PERFORMING AT *your best*

By **Gill Thurgood*** and **Karen Crampin** of Empowerme2 Ltd.

How do you perform?

Many people go through life without addressing how they feel or if they could feel or perform better. We all have to perform to varying degrees and are measured on our performance whether it's at work, at home or on the golf course. How do you perform as an employee, a parent, a friend, a member of your community? What makes a great performance?

Many researchers have identified energy to be the key to maintaining high performance in all areas of life. In physics energy is defined as the capacity to work - the question is how do you build your energy capacity and how do you manage it?

Managing energy

Managing your energy is the key to achieving high performance, health, happiness and life balance: there are a limited number of hours in the day, but there is no limit on the amount of energy we can apply. Take a moment to consider your energy level over the past week. Where are you on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is exhausted and unable to get out of bed and 10 is full of beans and raring to go? What would it take to increase your score by just 1 point? Below are some pointers to help you.

- Energy is derived from three main sources - body, mind and spirit. In order to be fully engaged and perform at our best, we need to be energised in all three areas
- Physical energy from the body allows us to

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do all the activities we want to in life; it is derived from food, drink, sleep and physical activity

- Emotional and mental energy stems from the mind, giving us motivation, hope and focus. Emotional energy is associated with the feelings of enthusiasm, optimism and confidence and mental energy with logical thinking, focus and decision making
- Energy from the spirit provides meaning and purpose and is associated with our persistence, determination, fulfillment and passion.

Improving energy levels

Underpinning all energy management is the physical aspect. Here are some suggestions to help you improve your energy levels through nutrition, exercise and sleep.

** Gill qualified as a dental auxiliary in 1967 at New Cross and worked as an aux/therapist in Northamptonshire and Essex before working in oral health promotion in Enfield, Haringey and Essex. She taught dental nurses for ten years at Epping Forest College. In 1998 she moved to a major pharmaceutical company to promote employee wellbeing. After ten years she decided to set up Empowerme2 with a colleague and associates. According to Gill, 'dentistry is still close to my heart which is why I am still a registered dental therapist!'*

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Ensure you provide your body with adequate fuel - you can't start your car if it has no fuel in it! You can't perform at your best when you're hungry, or, at the other extreme, in a food coma! Follow these simple steps:

- Eat small meals regularly with healthy snacks in between - like fruit, seeds or nuts
- Have breakfast within an hour of waking
- Don't go longer than four hours without food
- Be aware of how you feel - don't eat until you're full - eat until just satisfied
- Drink water regularly throughout the day
- Keep caffeinated drinks to a minimum
- Allow 20% of your daily food intake to come from 'want' foods like chips, chocolate, alcohol. If you deprive yourself of what you enjoy you may end up bingeing.

Inactivity causes the body to conserve energy and switch off. The best way to combat this is simply to MOVE. You'd be surprised how even small movements help you maintain your energy levels throughout the day.

- Every 30-45 minutes be sure to stretch your muscles - remember those stretches you're meant to perform when flying!
- Every 90-120 minutes get up and walk somewhere - to the waiting room, the printer, to get a drink
- Do some type of physical activity for 30 minutes to an hour daily - such as walking the dog, walking at lunchtime, mowing the lawn.

Essential shut-eye

Sleep is essential to the recovery and renewal of energy. Think how you feel after a late or bad night?

- Aim to go to bed at the same time every night
- Try to get at least seven hours of sleep
- Create a bed time routine - eg have a bath, read a book
- Remove distractions from the bedroom eg television
- Is your mattress over ten years old? If so, you might need a new one!
- If you wake in the night thinking of things to do the next day - keep a pen and paper by the bed to write them down.

Prioritise tasks

Even if you have increased your physical energy you may find that you are still feeling tired, depressed and defeated - this might be because of a lack of emotional and mental energy. Contrary to popular belief trying to do too many things at the same time - multi tasking - can be mentally draining and counter productive. A much more effective approach is to prioritise your tasks into urgent and not urgent or to complete a task that you can do quickly so that you can concentrate on the tasks that need your

full focus and attention. Perform tasks sequentially rather than simultaneously. The other aspect of 'mind energy' is that of emotions. How well do you manage yours? How would you want your cardiac surgeon to feel just before they operated on you? Angry, frustrated, exhausted, hopeless **or** energised, confident, optimistic? Where should your patients expect you to be?

Choose your attitude

Are you aware if you're mad, sad or glad? You choose your attitude; nobody else can make you angry or frustrated except yourself. We all have the ability to choose our responses - it's called response-ability. Occupational psychologist Dr Stephen Williams wrote '*You CAN'T choose what happens TO you, but you CAN always choose how you respond.*'

Energy from the spirit is by far the most powerful type of energy and the hardest of the three to explain and define.

To be fully engaged, you need to understand what matters most to you and what motivates and inspires you. The more aligned your work is to what you value and believe, the more engaged you are and the better you perform under pressure; similarly, the more aligned your personal life is to your values and beliefs, the happier you are. Ask yourself this difficult question - 'What do I value?' If you value a sense of contribution and helping others then you will bring your energy and passion into the dental surgery. If you value health highly you are unlikely to perform at your best working for a tobacco company! Often people experience dissatisfaction with life from a mis-alignment of their values and the way they are living their life.

For further information on these principles and how they can improve energy levels and build resilience in your workplace please visit www.empowerme2.co.uk or contact Gill Thurgood by emailing gill@empowerme2.co.uk.