



### About The Authors

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## **The Summary**

Energy, not time, is the fundamental currency of high performance. The premise of this book is simple: Performance, health, and happiness are grounded in the skillful management of energy. We live in a world that runs 24/7 and places what seems like unending demands on us. Our response is often to try to manage our time better, which helps to a point.

The number of hours in a day is fixed, but the quantity and quality of energy available to us is not. It is our most precious resource. The more we take responsibility for the energy we bring to the world, the more empowered and productive we become. The more we blame others or external circumstances, the more negative and compromised our energy is likely to be.

To be fully engaged, we must be physically energized, emotionally connected, mentally focused and spiritually aligned with a purpose beyond our immediate self-interest. Full engagement includes feeling eager to get to work in the morning, coming home equally happy in the evening, and being capable of setting clear boundaries between the two. It means being able to immerse yourself in the mission you are on, whether it is grappling with a creative challenge at work, spending time with loved ones, or simply having fun. Full engagement implies a fundamental shift in the way we live our lives.

The challenge of great performance is to manage your energy more effectively in all dimensions to achieve your goals. Four key energy management principles drive this process:

Principle 1: Full engagement requires drawing on four separate but related sources of energy: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual.

Principle 2: Because energy capacity diminishes both with overuse and with underuse, we must balance energy expenditure with intermittent energy renewal.

Principle 3: To build capacity, we must push beyond our normal limits, training in the same way that elite athletes do. All growth comes by expending energy beyond our ordinary limits and then recovering.

Principle 4: Positive energy rituals—highly specific routines for managing energy—are the key to full engagement and sustained high performance.

Change is difficult—we are creatures of habit. Most of what we do is automatic and non-conscious. The problem with most change efforts is that conscious effort can't be sustained over the long haul. Will and discipline are far more limited resources than most of us realize.

If you have to think about something each time you do it, the odds are that you won't be able to keep doing it for very long.

A positive ritual is a behavior that becomes automatic over time. We use the word "ritual" purposefully to emphasize the notion of a carefully defined, highly structured behavior. The power of rituals is that they ensure that we use as little conscious energy as possible where it is not absolutely necessary, leaving us free to strategically focus the energy available to us in creative, enriching ways. The most effective way to bring change is building positive rituals into our lives.

Making changes that endure is a three-step process that we call *Purpose-Truth-Action*. The first step in our change process is to *Define Purpose*. In the face of our habitual behaviors we need inspiration to make changes. To get that we should ask the question, "How should I spend my energy in a way that is consistent with my deepest values?" Ultimately we need to identify our deepest values and define a vision for our lives—which provides motivation to change.

It's impossible to chart a course of change until you are able to look honestly at who you are today. In the next stage of the process, *Face the Truth*, we look honestly at how we are currently spending our energy. We regularly underestimate the consequences of our energy management choices, failing to honestly acknowledge the foods we are eating, the quality of energy we are putting into key relationships, and how focused (or unfocused) we are at work.

The third step is to *Take Action* to close the gap between who you are and who you want to be—between how you manage your energy now and how you want to manage your energy to achieve whatever mission you are on. This step involves building a personal development plan grounded in positive energy rituals. It is possible to build and sustain energy in all dimensions of our lives rather than watching passively as our capacities diminish with age. Building rituals requires defining very precise behaviors and performing them at very specific times. As Aristotle said, "We are what we repeatedly do."

### **The Pulse of High Performance: Balancing Stress and Recovery**

Elite athletes use a training method referred to as periodization, where periods of training alternate with times of rest and recovery. Following a period of activity, the body must replenish its energy. Fail to do so and the athlete will experience a measurable deterioration in performance. Note: recovery is more than the absence of work; it is actively restocking energy.

Balancing stress and recovery is critical not just in competitive sports, but also in managing energy in all facets of our lives. The same balance is needed emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. Emotional depth and resilience depend on active engagement with others and with

our own feelings. Mental acuity diminishes in the absence of ongoing intellectual challenge. Spiritual energy capacity depends on regularly revisiting our deepest values and holding ourselves accountable in our behavior. Full engagement requires cultivating a dynamic balance between the expenditure of energy and the renewal of energy in all dimensions. (Unfortunately, most of us assume that we can expend energy indefinitely without restoring it).

Several years ago, the magazine *Fast Company* asked a series of successful professionals to talk about how they avoided burnout while in highly demanding jobs. Nearly every one described very specific routines that they had instituted to ensure they regularly renewed themselves. They went against the flow in a world that celebrates work and activity, ignores renewal and recovery, and fails to recognize that both are necessary for sustained high performance.

The challenge we face is to consciously and deliberately create new boundaries. We must learn to establish stopping points in our days, times when we step off the track, cease work, and shift our attention from achievement to restoration. Intermittently disengaging is what allows us to passionately reengage.

Working at a feverish pace without breaks may actually be addictive. Stress hormones such as adrenaline create a seductive rush—the so-called adrenaline high. When we operate at a high enough intensity for long enough, we progressively lose the capacity to shift to any other gear. Our natural inclination is to push harder when demand increases. Over time we resist precisely what would make us more effective: taking breaks and seeking restoration. In effect, we get stuck in overdrive, unable to turn off the engine.

It's not the intensity of energy expenditure that produces burnout, but rather the duration of expenditure without recovery. Regularly renewing our energy ensures that we can sustain full engagement—so long as demand remains constant. But what happens when demand increases to the point of overload?

That is actually the prescription for growth. To build capacity, we must systematically expose ourselves to *more* stress—followed by adequate recovery. Challenging a muscle past its limits prompts a phenomenon known as supercompensation, where the body responds by building more muscle fibers. The same is true of “muscles” in all areas—emotional, mental, and spiritual.

Ironically, although we resist being pushed beyond our comfort zones, that kind of stress is a key to achieving long-term satisfaction and well-being. The best moments in our lives usually occur when a person's body or mind is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile. Our deepest satisfaction comes from our willingness to expose ourselves to new challenges and engage in novel experiences.

## **Physical Energy: Fueling the Fire**

The importance of physical energy seems obvious for athletes. The rest of us are evaluated more by what we do with our minds than with our bodies, so we tend to discount the role that physical energy plays in performance. In most jobs, the physical body has been completely cut off from the performance equation. In reality, physical energy is the fundamental source of fuel, even if our work is almost completely sedentary. It not only lies at the heart of alertness and vitality but also affects our ability to manage our emotions, sustain concentration, think creatively, and even maintain our commitment to whatever mission we are on.

In practical terms, the size of our energy reservoir depends on the patterns of our breathing, the foods we eat and when we eat them, the quantity and quality of our sleep, the degree to which we get intermittent recovery during the day, and the level of our fitness.

Breathing is a powerful tool for self-regulation—a means both to summon energy and to relax deeply. (Extending the exhalation prompts a powerful wave of recovery). The second critical source of physical energy in our lives comes from the foods we eat. Eating 5-6 low calorie, highly nutritious meals a day ensures a steady supply of energy, without the typical highs and lows many experience. Focusing on low-glycemic foods, and eating a larger amount earlier in the day rather than later, greatly increases energy levels.

Drinking water is perhaps the most undervalued source of physical energy renewal. Drinking sufficient water greatly impacts performance--by the time we feel thirsty, we may already be dehydrated (dehydrate a muscle by just 3%, and it will lose 10% of its strength and 8% of its speed).

Other than eating and breathing, sleeping is the most important source of recovery in our lives. Even small amounts of sleep debt have a significant impact on strength, cardiovascular capacity, mood, and overall energy levels. Mental performance—reaction time, concentration, memory, and logical reasoning—all decline steadily as sleep debt increases. Sleep is also the primary period when growth and muscle repair happens. Going to bed early and getting up early will bring more rest than going to bed late and sleeping late—even if the same number of hours are involved.

Finally, exercise. Both strength and cardiovascular training have a powerful impact on health, on energy levels, and on performance. Given the number of benefits that we derive from even moderate exercise, it seems extraordinary that the vast majority of Americans do almost none. The explanation is simple. Building strength and endurance requires pushing past our comfort and experiencing discomfort. It takes time before the obvious benefits kick in, and most of us quit before that ever occurs.

## **Emotional Energy: Transforming Threat Into Challenge**

Physical energy is the raw fuel for igniting our emotional skills and talents. In order to perform at our best we must access pleasant and positive emotions: enjoyment, challenge, adventure and opportunity. Emotions that arise out of threat or deficit—fear, frustration, anger, sadness—have a toxic feel to them and are associated with the release of specific stress hormones, especially cortisol. Emotional intelligence is simply the capacity to manage emotions skillfully in the service of high positive energy and full engagement. In practical terms, the key “muscles” or competencies that fuel positive emotion are self-confidence, self-control, social skills, and empathy. Smaller, supportive “muscles” include patience, openness, trust and enjoyment.

Our emotional energy levels have a significant impact on our performance. Negative emotions draw down our energy stores at a rapid rate, while positive emotions fuel high performance. The challenge, then is to recover when we spend emotional energy and build up a positive reservoir we can draw upon.

Simply changing channels is an effective method to refuel emotionally. During the past decade we have been surprised and dismayed to discover how infrequently most people undertake activities solely because they are enjoyable and emotionally nourishing. One of the most revealing questions we ask clients is how frequently they experience a sense of joy or deep satisfaction. The most common answer we get is “rarely.”

Any activity that is enjoyable, fulfilling, and affirming tends to prompt positive emotions. Depending on your interests, that may mean singing, gardening, dancing, doing yoga, playing sports, or spending quiet, reflective time alone. The key is making such activities priorities, and treating the time that you invest in them, as sacred. The point is not just that pleasure is its own reward, but that it is a critical ingredient in sustained performance.

The depth or quality of emotional renewal is something else again. It depends on how absorbing, enriching, and enlivening the activity turns out to be. Television is one of the primary means by which most people relax and recover. However, watching television is the mental and emotional equivalent of eating junk food. It may provide a temporary form of recovery, but it is rarely nutritious and it is easy to consume too much.

Creating a rhythmic balance between energy expenditure and energy recovery is more complex emotionally than it is physically, but no less critical to optimal performance and full engagement. Taking time to invest in things that renew us emotionally doesn't cause us to be less productive; it enables us to be fully engaged and bring more energy to bear on our responsibilities. Many people are afraid that taking time away from work will mean they will get less done. Maybe, but our experience is that you will operate with more energy and be both more satisfied and more productive if you will make the investment.

### **Mental Energy: Appropriate Focus and Realistic Optimism**



Just as physical energy is the fundamental fuel for emotional competencies, so it is the fuel for mental skills. Nothing so interferes with performance and engagement as the inability to concentrate on the task at hand. To perform at our best we must be able to sustain concentration and access realistic optimism. This is a paradoxical notion that implies seeing the world as it is, but always working positively toward a desired outcome or solution.

Perhaps nowhere do we so undervalue the importance of intermittent recovery as in the mental dimension of our lives. In most work environments the message is that working longer and more continuously is the best route to high productivity. We aren't rewarded for taking regular breaks, or for building a workout into the middle of a day, or for any pattern of work other than keeping our heads down and grinding away for as long as we can. The problem is that thinking uses up a great deal of energy. The consequences of insufficient mental recovery range from increased mistakes of judgment and execution to lower creativity and a failure to take reasonable account of risks. The key to mental recovery is to give the conscious, thinking mind intermittent rest.

Much as it is true physically and emotionally, the balance of stress and recovery appears to be a critical factor in maximizing cognitive capacity. Exposing one's self to short-term stress can stimulate a burst of adrenaline that actually improves memory. After we have learned new information or had new experiences, it takes time for the brain to consolidate and encode what it has learned. Without downtime that learning cannot take place as efficiently.

Practically speaking, this means we operate mentally at our best when we incorporate breaks into our routine. Studies have shown that optimal performance comes when you take short breaks every 90-120 minutes. A short walk, a change of focus, a quick exercise burst, a meditation time, etc. done for even 15-20 minutes can greatly increase the effectiveness of the time you are actually working. Most people will get *more* done, and done better, even though they are actually working less. The tendency to push through without taking a break more often results in less productivity as your mental energy decreases over time.

Loss of memory is a common complaint for people over 40. More often than not the explanation isn't disease but rather the failure to keep the mind actively engaged. Continuing to challenge the brain by learning something new protects us from decline as we age.

### **Spiritual Energy: He Who Has a Why to Live**

The amount of energy we have to spend at any given moment is a reflection of our physical capacity. Our motivation to spend what we have is largely a spiritual issue. Fundamentally, spiritual energy is a unique force for action in all dimensions of our lives. It is the most powerful source of our motivation, perseverance, and direction. We define "spiritual" simply as the connection to a deeply held set of values and to a purpose beyond our self-interest. Practically, anything that ignites the human spirit serves to drive full engagement and to maximize performance in whatever mission we are on. The key muscle that fuels spiritual

energy is character—the courage and conviction to live by our values, even when doing so requires personal sacrifice and hardship.

Spiritual energy is sustained by balancing a commitment to others with adequate self-care. The capacity to live by our deepest values depends on regularly renewing our spirit—seeking ways to rest and rejuvenate and to reconnect with the values that we find most inspiring and meaningful. When we lack sufficient spiritual energy, we must find systematic ways to reconnect with our purpose and regain the passion and sense of direction that comes with it.

More than at any other level, spiritual energy expenditure and renewal are deeply intertwined and tend to occur simultaneously. Nearly all contemplative traditions talk about spiritual “work” and spiritual “practice.” These activities may be aimed at being of service to others or deepening our compassion or helping us to experience our interconnectedness. Spiritual renewal, on the other hand, comes from feeling inspired by and reconnected to our sense of purpose and our deepest values.

Some activities generate considerable spiritual renewal without demanding significant energy expenditure. These include walking in nature, reading an inspirational book, listening to music, or hearing a great speaker. Spiritual practices, by contrast, can be renewing and demanding at the same time. Meditation, for example, requires focused attention to quiet the mind, but may also prompt a rejuvenating experience. Prayer, too, requires the effort of concentration and contemplation, but can also serve as a source of emotional and spiritual comfort. Reflecting regularly on our deepest values and holding ourselves accountable to them is both difficult and taxing, but it may also be inspiring and energizing.

### **Defining Purpose: The Rules of Engagement**

If growth and development take place from the bottom up—from physical to emotional to mental to spiritual—change is *powered* from the top down. The most compelling source of purpose is spiritual, the energy derived from connecting to deeply held values and a purpose beyond one’s self-interest. Purpose creates a destination. It drives full engagement by prompting our desire to invest focused energy in a particular activity or goal. We become fully engaged only when we care deeply, when we feel that what we are doing really matters.

Purpose is a unique source of energy and power. Purpose becomes a more powerful and enduring source of energy in our lives in three ways: when its source moves from negative to positive, external to internal and self to others.

A negative source of purpose is defensive and deficit-based. It arises in the face of threat, when we feel our security or survival is at stake. The problem is the high cost—negative emotions drain energy, they don’t produce it.



Purpose becomes a more powerful source of energy when it moves from being externally to internally motivated. Extrinsic motivation reflects the desire to get more of something we don't have enough of: money, status, power, or even love. Intrinsic motivation grows out of the desire to engage in an activity because we value it for the inherent satisfaction it provides.

The third factor that ignites a deeper sense of purpose is shifting attention from fulfilling our own needs and desires to serving something beyond ourselves; something that is meaningful and makes a difference.

Clarifying purpose takes time—quiet, uninterrupted time—which is something that many of us feel we simply do not have. We are forever rushing from one thing to the next without any larger sense of purpose. It may help to think of energy devoted to these issues as an investment with the potential to deliver a high return over time—increased energy, fuller engagement, higher productivity and greater satisfaction.

The key to defining purpose is to create a vision for how we intend to invest our energy. A compelling vision statement strikes a careful balance. In order to provide inspiration it needs to be lofty, ambitious, and even a bit over-reaching. On the other hand, in order to have teeth it needs to be realistic, specific, and personal. Defining a vision this way becomes a picture of the possible, a blueprint for action, and a buffer against the inclination to make energy choices reactively rather than reflectively.

### **Face the Truth: How Are You Managing Your Energy Now?**

It is one thing to clarify our vision and quite another to live according to it. Facing the gap between who we want to be and who we really are is never easy. Each of us has an infinite capacity for self-deception. In many ways we push from our awareness that which we find unpleasant or upsetting or contrary to the way we wish to see ourselves. Until we can clear away the smoke and mirrors and look honestly at ourselves, we have no starting point for change.

Facing painful truths of where we are falling short or not living out what we believe is difficult. Denial is effectively a form of disengagement: it means shutting down a part of ourselves. Avoiding the truth numbs us from pain, but it also cuts us off from freely and fully engaging in the world. In addition, denial and self-deception require energy, which is then no longer available for more productive activities.

Looking honestly at our own behavior is only the first step. It is equally important to take responsibility for the choices that we make. The challenge is not just to acknowledge the fact of being overweight, but also to face the truth about its consequences—compromised energy, a higher likelihood of diabetes, heart disease, and a greater likelihood of early death. Only when we face these truths and act on them do we fully embrace the truth.

## **Taking Action: The Power of Positive Rituals**

Ivan Lendl was not the most physically gifted tennis player of his era, but for five years he was ranked #1 in the world. His edge was in the routines that he built. Lendl practiced long hours, and at very specific times. What set him apart from other players on the tour was that he followed similar routines in every dimension of his life. He developed a rigorous fitness regimen off the court and did regular ballet bar exercises to increase his balance and grace. He also practiced a series of daily mental-focus exercises to improve his concentration.

A growing body of research suggests that as little as 5% of our behaviors are consciously self-directed. We are creatures of habit and as much as 95% of what we do occurs automatically or in reaction to a demand or an anxiety. What Lendl understood brilliantly and instinctively was the power of positive rituals—precise, consciously acquired behaviors that become automatic in our lives, fueled by a deep sense of purpose.

Positive energy rituals are powerful on three levels. They help us to ensure that we effectively manage energy in the service of whatever mission we are on. They reduce the need to rely on our limited conscious will and discipline to take action. Finally, rituals are a powerful means by which to translate our values and priorities into action—to embody what matters most to us in our everyday behaviors.

Great performers all rely on positive rituals to manage their energy and achieve their goals. The sustaining power of rituals comes from the fact that they conserve energy. In contrast to will and discipline, which push us to action, a well-defined ritual pulls us. We feel somehow worse if we don't do it. Think about brushing your teeth in the morning. If we want to build into our lives new behaviors that last, we can't spend much energy to sustain them.

Since will and discipline are far more limited and precious resources than most of us realize, they must be called upon very selectively. Because even small acts of self-control use up this limited reservoir, consciously using this energy for one activity means it will be less available for the next one. The sobering truth is that we have the capacity for very few conscious acts of self-control in a day. However, we can offset the limitations of will and discipline by building positive rituals that become automatic as quickly as possible.

The most important role of rituals is to ensure an effective balance between energy expenditure and energy renewal in the service of full engagement. The more scheduled and systematic these rituals became, the more renewal they provided.

There are several key elements in building effective energy-management rituals but none is so important as specificity of timing and the precision of behavior during the 30-60 day acquisition period (it normally takes 30-60 days to clearly establish a habit in your life). The reason for this lies in the fact that our conscious capacity for self-control is limited and easily

depleted. By determining when, where, and how a behavior will occur, we no longer have to think much about getting it done.

Precision and specificity also help to assure that our rituals themselves remain fueled by our deepest values. It is not enough to create a vision statement; only by building a ritual to regularly revisit this vision can we ensure a strong, continuing connection to the unique source of energy such a statement provides.

If nothing succeeds like success, it is equally true that nothing fails like excess. A common mistake is to take on too many things—to try to change everything at once. Our method is to build rituals in increments, focusing on one significant change at a time, and reachable goals at each step of the process.

Two behaviors, we have found, dramatically increase the likelihood of successfully locking in new rituals. We call these behaviors Basic Training. They are the ground upon which successful rituals are most effectively built.

***Chart the course.*** There are a lot of ways to do this, but the aim is always the same: to launch each day's ritual-acquisition mission by revisiting our vision, clarifying not just what we intend to accomplish, but how we want to conduct ourselves along the way.

***Chart the progress.*** The second key to building rituals that lead to sustaining change is holding yourself accountable at the end of each day. Accountability is a means of regularly facing the truth about the gap between your intention and your actual behavior. If you are trying to eat a healthier diet, it is critical to have rituals that define what and when you are going to eat, but also to measure at the end of each day how well you've followed your plan. Defining a desired outcome and holding yourself accountable each day gives focus and direction to the rituals that you build. Many of our clients create a daily accountability log.

Holding your own feet to the fire doesn't require judging or punishing yourself when you fall short. Negative motivation is short-lived and energy draining. At its best, accountability is both a protection against our infinite capacity for self-deception and a source of information about what still stands in our way. If you are falling short in implementing a particular ritual or achieving the outcome you are seeking, several explanations are possible. It may be that the ritual isn't grounded in a value or a vision that is truly compelling to you. It may be the goal you set is too ambitious and needs to be implemented more slowly and progressively. Whatever the explanation, measuring your progress at the end of the day should be used not as a weapon against yourself, but as an instructive part of the change process.

As you begin to successfully develop rituals, you will find that it gets easier, and the changes seem less difficult. Life will develop a certain rhythm, your energy will increase, and you will be able to fully engage the different aspects of your life.



## From the Pastor's Perspective

*The Power of Full Engagement* was recommended to me by my coach. I found it interesting and challenging. I am very familiar with thinking in terms of time management; thinking in terms of energy management was a new idea for me. But I found it made a lot of sense, and practically there was a lot for me to apply.

I realized I operate with the idea that I will always have unlimited energy. I know in my head this isn't true, but it does reflect the truth of my heart, even while I am experiencing the opposite as I get older. Loehr & Schwartz point out that physical energy is foundational for every other kind of energy, so managing my physical energy is a first step. None of their suggestions in this arena were new—get enough sleep, eat right, exercise, etc—yet I felt challenged in a fresh way to invest more in my health, not only so I can be healthy, but so I can increase my energy levels. I am finding that the demands on me are increasing as I get older, not decreasing, so I see clearly my need to manage my energy. I find myself motivated afresh to do things I already knew, simply because of the new framework they have provided.

Their approach—developing rituals—I think of in terms of building habits. I have long known the importance of my habits, but I find myself (again) motivated afresh to intentionally build some into my life. I appreciated their warnings about not trying to take on too much at a time—focus on one ritual, get it established, and then move on to the next. I am looking at my life to see what one habit I can focus on that has the most leverage in my life. I think that will be my sleep habits—committing to an earlier bedtime and getting consistent in my night-time routine. My tendency has been to stay up late in order to get something done...and when I do I often have a snack (not veggies!), which affects my weight...and then I am tired the next day (which also affects my eating habits—I compensate for being tired by eating more). Getting a full 7.5—8 hours of sleep, starting earlier in the evening, will have the biggest impact on my life overall.

It's funny to me how quickly my thoughts go to all the other things I should also do. There are plenty, and I can make a good case for all of them. Of course, if I try to do them all, I'll end up not doing any. Even though I know that, I naturally still go there. That is one thing I will need to be intentional about resisting.

I encourage you to think proactively about what steps you can take to increase your energy. In the short time I have started focusing on managing my energy, I have already seen the impact. I'm sold, and I suspect that this will be a major theme for me over the next year, at least.