

## How to relax and fill your energy tanks over the holidays

It's been a big year, to say the least. Many client's I'm seeing at the moment feel as though they are leopard crawling battle-scarred across the finishing line that is 2020. Feeling tired, irritable, maybe a tad peeved and still a little anxious with the COVID cluster news? If yes, you are not the only one!

I am pretty sure we are all in need of some TLC this holiday and making a concerted effort to fill our energy tanks. This is an excellent time of year to switch off from all things that take away from our energy. Rest and restoration are two of the most powerful elements to help us move from exhausted to energised.



### Energy versus Time

Research shows that energy management, as opposed to time management, is what helps us perform at our best in the long term<sup>1</sup>. When increased demands are placed on us, we often tackle them by putting in more hours. The problem with time is that it is finite, extrinsic and out of our control. Wouldn't it be great if we could simply add hours to our day? So managing our time may work for a while but is not sustainable as demand continues to increase. Our energy, on the other hand, is renewable, intrinsic and totally within our control. So what are the different energy sources aka tanks we have available to us, and how do we fill them?

### The Four Energy Tanks

Tony Schwartz, researcher, author and founder of *The Energy Project*, talks about four energy tanks that we have at our disposal<sup>1</sup>.

## The BIG Four Energy Sources (Tanks)

**Physical Energy**  
QUANTITY



**Emotional Energy**  
QUALITY

**Mental Energy**  
FOCUS



**Energy of the  
Human Spirit**  
PURPOSE

- **Physical energy** is the *quantity* of energy we have and forms the foundational source from which we draw upon for all other energies. It's like filling a car with petrol. With a full tank, we will be able to go the distance, but the important thing is when the tank is empty, it needs a refill, or the car will simply stop. This is no different with our bodies.
- **Emotional energy** is the *quality* of our energy. How we relate to others and how we emotionally process what's going on in our lives. If we are spending a lot of time reacting to situations with high emotion, we will drain this energy tank. Ruminating and negative thoughts do the same. Withdrawing from others and isolating ourselves also takes its toll on this energy tank.
- **Mental energy** is all about our *focus* and relates to our creative energy. The capacity to create, to think, to make decisions, to dream and to plan. If we are spending hours at our desk working without paying attention to short periods of recovery during the day, we will deplete this tank.
- **The energy of the human spirit** talks to our 'why'. Why do we do what we do in life, our values, our aspirations? If one of our values is family and we spend most of the time working and spend very little time with our loved ones, this is incongruent with our values and therefore depletes this tank. If our purpose in life is unclear, this tank is affected.

### **Personal Energy Audit**

So how do we know if one or more of our energy tanks is depleted? It makes sense that if we have visibility to this information we know which tanks need attention. Below is a list of questions adapted from *The Energy Project* which will help you figure out which tanks you need to focus on during the holiday season<sup>1</sup>.

For every statement, assign either a 'yes' or a 'no'. If you find for some of the statements you are sitting on the fence, allocate it to the one that is more often the outcome i.e. more often a 'yes' versus a 'no' or vice versa.



### Physical energy tank:

1. I don't regularly get at least 7 to 8 hours of sleep and often wake up feeling tired.
2. I frequently skip breakfast or grab a snack which isn't particularly healthy.
3. I don't move my body enough meaning exercise at least three times a week that challenges my cardiovascular system and strength training at least once a week.
4. I don't take regular breaks during the day to renew and recharge, and I often eat lunch at my desk.

### Emotional energy tank:

1. I frequently find myself feeling irritable, impatient or anxious, especially when demand is high.
2. I don't have enough time with my family and loved ones, and when I'm with them I'm not always really with them.
3. I take too little time for the activities that I most deeply enjoy.
4. I rarely stop to express my appreciation to others or to save and celebrate my accomplishments and blessings.

### Mental energy tank:

1. I have difficulty focusing on one thing at a time, and I'm easily distracted during the day, especially by email or by phone.
2. I spend much of my time reacting to immediate demands, rather than focusing on activities with long-term value.
3. I don't take enough time for reflection, planning and thinking creatively.
4. I work in the evenings and or on weekends and rarely take a holiday free of work.

### Human spirit energy tank:

1. I spend too little time in my life doing what I do best and enjoy most.
2. There are significant gaps between what I say is essential in my life and how I actually live.
3. Decisions at work or home are often more impacted by external demands than by a strong, clear sense of my own purpose.
4. I don't invest enough time and energy in making a positive difference to others or in the world.

Now count up all the 'yes' statements. How did you go? The higher the number of 'yes' statements, **the greater the energy capacity you could have available to you that is not available to you.**

A score of 4 out of 16, for example, means that there is 25% energy capacity you could have available to you however is not available to you because you are not adequately filling this tank. If your score is 8/16, then this goes to 50% energy capacity not available to you that could be, and at 12/16 you are missing out on 75% energy capacity that could be available to you that isn't. Happy about your score?

### **Energy capacity**

It just happens that we take our energy capacity for granted. We assume that if the demand goes up, our capacity is automatically going to go up to meet it. So, if we demand that a car drives for 500 kms we are assuming that we can do that without filling the tank in essence. This makes no sense whatsoever, does it? If we are not building capacity, it will take its toll physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. It is a simple equation of input versus output.

### **The optimal age**

At what age do we need to start deliberately focusing on our energy? Research shows that before the age of 30, our bodies ability to replenish its energy happens without us needing to put much effort into it. However, from the age of 30, we cannot take for granted that our energy tanks will sort themselves out. The first tank that usually depletes is our physical tank as our bodies age.

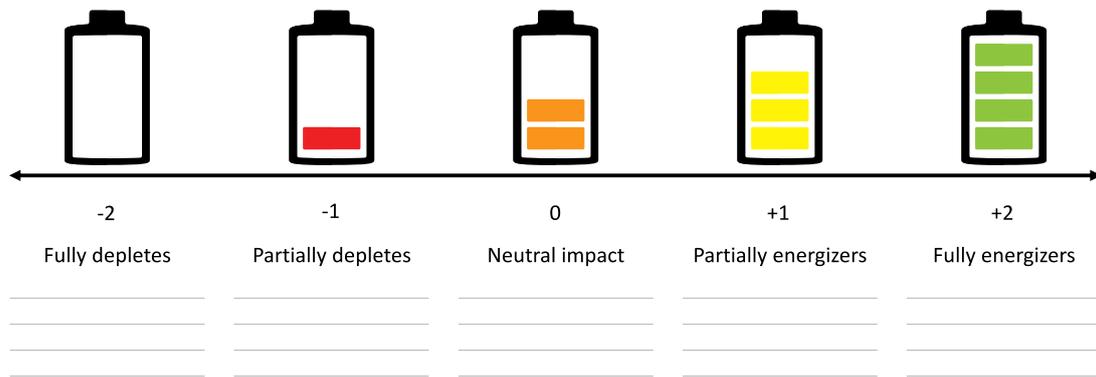


### **Renew versus Deplete audit**

Before we get into how to replenish our energy, let's think about activities in our lives that energise versus depletes us. If we have an awareness of what activities fill our tanks, we can draw on these at times when we are feeling drained of energy or avoid activities that empty our tanks.

Using the scale between -2 and +2 outlined below, let's get started. List as many activities you can think of that meet the criteria and try and be specific about each activity. You can use the below worksheet to document each activity.

## Renew vs Deplete



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### Scale:

- **-2** is something that you hate doing, it really sucks your energy, and you would rather donate a kidney than do this thing.
- **-1** activity you don't mind doing this activity however it doesn't leave you energised, if you had a choice you wouldn't do it but can do it now and again.
- **0** is an activity that neither depletes nor replenishes your energy.
- **+1** activity energises you to an extent and you don't mind doing it on a regular basis.
- **+2** would be something that you do that you absolutely love, when you do it time flies, it makes you feel amazing and when you have finished you feel totally energised.

### Filling our Energy Tanks

A personal energy audit is a great tool to get a baseline on our different energy levels and to help identify which activities deplete versus renew our energy. We can do it every month, maybe even every week if you're feeling really fatigued and overwhelmed until such time that you start building on our resources.

Let's have a look at which of our energy tanks need some attention. Now that we have raised this into our consciousness, let's figure out how we proactively replenish these resources. I have included a one-pager worksheet at the end of this article, which you can print out if you like and use to fill out which strategies you may want to focus on to replenish your energy.

For **physical energy**:



- **Movement:** A 30-minute walk 3 to 4 times a day is sufficient to keep your cardiovascular system in shape and manage your stress. Think about taking the stairs instead of the elevator. Walk around the block as a starter and as you get fitter extend the distance. If yoga or pilates is more your thing go for it. Whatever it is just keep moving.
- **Nutrition:** Eating well is a no brainer. If you're happy with your weight, try an 80:20 split of nutritionally valuable food versus treats. If you want to lose weight, think about changing this ratio to 90:10. Keep your meals small and regular to help manage your blood sugar levels. Remember the more protein you eat the longer you will feel full. Avoiding a large meal at night before you go to bed is optimal.
- **Sleep:** Our brain is ~3kg in weight; however, it requires 25% of our energy. Getting enough sleep is essential to re-energise your brain. Consistency of sleep is better than the quantity of sleep. What this means is going to bed at the same time every night and waking up at the same time every morning, seven days a week is optimal.
- **Hydration:** This is one of the areas that I really struggle with because I'm not a big water drinker. I fill up a water bottle and aim to finish one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Data shows that we need to drink 25mls/kg/day for a normal day of activity. You do the math's and work out what this looks like for you.

For **emotional energy:**



- **Gratitude:** Journaling or pausing to think about three things you are grateful for replenishes this tank and also helps to reduce our stress.
- **Releasing and regulating our emotions:** Pushing the pause button when you feel your emotions rising gives you time to get them under control and respond rather than react to situations; journaling about your emotions helps relieve emotional tension which depletes this tank.
- **Hobbies:** Doing something you love, something adventurous, or challenging.
- **Connection:** Supporting others and acts of service; reaching out to your close family and friends for support; cuddling a pet all replenish this tank.

For **mental energy:**



- **Meditation:** Breathe deeply every hour; more extended periods at the start or end of the day.
- **Power hour:** Complete the 2-3 most important tasks before checking email in the morning.
- **No multitasking:** The brain cannot multitask! Focusing on one task at a time without interruption will optimise your energy. Switching from task to task or being frequently

interrupted, e.g., checking your phone or looking at your email reduces your efficiency by 40% according to research.

- **Reduce rumination:** Ruminating significantly depletes our energy. Consider doing an 'after-action review' on paper writing down all the things that you did in a particular situation that were positive versus all the negative stuff. Another way is to designate a worry-hour every day so that we don't waste the rest of the day worrying about things.
- **Digital detox:** Digital technology can be the most significant waste of our mental energy. Become disciplined in when and where you use your phone, laptop or gaming device. Designate specific times for usage, create rules on the phone as to when you are going to check social media, for example.

For **the energy of the human spirit:**



- **Review our purpose and goals in life:** Make sure you are clear on what these are and all congruent with how you're living your life.
- **Values alignment:** Ensure you are clear on your core values. Perhaps review your values again as some can change over time. Assess whether you are living your values or whether something needs to be tweaked.
- **Engage in intellectual humility and curiosity:** Keep an open learner's mind rather than a fixed mindset that is inflexible and thinks it is right all the time; ask curious questions relentlessly; challenge the status quo and bring to your awareness that you have a choice in everything you do; be empathetic to others thinking about what it must be like to walk in their shoes.

Now that you have an awareness of which energy tanks need replenishing and how to do this, it is all up to you. Use this holiday period as an opportunity to focus on not only replenishing and renewing your energy, but what this can look like for the New Year. There is no doubt that most of us will continue to face challenges in 2021 both personally and professionally. So make a head start and get some energy laden rituals in place. This will set you up for the New Year without a doubt. Have a wonderful holiday break and a happy New Year!

## One-pager Worksheet

# Strategies to replenish our 4 energy tanks

### Physical Energy

Nutrition:

Hydrate:

Sleep:

Physical movement:



### Emotional Energy

Gratitude journaling:

Connection:

Kind acts:

Hobby:



### Energy of the human spirit

Revisit your purpose:

Core value alignment:

Engage in intellectual humility  
and curiosity:

### Mental Energy

Meditation:

Journaling:

Power hour:

Single focused tasks:

Digital detox:

### Author:

Dr Leanne Wall

E: [leanne@drleannewall.com](mailto:leanne@drleannewall.com)

W: [drleannewall.com](http://drleannewall.com)

### References:

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