



EXECUTIVE VITALITY™: BE TRUE TO YOURSELF

Joe became a lawyer like both of his parents before him, and his older sister, too. It was expected. It was the family business. But law did not compel him in the least. He was passionate about neuroscience and saw himself in academia. He was coming to the realization that, unless his career took a one hundred and eighty degree turn, he was headed down a road of depression, low self-esteem, and lack of success.

A recent article in *The Atlantic* makes the case that your career is one-eighth of your life. We've seen other articles that say you are working one-third of your life. Regardless of which is accurate, the point is well-taken. You spend a lot of time at work. Where people work, what they do, and with whom they do it directly affects their general happiness and their outcomes – their quality of life.

Joe began to realize that being true to himself was critical to his happiness and well-being. He started to evaluate what he wanted in all areas of his life, not just career, and then he began to align his goals with his values. He needed to ask for what he needed and go after it.

Whether the context is career or a personal relationship or other situation, we can't ask for what we want if we don't know what that is. And we must have the skills to make the ask. Here are steps you can take on your own, or with an executive coach:

1. Evaluate what you need. Only you know what will support your aliveness. Take the perspective that this is important. Be honest with yourself and don't be afraid of "undiscussables" (like in Joe's family, not wanting to be a lawyer).
2. You may need a North Star to guide you. Align your goals and values. Write a personal mission statement. Your values will determine your mission. Set goals and prioritize them.
3. Now that you know what you need to ask for, how do you do it? A good communication practice is to first seek permission to bring up a sensitive topic. Try to ensure your listener will be receptive; say (your version of), "I would like to discuss something with you. Is this a good time?" You might signal the sensitivity of the topic by saying: "It isn't easy for me to talk with you about this; however, it is important." Think of a specific and recent example that animates the points you need to address. Be prepared with a proposed resolution or path so that you can be clear when asking for what you need.

To be true to yourself, you have to know what you want. Be rigorously honest with yourself so that your perspective is not colored by others' expectations. As you explore what constitutes being true to yourself, be open minded. *Do what feels right to you. Do not be driven by external criteria with which you do not resonate.* Stretch yourself and grow. Read the article in [The Atlantic](#) and when you're done, read it again. It is a good illustration of what it means to be true to yourself in the context of your career.

If you are inspired to continue with your self-improvement journey and want help along the way, contact us at 714-278-9399 or email us at info@excn.com. Mostly, our clients work with us to strengthen their leadership skills and many of our clients have improved their executive vitality while engaging with EXCN, even if that was not the main focus of their coaching. Self-improvement is part of Executive Vitality.

Can you think of an area where it's hard for you to be honest about something you are putting up with that you should not be? In what areas do you feel that your path is not aligned with your values?