

## If Symptoms Persist

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Not long ago a self-employed colleague said to me, “if only I could feel better about my business then I am sure I would feel so much better about myself”. The passion he once felt for his work was no longer there, he was becoming less tolerant in certain situations and with some clients. Anxiety had become a familiar feeling during his work day, his sleeping pattern was erratic and now his personal relationships were beginning to show signs of strain.

Whilst my colleague was unsure of exactly ‘what’ was creating these challenges in his professional life, he had reached a point where he knew that something had to change, however he was not sure how or where to begin. Admitting to ourselves we no longer want to feel a certain way and are willing to make changes is in fact the first step in the process.

During my career scenarios similar to this continue to be one of the most common issues that are presented to me by my clients. Whilst the presenting issues and symptoms can be wide and varied, the root cause is often the same.

Why is it that so many of us, especially business owners and managers, are unable recognise the early signs of such imbalance in our lives, or more seriously, burnout? Is it that we have difficulty in separating our personal challenges from our business challenges, or to even recognise the correlation between the two?

How do we recognize this imbalance? If there has been a shift in how you feel, (either physically or psychologically), I encourage you take note of what the change was and when it occurred. Be aware, watch closely for common triggers or times you notice a shift in how you feel.

What are some useful strategies and stress relievers that are immediately available to us all and assist with the pressures we feel in both our professional and personal lives?

Our most important asset is our body that under normal life conditions requires daily attention in order for it to operate at optimal levels. Add to this the pressures of running a business or holding a demanding position within your organisation and self care now becomes of greater importance.

What do I mean by self-care? It exists on many levels, physical, intellectual, emotional, and for some, spiritual. You may wish to start by asking yourself the following questions. Does your diet consist of foods that energize you; do you have adequate and restful sleep; is your breathing calm and relaxed or do you notice difficulty in this area, particularly in a stressful situation? Do you have an appropriate level of regular exercise that is enjoyable for you and do you allocate a certain portion of your day to relaxation (even 20 minutes). Do you invest quality time in your relationships with others? Do you feel happy most of the time?

Due to our uniqueness, the key is to discover what 'feels' right for you on some or all of the above levels and commit to doing it. Many are unsure where to start with this notion and it is common to obtain assistance about what self care means for you and how best to implement it. Once you have obtained a good balance then the natural progression is for this feeling of wellness to manifest itself into other areas of your life.

Feeling better can influence our thought process and have a positive effect on how we view the world around us. You may become aware that the people, places and situations that once created stress now no longer have the same effect.

There are two days of the week we should not worry about, one is yesterday and the other is tomorrow. This therefore only leaves today. Why is it we can spend a considerable amount of time focussing on things which are often out of our control; either because they have already occurred or are possibly about to? We become attached to a possible outcome and exert a considerable amount of energy when it could be directed into something far more productive and meaningful, such as, what is currently in front of us.

Living one day at a time is a simple and effective tool to put into place when so many of us are faced with this basic human condition of wanting to do

and face anything but the present moment!

One recent client who was having grave personal issues found this strategy to be what enabled her to manage a demanding professional life, simply by taking each day as it appeared. She was pleasantly surprised how much additional time and energy this strategy created and how different her thought process was. Her time was now invested in matters before her resulting in a considerably more productive day.

Many of us have been faced with or are currently facing a traumatic event in our lives. Not only are we faced with the challenge of coping with this on a personal level, we also need to take necessary steps in order to minimize the impact of this event on a professional level.

In addition to putting into practice the strategies I have already mentioned, I encourage you to obtain external support and not attempt to do cope with any major trauma on your own. Build a support network both within your work and home environment which feels comfortable for you. This enables you to share your concerns with trusted others and provides an opportunity to brainstorm possible solutions if appropriate. So often we hold the stigma that asking for help when life becomes too difficult may be seen a sign of weakness whereas it is simply a sign of our humanity.

One colleague opened up to me about the major personal stresses he was facing and how they were beginning to affect not only the daily operation of his business but were having a considerable affect on his self confidence. Being of the nature to not share issues of such a deep personal nature, speaking to me was the first time he had opened up and voiced his concerns. He was able to acknowledge that by simply 'getting it out of his head' had assisted him immensely and enabled him to see how by internalizing his thoughts and feelings had accelerated his anxiety levels. During our second meeting some weeks later he was then able to see the positive effects that this current experience may have for himself and for others around him.

When difficulties arise, are you open to the possibility that one day you might discover meaning from your experience and ultimately be able to

integrate your lessons in both your professional and personal lives? Finding such a meaning can have a dramatic affect on how well you cope with the event.

One final word, I encourage you to every day reflect on all of the good things you have around you also, dont forget to laugh. "The most wasted day of all is that on which we have not laughed." Sebastian Roch Nicholas Chamfort. (1741-1794).

