutting costs and raising sales prices. Maintaining energy comes from three categories working with each other as a process. Those categories are spirituality, confidence, and authenticity. Each type represents important parts of vitality. For one category to make a difference, they need the other two to work. If you only focus on two categories, the system breaks, and your energy levels will plummet.

Focus on all of them but take it one at a time. Read the sections and carefully and do the activities for each category.

### Definitions

**Burnout** – Emptying reserves by using more energy than is created

**Maintain** – Optimizing and minimizing the amount of energy used

**Create** – Increasing the amount of energy in the reserve

## Spirituality

Spirituality is defined as "one's need to find experience, meaning, and purpose by living according to a persons' deeply held values" (Godwin et al. 8). Spirituality consists of one's values and how one emotionally connects, upholds, and develops those values.

A Value is a subconscious emotion that is the guiding principle of an individual's life. One hundred percent of the time, the individual is motivated and directed by these deeply rooted emotions. The act of labeling these emotions, such as the label of passion, optimism, kindness, gratefulness, growth, or empowerment, lets the leader become clear and identify what their default motivations are. When a leader is unclear about their motives and their encompassing values, they might not aim for a consistent, clear goal. They would lead without a destination, and people would blindly follow, ultimately ending up nowhere. There would be no effect on leadership. Spirituality identifies who an individual is and where they want to go.

Related to individual leadership, if you are unclear on a goal you want to achieve, you might direct your effort to a task that has no benefit. The task won't get you closer to your goal, and you would use up energy for no reason. Clear values give you a sense of direction. That direction allows you to efficiently use your energy on the right things.

The baker valued a long-lasting successful shop, good food, and happy customers. His actions reflected those values. He worked tirelessly to keep the customers happy by giving them outstanding baked goods. His shop didn't succeed, though. He worked until he could no longer serve the customers, and the shop had to close down.

He valued a long-lasting successful shop. In this case, he thought of success as feeding his customers, never letting them down, and delivering the best of the best. As stated previously, values are subconscious emotions. If they are not brought to the forefront of the mind, you will overlook them in your day-to-day. The baker knew he wanted to succeed, so that is what he focused on. He didn't put much emphasis on the "long term" part of that success. Suppose he took the time to identify specific values. In that case, he might have determined that his overworking and not eating behaviors were not in the shop's long-term interest, aka not in alignment with his values.

## Identify your values

To clarify some values, answer these questions from Carlton University (Values Assessment Worksheet).

1. Recall times when you have been so absorbed in what you were doing that you hardly noticed the time. What were you doing?
2. Think about the things that you find meaningful. What do you think of? Include ideas, feelings, and activities.
3. What are the most important values to you? (Passion, Fun, Autonomy, Respect, Leadership, Risk-taking, etc.) – If you need inspiration, a quick online search for value identification worksheet will give you hundreds of potential answers.
4. Now, choose the ten most important to you and then prioritize them.
5. What are the five most important to you? Prioritize them.

The purpose of values are to give you a sense of direction, so you can analyze if you're spending energy productively or wastefully. If you value teamwork and repeatedly debate with a team member, you will quickly lose motivation. If you value compassion, volunteering at a soup kitchen won't use much effort. If you value gratitude, spending time acknowledging your teammate's achievements will come to you easily.

Align your actions with what you value.

## Confidence

People believe in people who believe in themselves. If a leader does not have strong beliefs, their followership might doubt the possibility of success. A person's "level of certainty about his or her ability to successfully do tasks" determines the intensity of the confidence that a person conveys (Axelrod 298). With strong confidence, a leader communicates their values and vision with certainty. The more certain that person is, the more likely a follower will be influenced. Confidence encompasses core leadership traits of empowerment over thoughts, behaviors, relationships, and performance. Without the confidence to carry out leadership, the leader cannot influence their followers.

Irrational self-talk promotes strong discouraging beliefs in oneself, resulting in low confidence. If Izzy tells herself, "I must be thoroughly competent, adequate, and achieving," she is kidding herself (Payne et al. 198). It is irrational and unreasonable to expect so much from herself. Even leaders make mistakes. Instead, she should believe, "I accept the mistakes I make because that is a natural human experience. I will learn from the mistakes." When leaders have overreaching expectations about their capabilities, they are likely to underperform and doubt their ability to uphold their beliefs. Search inside yourself. What unreasonable beliefs and expectations do you hold? How are you coming up short, and how can you rewrite those beliefs?

Another form of individual leadership that develops confidence is the practice of visualization, which is "symbolically experiencing imagined results of our behavior before we perform" (Godwin et al. 68). In sports psychology, a study was run where basketball athletes practiced visualization by envisioning themselves shooting free throws. For six weeks, they practiced the visualization of scoring every single shot. In their mind, they never missed. Another group was assigned to physically practice shooting free throws for six weeks. Both groups shot just as many shots throughout the study. As a control, another group didn't touch a basketball for six weeks.

At the end of the six weeks, both groups shot free throws, and they analyzed the results. Which group do you think scored the most? The group that only visualized their practice made more goals than those who solely relied on physical training (Godwin et al. 68). The idea behind this goes against the common saying, "practice makes perfect." Instead, the visualization relies on the phrase, "**perfect practice** makes perfect." For six weeks, they didn't miss a single shot, so when they jumped on that basketball court, they were overwhelmed with confidence. The rush of overflowing confidence allowed the basketball players to relax. Their self-doubt washed away, and all they had to do was effortlessly take the ball and shoot.

Individual leadership over mental imagery is the constant and obsessive reruns of the positive execution of leadership. The more a leader rehearses the perfect implementation of team facilitation, the more substantial confidence they create, leading to better facilitation. The more a leader visualizes giving a perfect presentation, the better the presentation delivery will be.

### Authenticity

Charismatic leadership, also known as authenticity, is defined as "one's personal strength perceived to be extraordinary and attractive by other people" (Chung et al. 301). Charismatic leadership works by internalizing one's values, visions, and beliefs to transform into a much clearer self-identification. The internalization of identity will come with the practice of spirituality and confidence. The stronger internalization one has, the stronger identification they will create. With the practice of self-leadership, one can internalize, identify, and then act on the same frequency. They think clearly, speak with certainty, and operate with confidence. Their thoughts, words, and actions are aligned.

### Try it out

Is there something you can be a little more confident in?

You don't have to make massive changes. Look for something that could change if you had just a smidge more confidence, such as meeting strangers, presenting, playing a sport, test taking, dancing, speaking up for yourself, and saying no to junk food.

Commit to a week of daily visualization for 5 minutes. Visualize doing your activity perfectly for 5 minutes every day for a week.

You might know this as authenticity. Authentic people have less self-doubt, more certainty, and less tension. An authentic leader can communicate and inspire because they understand themselves. Their thoughts, words, and actions align. An authentic leader is more willing to open and share themselves, creating a more powerful message. By all aims, authenticity creates ease emotionally, socially, intellectually, and spiritually. With ease comes less effort while still maintaining the same results.

Spirituality, confidence, and authenticity work together. Going through these exercises get the wheels turning, but the machine still must be maintained. Make it a priority to reflect on your values and analyze your confidence. This isn't some class assignment you can forget about tomorrow and have no repercussions. If you never revisit this material, that is a significant lost opportunity. Knowing your values and increasing your confidence will have an unbelievably massive impact on your life.

## Creating Energy

The energetic get energized

You know how to maintain your energy. Now, as you optimize your use and minimize its depletion, you can rapidly increase its reserves. Burning out manifests when someone burns through their energy faster than they create it. Eventually, they will run out, and once that happens, it is difficult to bring it back.

Getting back up from a burnout isn't impossible. It happens, but it usually takes a few days, weeks, or even months. Most people would call this a rut. You can definitely recall a time you were in a rut. That's burnout. Remember how difficult it was to get off the couch or concentrate on your work?

Maintaining and creating at the same time will keep you far away from burning out. In fact, if you do it correctly, you will steadily increase your energy. As your effort is spent wisely, you will be adding fuel to the fire.

Energy needs energy to create itself. It takes effort to cultivate stamina. There are plenty of ways to go about this, but some are better than others. The four best energy creation tactics include focusing on your mind, nutrition, sleep, and movement.

These topics deserve their own books. Below is a brief overview. If you want to learn more, look at the cited references.

### Mind

The brain uses the most energy out of any organ. It has been estimated to use about 20% of the bodies total reserve (Richardson 2019). So, it is essential to keep the brain in pristine condition.



This is achieved by practicing mindfulness. The popular meditation app Headspace says mindfulness "is the ability to be present, to rest in the here and now, fully engaged with whatever we're doing in the moment" (What is meditation?).

Mindfulness can be practiced in many ways, such as meditation, journaling, body scans, mindful eating, mindful breathing, and so on. Meditation has shown to improve focus, reduce anxiety, increase empathy, and increase energy.

## Nutrition

The body uses nutrients to feed and repair cells. Of course, you know that nutrition is received by food and drink. But did you know that a calorie is literally a number to measure the energy of nutrients (Nordqvist 2017)? Of course, calories aren't the only factor when it comes to energy from nutrition. You can't eat as much food as you'd like and get an endless stream of energy. It's more complicated.

If you want to get more detail, do your research. If that seems like a hassle, here are some general guidelines.

- The average recommended calorie intake for the day is 2000 calories
- Stay away from processed foods
- Eat vegetables, fruits, and nuts
- Good protein sources are chicken, fish, beans, and nuts

Indeed, you already knew this. The average person doesn't have to be type A about their diet. Most people don't need to drink apple cider vinegar, eat protein 30 minutes after they wake up, or go on fad diets. Tedious recommendations like these are mostly for elite performers. The advice is for getting the absolute most out of your nutrition, but only after you get down the foundation.

Sticking with just these 4 bullet points will get you 80% of the way to healthy nutrition. That's plenty enough to give you more energy.

## Sleep

Sleep is the number one way the human body creates energy. During sleep, the body heals itself. Healing regards the muscles, digestion system, brain, and everything else in the body (Sleeping Tips & Tricks).

Everyone has heard the recommended sleep duration is 8 hours. For young students, a higher number is sometimes recommended. College is rough. Sleep takes a backseat. Schedules are unpredictable, socials go late into the night, and studying seems to creep its way into 1 am.

**SLEEP IS THE MOST IMPORTANT WAY YOUR BODY REPAIRS ITSELF!**

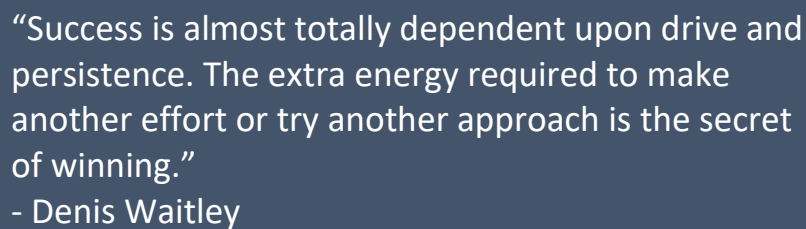
Out of anything, make time for sleep.

### Movement

Movement encompasses any type of activity that gets you off your butt (Benefits of Exercise 2019). You can run, lift weights, bike, swim, walk, bounce on a trampoline, skip to class, quite literally anything that requires movement. The good thing about movement is that it could take as little as 5 minutes.

If you can't make it to the gym, a short bodyweight circuit of pushups, sit-ups, and jumping jacks will have an effect on your energy. To get more energy, increase the duration of the movement and increase the intensity. Small energy gains come from a short walk, and significant energy gains come from a 45-minute run.

Amazingly, movement also helps with Mind and Sleep. It even helps with nutritional cravings. So, Movement compounds into the other categories.



“Success is almost totally dependent upon drive and persistence. The extra energy required to make another effort or try another approach is the secret of winning.”  
- Denis Waitley

There was so much information packed in this book. It might feel overwhelming, so here is a summary.

Energy is the amount of willpower and effort you can give to a task at any given time. Energy provides you as a leader with that ability to keep on pushing towards success. It is a commodity. Meaning, the more you use it, the less you have. So, it is vital to minimize its use and maximize its efficiency. Use the process of identifying values, building confidence, and practicing authenticity to purposefully use energy on the right activities. Finally, you want to build up as much energy as you can. While simultaneously maintaining and building energy, your reserves will overflow. Channel that energy into your life and into your leadership. Sustaining a creation of energy will compound. The more you have, the easier it will be to create more. Knowing all of that, keep the starving baker in mind. In your efforts to serve others, remember to feed yourself.

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