



## EXECUTIVE VITALITY™: ME FIRST

To avoid crisis and burnout, put yourself first on your calendar.

Have you given up your “me-time” in the past 18 months to take care of others? Many people have, and this exacts a very high price on health as well as on one’s ability to lead. Many are feeling overwhelmed with the pressures of work and family life. Pressure can come from multiple sources: aging parents; children struggling with unemployment, working from home with their own children, and divorce; living away from people who need your attention and care; the changing nature of work; external social challenges; political strife; and more. Today ambiguity and the pace of change are outpacing our ability to adapt.

There is one message in this tip: PUT ME—that is, YOU—back on your calendar. Put your name on your calendar for no fewer than 10 hours per week. YES, ten (10)! Likely, this will require your saying, “No” to people. (For help on that, see: [hbr.org/2021/09/How to say no after saying yes](https://hbr.org/2021/09/How-to-say-no-after-saying-yes).) You will need to make choices. Be clear (with yourself AND others) on what you need for alone time, workout time, sleep, eating, and your hobbies. Without sufficient me-time, you will possibly suffer from a decline in your immune system, your nervous system going into overdrive, your blood pressure going up, eating badly, or drinking too much. And then, work will get disrupted. You will be tired and depleted. How to fix this:

**Strategy 1:** Get out your calendar, and yes, put your own name in it. Treat yourself like your most important customer.

**Strategy 2:** Learn to say, “Thank you, but, NO,” or “I am otherwise occupied.” It will sometimes be hard when you feel you should take the time with a parent or child. And there are, of course, times when their need is great, and you will want to go. This should be the exception, not the rule. They will understand when you tell them you need to recharge your batteries and you will be back – better and stronger.

**Strategy 3:** Have FUN! Remember what that feels like? Pick activities that take care of your mind, soul, body, finances, community. Enjoy your me-time. It isn’t a time to force yourself to ride 100 miles; maybe go for 10, if that feels better.

**Strategy 4:** Invite others to join in this endeavor – start a me-time community group.

**Strategy 5:** Identify what “forced you” to give up your me-time in the first place and work on that issue specifically. Also, think about what it feels like to keep your me-time.

Always enjoy the gift of me-time you give yourself. Recognize that you work hard and provide so much to others.

We all must acknowledge that to be able to sustain our capacity, we must find time to rest, recharge, rejuvenate and recalibrate, so we show up rested, invigorated, mindful, and capable of dealing with others’ needs.

*How much me-time did you have this past week? What would you do with 10 hours of me-time per week and what would be the benefits?*