

The cure for exhaustion

Build deeper connections to ignite meaning, purpose and pride in your work.



Warning! Your connection has been lost. You must re-establish your connection to continue working.

It was almost midnight when the message flashed across my computer screen. I was alone in my office, working on a report that was due the next day. I was tired and had no time to waste. But now, I was forced to wait, staring at the message that had unexpectedly interrupted my typing.

Your connection has been lost. There was truth in those words that went far beyond my company's computer network. For months, I had been conscious of a growing emptiness as I worked each day.

On the surface, nothing had changed. I had a position that many would envy, and I was working for a good company that valued my contributions. But where once my job had been an exciting adventure, it had now somehow become an obligation that I had to force myself to fulfill.

Although I could still remember a time when I was excited to begin each day — a time when I faced both the challenges and the successes of my work with enthusiasm — I was now caught in a spiral that was slowly taking me down.

Are you in this same spiral? Do you feel more exhausted each day from the effort to fulfill your role? Whether you're leading a team at work, teaching a classroom of students or managing a household, it happens to all of us. And when it does, there is only one answer, an answer that is one of the greatest lessons in the business of life — you must re-establish your connection.

Without the energy and inspiration of a real connection to your work, you will never experience the success, or the fulfillment, that you want. But once you find it, it can fuel a level of performance beyond your imagination.

■ Find a deeper connection to the people around you. Do you really know the people with whom you work closely? Do you feel that you are part of a team or are you an outsider with little sense of belonging?

Start to build a connection to the people you work with by simply listening. Listen to their thoughts and ideas, as well as the stories about their families and their lives. Really listen to what they have to say without processing other background thoughts,

interrupting or checking your Blackberry.

The more you do this, the more you will create a connection of understanding and trust, a connection that will give you a sense of belonging and inclusion that can become one of the most important elements of the work you do.

■ Find a deeper connection to your personal excellence. Are you proud of the work you do? If not, challenge yourself to reach a higher standard.

When you choose a personal standard, such as, "I will keep every commitment I make," you set in motion a force that establishes what's important to you and makes you accountable for living up to it. The pride you feel when you set a standard for excellence, and then achieve it, will forge a powerful personal connection to your work.

■ Find a deeper connection to your real purpose. Do you see your work as part of something important?

If I view my job of running a staffing company as simply a series of business goals and financial objectives, I only tap into a fraction of the passion I feel when I remember that our real purpose is finding jobs for people who need them. Seeing a larger purpose in what you do brings inspiration to even the most mundane tasks and connects you to your work in a deeply meaningful way.

Sitting in my office that night I vowed to re-establish my connection to the work I was doing and, in the end, I was successful. But in the process, I learned something vitally important.

The real cure for exhaustion is not rest. The cure for exhaustion is to establish a whole-hearted connection to what you do. This connection will give you the sustaining energy of meaning, purpose and pride, not only in your work, but in who you are.

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