



REVITALIZE, RESTORE, SPARKLE, BE BRIGHT, WHOLLY HEALTHY AND MINDFUL

**from the book "GAME CHANGERS AT THE CIRCUS "
by Jean-François Cousin**

*"He who has health, has hope; and he who has hope, has everything."
Thomas Carlyle¹*

You will only *be* great when you *feel* great. Physically, intellectually, emotionally and spiritually².

Physical stamina will grow your resilience, intellectual vigour will help you think at your best, emotional well-being will maintain your balance and security and spiritual health will heighten your mindfulness and sense of self-worth. Your journey to greatness requires nothing less.

How are you feeling these days?

Where are you starting from, health-wise?

As you start your journey towards greatness, I recommend you first assess your health holistically, the health of your body, mind, heart and spirit. I have put together a kind of 'mini-check-up', merely based on my experience as a coach, not on a scientific or medical basis. Please reach out for a pencil and score yourself on a scale from 1 (never) to 5 (always) on the table below. Trust me on this one and 'just do it', it really matters.

¹ Scottish philosopher (1795 –1881)

² In this book, we define spiritual health simply as mindfulness (presence to yourself and others) and peace of mind

Mini check-up of my whole health	1 (never)	2	3	4	5 (always)
My physiological condition keeps chronic illnesses away ³	1	2	3	4	5
My body is fit	1	2	3	4	5
I sleep well and I wake-up fresh	1	2	3	4	5
I feel energetic from morning to night time	1	2	3	4	5
People around me often tell me I radiate energy	1	2	3	4	5
My sexual stamina is good	1	2	3	4	5
I am intellectually agile	1	2	3	4	5
I concentrate well enough along the day	1	2	3	4	5
I have great laughs	1	2	3	4	5
I see a lot of positive things around me	1	2	3	4	5
I am emotionally stable	1	2	3	4	5
I am fully present to others, when we interact	1	2	3	4	5
I spend quality time with those I love	1	2	3	4	5
When I relax, I relax completely	1	2	3	4	5
I enjoy peace of mind	1	2	3	4	5

Any instant insight?

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Any immediate resolution?

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You may not be content with your scores. Senior leaders I coach rarely are.

³ You don't suffer from recurrent disease (headaches, colds, the flu, etc...)



Then, will making progress matter enough so you take action..., possibly at the cost of changing some habits or letting go of some pleasures you indulge in?

To check, I first ask senior leaders 'what matters most to them', and once they have shared their ideas, I invite them to prioritize. They always choose the same first and second most important things... and those are not about work:

1. Health
2. Family and friends

Come to think of it, isn't that just plain rational? (1) 'survive' (in a tough world), then (2) 'avoid being alone'...

The fear of loneliness 'naturally' rises with age. As some of my Clients see retirement looming closer, they realize that after they relinquish power, they might become a 'nobody', lonely if not alone. Especially if they have invested so much time in their career that the bond with their family and friends has become loose. Some senior executives sound almost jealous of their gardeners, who "enjoy a 'complete' life with family and close friends, and will seamlessly transition into retirement.

Brian Dyson, former Coca-Cola CEO, made the point vividly: *"Imagine life as a game in which you are juggling some five balls in the air. You name them – work, family, health, friends, and spirit ... and you are keeping all of these in the air.*

*You will soon understand that work is a rubber ball. If you drop it, it will bounce back. But the other four balls – family, health, friends, and spirit – are made of glass. If you drop one of these, they will be irrevocably scuffed, marked, nicked, damaged or even shattered. They will never be the same. You must understand that and strive for balance in your life."*⁴

Well-known as it is, this snappy recommendation does not seem to be really heard by the majority of us, least of all "corporate athletes", as I call senior leaders. I mean "corporate athletes" quite literally, seeing the demands for continuous peak-performance -implying energy, clarity, emotional control and intellectual agility- just as challenging for senior leaders as they are for sports champions.

⁴ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZlaSKIL1mtA>

Which beliefs hold you back from feeling great?

"Every human being is the author of his own health or disease." Buddha

Which beliefs are preventing us –and senior leaders in particular- to heed Dyson’s sound advice? How should we challenge them? Here are a just a few, from my experience...

Unhealthy beliefs	Challenge...
I am healthy even I don't exercise	For how long?
I don't have time for health	What's more important, for the long term?
Accidents happen to others (only)	Seriously?
My travel schedule doesn't allow me to exercise	What do you consider as 'exercise'?
I am too tired	Precisely! Don't you need more stamina?
I am too fat to exercise	How about just one or a few steps forward?
I am too lazy	What would be your rewards for trying?
I love my job, don't mind working crazy hours	If work is your addiction, what are you avoiding? What are you missing?
I sacrifice myself for the greater good	Do you love yourself (enough)? How long will you last? How effective are you at creating that 'greater good'?
I'll take care of my health once I succeed	Ever heard the story about 'driving to a meeting with low petrol in the tank, and being too late to stop and make gas?'
It's OK to occasionally lash out at people, when I am under pressure. I am human after all.	How much good does it do you?
My family understands my responsibilities are so important that I can't spend more time with them	Do they still really care about you? How could Benjamin Disraeli ever say " <i>no success in public life can compensate for failure in the home</i> "?
I'll spend time with my kids when they grow up	By then, who will you be to them?
I have distanced myself from my friends so much, they won't let me close again	Who says?



Now, which beliefs are preventing *you* from feeling great?

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Can you replace them with healthier beliefs? For example switch from “I believe I am too lazy to exercise” to “I believe there are healthy activities that I can enjoy and don’t take much time”, and then check out with busy friends what they do; or shift from “I sacrifice myself for the greater good” to “I’ll best contribute to the greater good by taking good care of myself first”, just as you will put on your oxygen mask before attending to those near you in a depressurized plane.

Let’s assume you let go of whichever unhealthy belief held you back from greater health... Which area of your well-being requires your attention first? Is it

- physical (you feel weak at times)?
- intellectual (you sometimes lack clarity and agility)?
- emotional (you struggle with your feelings)?
- spiritual (you don’t feel at peace and aren’t entirely present)?

You may like to pause for a moment here, to visualize how you wish your health and fitness to be. Close your eyes... Breathe in, breathe out... How will you feel like, from morning to evening? What difference will health and fitness make to your life? To others'? To your relationships? What will be additional rewards?

Making that vision come true requires some change in and/or additions to your routines. And an obstacle may be... laziness, most likely the third one in the list of laziness-types Sakyong Mipham⁵ describes:

1. Laziness of not wanting to do anything
2. Laziness of discouragement (or feeling ourselves unworthy)
3. Laziness of being busy with worldly things.

⁵ Sakyong Mipham is the head of [Shambhala International](http://www.shambhala.com), a worldwide network of urban Buddhist meditation centers; read more at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sakyong_Mipham



To dive further into that idea, here is a related passage from Sogyal Rinpoche's book "Glimpse after glimpse - daily reflections on living and dying"⁶:

"Many of us are swept away by what I have come to call an "active laziness". Naturally there are different species of laziness: Eastern and Western. The Eastern style consists of hanging out all day, doing nothing, avoiding any kind of work or useful activity, drinking cups of tea and gossiping with friends.

Western laziness is quite different. It consists of cramming our lives with compulsive activity, so that there is no time left to confront the real issues.

If we look into our lives, we will see clearly how many unimportant tasks, so-called "responsibilities" accumulate to fill them up. One master compares them to "housekeeping in a dream." We tell ourselves we want to spend time on the important things of life, but there never is any time.

Helpless, we watch our days fill up with telephone calls and petty projects, with so many responsibilities—or should we call them "irresponsibilities"?

We are so addicted to looking outside ourselves that we have lost access to our inner being almost completely. We are terrified to look inward, because our culture has given us no idea of what we will find. We may even think that if we do, we will be in danger of madness. This is one of the last and most resourceful ploys of ego to prevent us from discovering our real nature.

So we make our lives so hectic that we eliminate the slightest risk of looking into ourselves. Even the idea of meditation can scare people. When they hear the words egoless or emptiness, they think that experiencing those states will be like being thrown out the door of a spaceship to float forever in a dark, chilling void. Nothing could be further from the truth. But in a world dedicated to distraction, silence and stillness terrify us; we protect ourselves from them with noise and frantic busyness. Looking into the nature of our mind is the last thing we would dare to do."

Whether that resonates with you or not, we need to save time in your busy schedule, for you to try some new practices that will help you feel great, a pre-requisite for greatness to rise from within you.

⁶ Read more about Sogyal Rinpoche at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sogyal_Rinpoche

Save some time and invest it for what matters most

Just for a while, shift your mindset from 'spending your time for important things' to 'investing your time for what matters most'... It's a lot about re-gaining control of your time and your energy, vs. letting others control it.

1. **Quality vs quantity**

Amongst the quantity of time you spend with colleagues, family and friends, which parts are 'quality times' (when you are totally present and energized)? Can you just let go of some of the non-quality time?

2. **Invest your time and energy for greatest returns**

Most likely, 80% of your results come from 20% of your time. Then what are the top 20 percent of your activities that account, or can account, for 80 percent or more of the value of your work? Take a critical look at your daily routine, and identify what's not worthy of your time... What can you stop doing? (attending meetings longer than worthwhile? mindlessly watching TV? driving to work instead of being driven there? Absentmindedly reading stuff or browsing the internet?..)

3. **Delegate what you can avoid to do yourself, and mentor others so they love to do it well**

Amongst the tasks you are undertaking at work, which ones could be done by someone else, less highly paid than you? (a better return for your company's investment in salaries!) What can you delegate? (accepting to handle the risk of ensuing mistakes and their cost). The most successful CEOs I have coached share this in common: they look at all tasks coming their way with the mindset "how can I avoid to do that myself?", and then they invest significant time in enabling and motivating their people to do the best they can. Their motto could well be "*least from me, most from them*"

4. **Be clear about what you need to know**

You know that letting go of micro-management is essential to your rise as a leader; and yet fear of mistakes can stand in your way of empowering others; getting clarity about what you need to know and sharing it your colleagues will save you much of time you spend reading or hearing what you don't need to know

5. **Protect yourself from disturbances**

Which distractions at work do you allow to disturb your concentration and effectiveness? Could you 'protect yourself' better from them?

6. **Say no**

What should you say 'no' to? Before you say 'no', just ascertain that it is the right thing to do, because you have something greater to do instead. And then say 'no' respectfully: "I wish I could do this and I am sorry I can't". Don't provide justifications that people may question. If you can't avoid to justify yourself, then just explain that your higher priorities take all of your time at this moment, period.

7. **Re-boost your energy**

When you feel your stamina or concentration decrease, just stand up, stretch yourself, walk around the room, breathe deeply, drink water; and that will save you time in the completion of the next tasks.

8. **Then... don't feel guilty, you are working smart!**

Should you then ever feel 'guilty' to leave work earlier and earlier (in the belief

employees might take it easy), make sure the quality of your contribution is visible enough, and that your company’s values emphasize ‘work smart’, not just ‘work hard’.

Gifts for your physical stamina

“Man is not just intelligence. He is Energy. He has defined himself as intelligence and has lost the link with energy, with the creative flow” said Einstein.

“The mark of a great man is one who knows when to set aside the important things in order to accomplish the vital ones.”⁷

Shall you do just that for the sake of your ‘energy and creative flow’, right here, right now? What will be the ‘vital’ activities you will choose to as gifts to yourself?

Let’s start with easy activities related to your physical health. They are particularly important of you are prone to chronic diseases, digestive upsets, headaches, insomnia, tension, weight issues, lower sex drive, back ache.

Healthy practices	Tips & notes	My choice
Yearly complete health check-up	Schedule it this weekend	
Sleep profoundly and wake up gently	Ensure your bed is good for your back. Adopt a relaxing ‘ritual’ before you sleep (for example, read a novel that takes your mind away from stress), which will signal ‘bed-time’ to your body. Sleep early, wake up early is to be more rejuvenating than sleep late, wake up late Drink a full glass of water before you stand up from your bed (ideally squeeze-in a lemon)	
Take a short power-nap, to be as fresh in the afternoon as you are in the morning	Research has proven its huge benefits, so just dare to! Ask your personal assistance to prevent any phone calls or meetings for 30mn. When you travel, shorten your lunch and arrange to rest for a while.	
Offer yourself one full day off-from-work each week	No access to emails. Ideally turnoff your phone Exercise, spend quality time with others, do creative activities that inspire you	
Optimize your diet	Make a yearly appointment with a qualified dietician, and require practical and convenient enough advice. Anything else won’t stick to your routine. If you don’t eat much fruits and vegetable, do meet a dietician promptly!	

⁷ Brandon Sanderson, in ‘*The Alloy of Law*’

Healthy practices	Tips & notes	My choice
Exercise more, at home <i>and</i> at work	<p>If you don't have time to go to the gym, hire a personal trainer for a few sessions and ask her/him to teach you exercise-routines you can do at home and at work.</p> <p>Find your way to make those exercises exciting (do them with someone or watch something interesting on TV, listen to music, etc...), so you don't get bored</p>	
Ensure your posture at your office is sound	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask a certified chiropractor or an osteopath to assess your body postures and give you advice • Arrange to work at your computer standing • Stand up, stretch yourself and walk around at least mid-morning and 2 times along the afternoon 	
Reduce or eliminate smoking and alcohol consumption	Seek assistance of a professional if you can't kick away your addiction(s) to toxic substances	
Pamper yourself regularly to a massage or a reiki session	Just make sure you enlist professionals with proper credentials	
Your own ideas:		
Discipline is key to success! Choose an accountability-buddy	<p>Ask her/him to regularly check up with you how you are doing with your commitments</p> <p>Insert regular reminders about your commitments in your electronic calendar, so they pop up and renew your focus</p>	

I mentioned the added value of hiring the temporary services of a doctor, a personal trainer, a dietician or a chiropractor on a need-basis. Indeed I believe 'corporate athletes' need a support team, just as top athletes do.

And just as sports champions also need regular renewal after their intense efforts, you need it too. I will recommend a number of easy practices to 'renew yourself' as we explore together how you can enhance your intellectual vigour, emotional well-being and spiritual health.

Gifts for your intellectual vigour

Let's now move on to activities that will keep you bright and sharp. Help you improve further your concentration, mental agility, memory and skills at critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, learning, adapting to change and challenges.

Here's a menu of simple practices for you to choose from.

Healthy practices	Tips & notes	My choice
Proper rest and relaxation	As mentioned above: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sleep profoundly and wake up gently • Take a short power-nap • Offer yourself one full day off-from-work each week 	
Invest your time for what matters most	Advice given previously help you stay sharp by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocate your time and energy for greatest returns • Delegate what you can avoid to do yourself • Say no 	
Optimize your diet and drink lots of water	Check with a dietician if what you eat supports your intellectual drive enough	
Focus on just one thing at a time	Don't multi-task, it exhausts your brain and prevents quality thinking Protect yourself from disturbances	
Take several moments for reflexion along your day	Just let your thoughts wander with no agenda, you'll get greater clarity Take a couple of minutes before each meeting, to reflect about what you most want from it	
Take your mind off work in the evenings and at weekends	Refresh your brain by focusing on non work-related matters Spend quality time for your family and friends Regularly go out and meet people different from you, and set yourself the goal to discover what is great about them	
Take short holidays regularly	Schedule a few long-weekends along the year in places that inspire you and really disconnect you from your every-day life	
Your own ideas:		
Discipline is key to success! Choose an accountability-buddy	Ask her/him to regularly check up with you how you are doing with your commitments Insert regular reminders about your commitments in your electronic calendar, so they pop up and renew your focus	

Gifts for your emotional well-being

Do you occasionally suffer from anxiety, a bad temper, irritability, anger, mood swings? If such is the case, you may find out here you can improve your situation by taking better care of your emotional health, or –to put it simply- your ability to understand and appropriately express your emotions, and to nurture meaningful social interactions and connections.

We will mostly focus on ‘negative’ emotions, as they are quite a dragon to tame. They feed in the darkness of your fears and insecurities such as:

- “I am not good enough”
- “I am not loved”
- “I don’t belong”

You can become emotional when some of your core-needs are not being met, such as:

- Physiological needs
- Financial needs
- Need of security / safety
- Need of love, relationships
- Needs of self-esteem, respect, praise, achievement
- Need of personal growth
- Need to make a contribution
- Need of freedom, autonomy / independence
- Need of fairness / justice

And you can struggle with your emotions if you hold (unhealthy) beliefs that can never be satisfied, for example:

- I must be wealthier to be financially safe
- I must prove that I am better than ...
- I must become the best at...
- Others owe me respect / obedience / ...

A powerful exercise helps a lot of leaders who question their emotional outbursts. It is called the ‘downward arrows technique’ and starts with asking yourself “why does this (emotion trigger) bother me?” You find one or several causes, write them down, and then ask yourself again (“why does that (the cause) bother me”). You repeat the questioning (and the writing) until you find one of the core needs above as a deep cause for your emotional outbreak.

Then you move on to assess all the assumptions you have made along the exercise, and sort out which ones are accurate, and which ones are not. The process alleviates your anxiety and equips you with a clear mind to build up an action plan.

Here is an example of my Client Jeff's work in a coaching session.

Jeff is a CEO whose emotions are recurrently triggered by Harold, a member of the Board of Directors, who critically questions Jeff's presentations. I start the exercise by asking:

- Why does that matter?
- Because it casts doubt on the solidity and accuracy of my presentations
- And why does that matter?
- Because it undermines my credibility
- And why does that matter?
- Because it might erode the trust of the Board in me, over time
- And why does that matter?
- Because they might start looking at another candidate for the job
- And why does that matter?
- Because I might lose my job, in the end
- And why does that matter?
- Because I have got a family to feed, a reputation to uphold, and it's not sure I can get a new job quickly in this economic downturn

There we recognize several core human-needs threatened in Jeff's mind. It's then possible to examine each statement Jeff made and assess the assumptions he made.


To take just one example, Jeff said the questioning "casts doubt on the solidity and accuracy of my presentations". Is that correct? Or does the questioning: provide instead an opportunity to assert the solidity and accuracy of Jeff's presentation"? Or are both statements correct?

Anyhow, it becomes clear what Jeff's action can be: take the opportunity of Harold's questions to further establish the solidity and accuracy of Jeff's presentation, starting with 'Thank you Harold for the chance of to elaborate on this point'. That will actually contribute to strengthening Jeff's credibility.

In addition to resolving what to do about this issue, Jeff's coaching session prompted him to reflect in depth on his choice of 'victim behaviour' vis-à-vis Harold and sense of self-worth in his position. We will work on this in Chapter 2.

This 'downward arrow technique' exercise is not meant to resolve all of your issues, as you may not be able to reach out to deep-seated insecurities by yourself. Then simply take the opportunity to work with a therapist for a while, a healthy self-development practice.

A number of practices can help you enhance your emotional health.

Healthy practices	Tips & notes	My choice
Do Walk!	Just keep in mind: "a vigorous five-mile walk will do more good for an unhappy but otherwise healthy adult than all the medicine and psychology in the world" (Paul Dudley White)	
Walk your life on 3 feet at least...	Imagine you would walk on 3 feet... When one or even two are weak, you can still progress. Same principle applies to emotional stability and progress. So find yourself a third passion beside family and work. It can be sport, community work, arts, gardening, travelling..., as long as it keeps you physically active	
Identify your recurrent emotional triggers	Identify patterns, and then work-out the 'downward arrows technique', to build up an action plan to improve things	
Take responsibility for your emotions	Say "I feel angry", not "you make me angry" When at conflict with another person, remember to address his/her behaviour(s) and not to criticize the person	
Don't react immediately when you are upset	Say you just received that aggressive or disrespectful email and you are enraged... 'Take five' to cool down, and don't respond before your adrenaline is fully released. Prefer face-to-face discussions when possible: they diffuse tensions way better than emails!	
Don't sleep over your negative emotions	If they keep you awake, stand up from your bed and write them down, then apply the 'downward arrow technique' "If you can't sleep, then get up, and do something instead of lying there and worrying. It's the worry that gets you, not the lack of sleep" (Dale Carnegie)	
Trigger yourself positively in the face of adversity	"There is no education like adversity" said Benjamin Disraeli... So be thankful for the next challenge in your life or career and cheer yourself up: "I will rise to the occasion and learn from it"	
Focus on the positive, 5 minutes a day at least	Take five minutes in the early morning to meditate or just reflect about the positive things in your life and what you can be grateful for	
Consciously choose to see the positive in dangers	Train your mind to see the good in every situation, for in every 'risk' or 'crisis' there is opportunity aside of danger. The Chinese chose to signify 'risk' or 'crisis' with these 2 characters: 	

Healthy practices	Tips & notes	My choice
Start with 'Thank you' when you reply to a statement you believe to be hostile	When you perceive someone communicates aggressively with you, start your answer by 'Thank you for sharing your thoughts/feeling'. It helps 'disarm' your counterpart	
Question the intention of the person you perceive as belligerent	When you believe someone is combative with you, ask her/him: "Can you please elaborate on your intention here?"	
Give yourself time to process your emotions before you take actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent yourself to reply right-away to emails that make you angry • Go out for a 5 minutes walk when the pressure is high, or just go the washroom and freshen your face. • Listen to your favourite soothing music for 5 minutes when you boil inside • Look for a while at an object or picture you love, until you calm down 	
Stay detached but empathize with the other party in a conflict	As Steven Covey phrased it "Seek to understand first": ask the 'opposing' party about their concerns, fears, beliefs, assumptions, interests before you share yours	
Surround yourself with enough positive people	If some people stay deeply negative around you after you read this book, invite them to go... and seek professional help	
One kind act a day	With absolutely no expectation of return. Try it out: it does wonders to your inner happiness, which in turn keeps you more at peace	
Tell 'significant others' they are important to you	As easy as that is, it strengthens the relationship and enhances all parties' self-esteem. It makes it easy to address issues later on.	
Laugh enough... Seriously! At least once a day!	"Always laugh when you can. It is cheap medicine " (Lord Byron) Save short videos of your favourite stand-up comedians on your computer or hand-held devices, and play them	
Give a long hug to someone you love! At least once a day	Seriously, research has shown that a 20 seconds hug releases oxytocin, the natural bonding hormone and neurotransmitter which is anti depressant and anti-anxiety	
Your own ideas:		
Discipline is key to success! Choose an accountability-buddy	Ask her/him to regularly check up with you how you are doing with your commitments Insert regular reminders about your commitments in your electronic calendar, so they pop up and renew your focus	



Obviously those practices will not help out a grieving or depressed person enough. So, should you be grieving, suffering from insecurities or trauma from your past, or thinking you may be depressed, do treat yourself to sessions with a therapist for example.

Similarly, if you find yourself often struggling with strong emotions, just offer yourself the chance to unravel them with a professional.

Just before we move on, here is a partial illustration of a transformation towards greater emotional well-being.

The founder and owner of a successful advertising agency, Jose was a narcissistic workaholic, and valuing material success above all else. He was chronically irritable and his employees were terrified about his deafening bouts of anger. Staff-turnover was very high at his company.

Jose's health started to deteriorate as he reached his late thirties. It became so bad that he stayed several times for a couple of weeks at a hospital. The last time, he was almost paralyzed by a terrible back-ache.

Upon his return at work, he decided to try out coaching, following a friend's recommendation, and we met.

When I asked Jose simply why working that hard was important to him, he jolted back in his armchair with anger in his eyes. He stayed silent for a few minutes, and then started to unravel his childhood story. He told me his parents –particularly his father- considered his brother was much more gifted, intellectually as in sports, than Jose.

They regularly boasted about his sibling's achievements to family and friends, and hardly ever mentioned Jose. Jose felt hurt, deeply. Although highly intelligent and creative, he did not feel like competing at school and his scores were just good enough to go to the next class. He eventually graduated from mediocre university, without any distinction. Meanwhile, his brother had obtained a Master degree 'cum laude' from a prestigious institution, and secured a comfortable career as a mid-ranking civil servant, to his parents' delight.

Jose started his career with an advertising company. There, for the first time ever, he found an environment supportive of his talents and his personality. He gave the job all of his energy. Clients loved his work and he got to manage large accounts for the enterprise. 3 years later, Jose seized the opportunity of an assignment abroad as an expatriate, and felt even more liberated. When he turned thirty, he had amassed enough financial reserves to fund his own company. With boundless energy, he developed his customer-portfolio at break-neck speed and made his name on the market.

Although he had married and started a family in the meantime, he continued to invest almost all of his time and energy to his business. He was showering his wife and kids with expensive gifts, in the belief it would make up for his absence. His family was not impressed though, and would have happily traded the presents for more of his presence. One evening, Jose's son asked him "you are never here; are you really my father?" Strong as the shock was for Jose, it wasn't sufficient yet to cause him to stay closer to his family. Sadly, his irritability continued to grow, at home and at work.

Drawing from his burgeoning fortune, Jose offered himself a Ferrari, a luxury watch and many more flashy symbols of material prosperity. His reputation on the market became that of a brilliant but success-obsessed, emotionally unstable and arrogant guy. From that moment forward, Jose's health deteriorated quickly, and he treated people around him more and more badly.

As Jose disclosed his story with brave honesty to me, he understood the little boy in himself was still alive, that was hurt and bent on proving his worth 'over' his brother to his parents. He acknowledged that this outdated need was highly toxic, served no purpose anymore and had to be put away. Jose decided to fly and meet his parents that summer and talk with them. Although he did not share with them the toxic need they had –probably unknowingly-engendered in him, he did forgive them in his heart while they stayed together. Jose came back more at peace with himself and said he felt like "his back had been relieved of a very heavy burden".

As we explored Jose's relationships with his own family and his employees, particularly his bouts of anger with them and their triggers, he found out that he was not truly 'loving himself', and therefore was not able to truly 'love' others. Jose's honesty with himself enabled him to build a solid sense of self-worth, in full awareness and acceptance of his gifts and vulnerabilities. Having let go of the need to constantly prove his 'superiority' over others, he gradually became sincere and more balanced in his interactions with others. Importantly, he started to listen more and see 'good things' and 'good intentions' in others. That shifted the dynamic of his interactions from "look how smart I am" to "let's enjoy contributing the best we can together". Gary also began to say things he never uttered before: 'I am sorry', "I was wrong", 'I don't know'... And –over time- that engaged his employees at a level he never expected.

All along Jose's development, we created and sustained the conditions for the improvement of his health -physical, mental, emotional and spiritual-. And that played a vital part in supporting Jose to move forward. In particular, Jose chose to

- spend quality time and regular short holidays with his wife and kids; he asked them to keep him accountable for this commitment, "brutally if need be"
- tell his wife and kids he loved them (which he hadn't said for ages), and then do it again; and tell co-workers they were important to him
- sell his Ferrari, to buy instead a countryside cottage for their family time-out
- attend a meditation course for beginners; he then decided to meditate 10 minutes before breakfast every morning
- ask a chiropractor to assist in improve his posture at his work-station
- take a power-nap at 1pm each day he was at his office
- ask his personal assistant to help manage his time so his concentration could be protected
- take up a martial art class
- take up bi-weekly painting lessons, a desire he had since childhood

Jose hasn't had health issues ever since. His image on the market is improving. A couple of people who had met him recently for the first time told me he came out as a "great guy".

Gifts for your inner-peace and mindfulness

"Almost all the problems of mankind arise from the inability to be alone with oneself in a room for any period of time" wrote Blaise Pascal, a French philosopher in the 17th century. What happens when you are alone with yourself, all relaxed? One could say your 'spirit' flows. By 'spirit' I simply mean here the messages from that deepest part of you that makes sense of your world and of who you are. Give it enough time and it will help you become mindful of who you are, and even understand what your purpose for living is. It then helps you gain peace of mind, strength and hope.

That matters, as –in Brian Tracy’s words- “the highest human good is peace of mind. In fact, you can measure the success of your life at any given time by your level of happiness and peace of mind, by how good you feel about yourself and your world.”

When you are mindful, you are aware, open, accepting, energized, curious and seeing many possibilities and perspectives.

When you are not, you are most likely on autopilot, closed-minded, “in your head”, disconnected, tired, passive, operating with fixed stereotypes and assumptions, as Joshua Ehrlich wrote⁸.

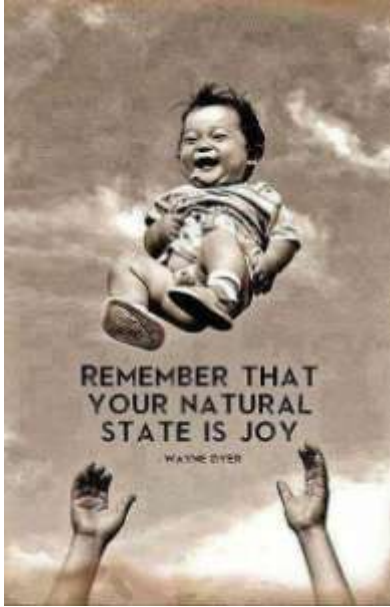
Should you experience feelings of emptiness, anxiety, hopelessness, apathy, hate or conflict, they may signal a lack of ‘spirituality’⁹ in your life.

The good news is you don’t have to be a ‘guru’ to enjoy some benefits from spirituality such as mindfulness –presence to yourself- and peace of mind. Simple practices normally suffice.

Healthy practices	Tips & notes	My choice
Stop doing, stop thinking and be quiet for a while	Take time for yourself every day, and protect it totally. It can be just 5 minutes, just after waking-up or anytime along the day. Let your thoughts flow without examining them. Regularly spend time in nature.	
Appreciate	Take a moment daily to appreciate some things around you: each mouthful of a meal, a painting or a picture, a sunset, the beauty of the architecture...	
Practice having an open mind	Let go of judgment when you listen or look at someone, give others space to express themselves, choose to listen with the certainty that you will find something of value in what others express.	
Forgive	It’s worth it. Do it now! Then you can move forward with a lighter heart. Forgive to forget: remember Albert Schweitzer’s witty words: “Happiness is nothing more than good health and a bad memory”	

⁸ In “The Global Coach”

⁹ We don’t associate spirituality and religions or philosophies.

Healthy practices	Tips & notes	My choice
Take up a meditation class	Search on the internet for the opportunity in your area. Don't start with a long meditation retreat, it could be counter productive	
Breathe deeply	Practice deep breathing at your convenience. If you are an extrovert, discipline yourself to breathe between sentences, if only to allow more time for your brain to process your thoughts	
Try out a yoga or taichi class	Choose one for beginners; check with the yoga or tai-chi school that the way they initiate new comers is comfortable with you	
Learn a compact yoga practice	Ask a yoga teacher what 5-10 minute practice without props s/he may recommend to you, learn it with the teacher and then do it daily. Search for "5 Tibetans" on internet to see an example ¹⁰	
Celebrate with gratitude	Acknowledge what you are / can be grateful for once a day. Express your gratitude to those at cause. Write it down	
Do more of what gives you Joy!	<p>What activity you are missing that you love or used to love? Music, hobby, sport,... Seek ways to re-introduce it into your life</p> <p>Remember that your natural state is joy!</p> 	
Your own ideas:		
Discipline is key to success! Choose an accountability-buddy	<p>Ask her/him to regularly check up with you how you are doing with your commitments</p> <p>Insert regular reminders about your commitments in your electronic calendar, so they pop up and renew your focus</p>	

¹⁰ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vHFVMBwqz0>



Once you have made your choice of healthy practices, two things are important:

1. Repeat those actions until they become a habit. It is worth it, for as Tryon Edwards remarked "actions form habits; habits decide character; and character fixes our destiny."¹¹ Tell your 'accountability-buddy' to scowl you the moment you deviate from your commitments. Because you will! It's often hard to do the right things to feel good afterwards; even when we know that taking it easy instead will make us feel bad afterwards...
2. Just like athletes, hire a temporary 'support team' of professionals (we mentioned personal trainer, chiropractor, osteopath, yoga teacher, doctor, therapist) on a need-basis, to help you energize yourself and keep fit.

Offer your time and presence to those you love

Those you love are your primary support team, you'd better keep them close. Who or what would you turn to, after you let them drift away from you?

Here is a remarkable story shared by Heinz Landau¹²:

"In line with his own wishes, the contract of our CEO Dr. Marijn Deckers will be extended by just two years on expiration of the initial five-year period. Deckers (56) cited family reasons for extending his contract only until the end of 2016."

The announcement was a big surprise for the financial community. Bayer is doing very well under Deckers' leadership, and with 56, he is in a great age for a CEO for such a company. Deckers had written a letter to all employees stating that his decision was purely based on family reasons. His daughters will move 2016 to the U.S. to study over there. Together with his wife, he wants to spend then plenty of time in the U.S. to be close to his daughters, but that wouldn't be possible in his role as CEO of Bayer.

Deckers emphasized: "The right balance between my career and my private life has always been important to me. And that's the reason why I have decided that way."

Deckers had caught my eye already in 2010 when he was appointed as CEO of Bayer. Also at that time, he spoke in interviews about the topic "balancing life".

"I do not see myself as a workaholic. I have nothing against hard work, but I am trying to keep balance. Apart from that, I have a family with three children whom I want to watch growing up." Deckers, who is already at 7.30 a.m. in the morning in the office, stated that, already many years ago, he made an agreement with his wife to be at 6.30 p.m. at home from work. In the evening, he said, he is reading stories for his daughters and he helps to bring them to bed.

Deckers stated further: "It is so important that you don't scourge your family with your business agenda." Deckers, who lost his mother when she was only 47 years old, mentioned:

¹¹ Full quote: "Thoughts lead on to purposes; purposes go forth in action; actions form habits; habits decide character; and character fixes our destiny."

¹² Former CEO of Merck in Thailand, read more at <http://www.thecareguys.com/2012/04/11/strive-for-balance-in-your-life/>

“What is important? Surely that I am still there and that I can play with my kids.”
Therefore, for people who know Deckers well, his decision to step down as CEO of Bayer in 2016, cannot be a surprise.

The busyness of leaders can put them at risk of ‘losing’ the connection with those who matter the most, as vital as it is... Here’s one example amongst hundreds of others I know of.

Andrew, a remarkably successful President for Asia-Pacific of a well-known multinational company, a celebrated ‘media-darling’ with a stellar career, told me he was wishing to ‘reconnect’ with his family. For a couple of decades, he had let the demands of the job shrink his time with his wife and children down to a minimum, with the belief that he was doing a great job at securing financially a good future for his family.

His incessant travelling around the world had taken such a toll on his health over the years that he was spending a lot of the weekends just catching up with sleep. His chronic stress and frequent conference calls on Saturdays and Sundays were worsening his mood at home. Although his family understood the importance of his region-wide responsibilities, they were feeling neglected. One of his two teenage kids, Liam, had adopted toxic behaviors that were of major concern to Andrew. Yet he could not find a way to ‘talk’ Liam out of his unhealthy habits. Each time Andrew tried, he could not control his disappointment as Liam stubbornly avoided a real dialog, and the father promptly erupted in blame.

Andrew and I embraced a profound exploration and actualization of the deeply-held values and fears which accounted for the gap between his ideal and actual life choices. We found out that a particularly detrimental belief had been ‘I have distanced myself so much from them that they won’t take the risk of letting me close again anyway, for fear of seeing me go astray again.’

Andrew came up with a revamped, solid beliefs and behaviors platform for reconnecting with his family¹³. He had courageously chosen to share transparently his reflections as they came along our coaching work with his wife and then with the children. And little by little, that reignited a family dialog. Andrew was grateful for the wise and helpful insights and advice his wife offered him.

Early in the process, he apologized to his wife and to his kids, individually, for having let his ‘corporate ego’ stand in the way of his relationship with and responsibilities to the people who were the most important to him: them.

As a family they discussed which concrete actions he could take, to finally become a worthy and committed spouse / parent. That included one dinner every two weeks with his wife in a fine restaurant, one family-weekend a month away from the city, and sport with the kids every Saturday with a ‘no excuse policy’ –applicable even if he had flown from another continent the night before-...

Meanwhile, at work, Andrew challenged himself to excel at his job with a ‘least from me, most from them¹⁴’ mindset, learnt to say ‘no’ to minor requests –accepting the ‘costs’ of it-,

¹³ We will discuss that part of the work in Chapter 2

¹⁴ ‘them’ meaning his employees



and coerced himself to stop working at times chosen in advance and go home. That left him with no choice but to re-engineer his effectiveness at the job.

Andrew paid more attention to his diet and decided to exercise twice a week before work, at home as well as at the hotels he stayed at. He lost weight and gained a lot more energy from it.

Andrew quickly became fresher, produced sharper strategic thinking, and grew a more inspiring role-model to his many teams at work.

A few months later, the Chairman of the Board told Andrew "he looked younger", asked him "what happened?" and requested tips for his own health and stamina.

The family grew closer together and –importantly- Liam dropped his noxious habits and adopted a positive mindset and sound behaviors. One Saturday, as Andrew was resting from intense badminton games with his two kids, Liam told him: "You know Dad, don't try too hard; you've shown us it's always possible to change for the better, and you've proven you love us already!"

The gifts from your health and mindfulness to others

The gifts you offer yourself as you take better care of your holistic health have positive ripple-effects on others around you as well:

- Your energy is communicative
- As you delegate and empower, they grow in confidence and capabilities
- As you think clearly and fast, you stimulate them to think at their best as well
- As you are emotionally grounded, they feel safe and grounded too around you
- As you are absolutely present, they open up to you
- As you take time to rejuvenate, they are inspired to consider doing the same

Do choose your healthy practices here and now. Do it for you, and do it for others around you.

My choice of healthy practices	Time-line	Accountability partner

Revitalize / from the book "GAME CHANGERS AT THE CIRCUS"

<http://www.greatness.coach/book/>



Then you will feel great, be *how* you need to be, and able to fly towards “that place inside of you of peace and well-being, that knows who you are, why you are here and the purpose of your life”, as Dr Cherie Carter-Scott¹⁵ said.

Key takeaways

- Unleashing your greatness is an inside-out process: to generate greatness, regenerate yourself first by taking care of your health holistically -just as athletes do-: physically, intellectually, emotionally and spiritually.
- Complete our simple check-up, to clarify where you are starting from, stamina-wise
- Then confront the beliefs that hold you back from accessing greater health and replace them by healthier beliefs
- Pick a few tips to save time in your busy schedule for new healthy activities
- Choose easy ‘healthy practices’ you like from our ‘gifts-menus’, and enhance your physical stamina, intellectual vigour, emotional well-being, inner-peace and mindfulness
- Invite family-members, friends or colleagues to be your ‘accountability partners’ for each ‘healthy practice’ you chose
- Remember always, those you love are your number-1 support team; offer them enough of your time and your full presence
- Just maintain the discipline and you will shortly become an inspiring role model of energy, freshness, equanimity¹⁶, clarity and focus for those around you

¹⁵ Author of #1 New York Times Best Seller “*If Life Is a Game, These Are the Rules*”

¹⁶ mental calmness, composure, and evenness of temper, especially in difficult situations