

Feeding your energy – a practical Exercise to Build bounce back in your team



Our article “How do you adapt and thrive when the going gets tough” offered ideas to build the kind of resilience that means individuals and teams adapt and thrive rather than ‘toughing it out’ or being triggered into knee jerk reactions.

Our Exercise to recognise your triggers and build bounce back in teams focused on emotions – building awareness and understanding in teams so that they spot triggers early, have each other’s backs and support each other to bounce back.

Today’s exercise helps you to set yourself up to succeed by creating your own recipe for boosting and maintaining your energy.

Exercise: Feed your energy ... perform through intensity

‘Managing your energy – not time – is the key to high performance and personal renewal’

– Tony Schwartz and Jim Loehr

From their many years of working with top athletes, Business and Performance psychologists Schwartz and Loehr showed that life is a series of sprints not a marathon:

- Energy capacity diminishes with both overuse and underuse
- The highest performing athletes ‘oscillate’ – they create a rhythm of spending energy and renewing energy
- They are connected to different source of energy, only one of which is physical energy.

When Schwartz and Loehr applied their work to business, they showed that ***engagement and performance are directly linked to the level of energy of team members.***

They identified four sources of energy – physical, emotional, mental and spiritual. From our years of work with teams, we have identified a fifth – social energy.

This exercise helps team members to notice their different sources of energy, identify how they can draw on them, where there are gaps and simple steps to support themselves.

Doing this means that they are more able to respond rather than react and are less likely to be 'triggered'.

What you will need:

- Brief for this exercise (see below)
- Slides or a flipchart with the framework*
- Printouts of images to represent each energy source*
- A 'scale' for each pair – 2 sheets of paper with 1 and 10 written on them (they can write these)

* available by emailing us (see end of this article)

Time taken: 45-90 minutes depending on how much exploration/ discussion time you build in.

Group size: up to 16 (ideally even numbers). Note: this needs floor space.

Part 1: Sharing the framework (5'+)

(See the image above. Email us for slides)

Share the 5 sources of energy, starting with physical and then mental energy.

Invite the group to come up with examples of ways to boost each energy as you talk this through. Have some ideas prepared in case you need to steer the group – we give example 'aids' below.

This is livelier if you spread out the images on the floor and either invite people to write ideas on a flip chart by each image or to write their own ideas on post it notes and stick them up. This means the team create their own map of resources and ideas.

Tip: It's worth noting that the energies are connected and affect each other. We're separating them out to pinpoint what you might need to boost.

Physical Energy – this is about energy and physical resource

Aids: Regular physical activity & exercise; sleep; renewal and recovery time; taking a short break every 90 minutes; eating and drinking well.

Mental energy – our capacity to concentrate and think well

Aids: Reduce email interruptions; train the brain with mental exercises and the physical exercise that increases oxygen flow; use both sides of the brain – be creative, visualize, learn mindfulness, learn to juggle

Emotional energy (intertwined with mental energy) – this enables us to stay calm, keep things in perspective and avoid negative/ strong emotions overwhelming us. Men often learn to suppress this, and women are more likely to ruminate.

Aids: Understand your ‘stress triggers’; change perspective – differentiate facts from stories; engage in sports or constructive hobbies not distractions; breathe to create space to choose your reaction to people and events.

Spiritual energy – this can be (but isn’t only) about religion and faith. In its broadest sense, this is about your sense of purpose and the meaning of what you do in life beyond the task (it’s what Simon Sinek calls your ‘Why’)

Aids: Define your purpose and core values; align your priorities and allocation of time/ actions with what’s most important to you; ensure enough self-care and care of others.

Social energy – as humans we all have a strong need to belong and feel part of something. Close ties and positive, trusting relationships help this. Teams with more robust relationships and forge high quality connections are more resilient

Aids: Foster relationships, improve their depth and quality by having real conversations; get to know your own social style and balance time to connect and time to withdraw.

Part 2: Peer coaching (25’ +)

Set up coaching pairs. Ask people to choose someone quite different to them or that they know least well – a bi-product of this exercise is building trust.

Explain that the purpose of the peer coaching is to enable them to explore their current level of energy, how they feel about that, where they want to be and identify what they will do to get there.

Agree/ reiterate confidentiality before you start – individuals may share in their pairs sensitive issues which they want kept private. You can offer them the option that their partner asks questions and they consider their responses in silence and/or make notes.

Be clear that the intention is for one person to ask questions, listen and summarise as the other explores. This isn’t about offering ideas or advice.

Round One:

Invite the first person in each pair to choose a source of energy they would like to improve.

Invite them to set up their own imaginary scale on the floor and put a piece of paper at 1 (low) and 10 (high).

Offer questions to help them structure their exploration and briefly illustrate the steps (without doing the exercise in depth) before the pairs do this:

Step 1: In your chosen dimension, stand on the scale where your level of energy is currently.

- What number are you at?
- How do you feel here?
- What's happening?
- Why are you here?
- What's keeping you here?

Step 2: Identify where you would like to be, both aspirationally and realistically, and move there. Notice what it feels like to be here.

- What's different?
- How do you feel?
- What's happening?

Step 3: Imagining you are already at this point, look back to where you started.

- What has enabled you to move here?

Step 4: Come back to the starting point (at Step 1).

- What's your immediate next step? (and invite them to step forward).
- What have you done here?
- What's the next step.

Now let the pairs explore the steps for themselves.

Tip:

The scaling exercise is more impactful if participants pay attention to what they feel and notice in their bodies. You can achieve this with a short guided mindfulness exercise where you ask people to be aware of their bodily sensations and breath (contact us if you would like an example).

If a pair are working quickly, they may work through several of the energy elements. Round Two: After 10 minutes, ask the pairs to swap over. With their partner's help, the other person gets to explore Steps 1 to 4 on their chosen dimension(s).

Part 3: Reflection (5')

Give the group individual reflection time to note down conclusions, insights, and commitments.

Part 4: Extending this to the way this team works (c. 30')

Facilitate a discussion about what people noticed and learned.

You can build this into a practical discussion for the team by picking something that the team want to work on.

Questions to explore as a team include:

- What will help us to support and maintain our energy in meetings?
- What will we do when we see it drop?
- What ways of working would stimulate more energy rather than draining it? (email is often a big culprit of energy drain)
- What new practices do we want to build in?

This process also lends itself to broader discussions about energizing wider teams.

Part 5: Follow up: keeping the energy alive

The team may have found it strange to talk about the dimensions of emotional, social and spiritual energy. You can help to make boosting energy on all dimensions feel normal by testing their energy regularly with the team.

One simple way to do this is the 'energy check' during a meeting:

- Ask team members to put one hand out in front of them.
- Demonstrate a sense of level – holding your hand lower means low energy and as high as you can reach means peak.
- Ask everyone to indicate their current energy levels. If it needs boosting – ask them what they need right now to boost energy.

Sometimes first responses are humorous and that's great – and do dig a bit deeper by reminding of the five sources. Encourage them to consider the key one for them now and what practical steps they can take, however small, to manage and restore their energy well.

Alyse Ashton

References:

For more fresh thinking, resources and practical tools visit <https://eye2eyedev.com/resources/>

Manage your energy not your time Tony Schwartz and Catherin McCarthy (10 Pages)

<http://hbr.org/2007/10/manage-your-energy-not-your-time/ar/1>

Boost Resilience, Decrease Stress, and Improve Your Performance by HBR IdeaCast with Stewart Friedman (audio 15 mins) <http://blogs.hbr.org/2009/09/boost-resilience-decrease-stre/>

Resilience: How to Build a Personal Strategy for Survival by Gill Corkindale (HBR Blog 1 page)

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Why Is Resilience So Hard? by Steven Snyder (HBR blog – 1 page) <http://blogs.hbr.org/2013/11/why-is-resilience-so-hard/>

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