

## EXECUTIVE VITALITY™: RENEWAL, REJUVENATION, AND RELIEF

*Harvard Business Review* categorized a recent article entitled *How to Get the Most Out of a Day Off* under “Time Management.” I think of the day off more as a Mental Health day or alternatively, as having an Integrated Life (see last month’s *Breakaway Performance*, Executive Vitality: Integration as Balance.) The HBR author focused on literally *what* to do (doctor’s appointment, micro-vacation...) with some mention of *why* (planning a full-length vacation is stressful, needing a break...). My focus is on *how* to take that day off.

First of all, we all know *why* flexibility in work hours and time off is essential for most people: renewal. Merriam-Webster says renewal restores to vigor or perfection; regenerates, revives and rebuilds; and replenishes, recharges and refreshes.

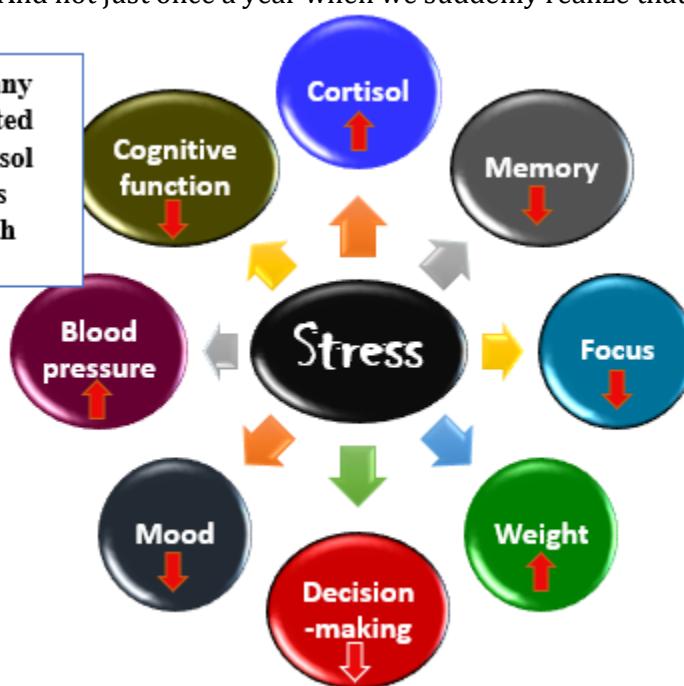
What executive does not need or want those things? Let’s give our bodies and minds the chance to benefit from all of those “re-” concepts above. We can’t be effective leaders if constant stress—unbroken by renewal—reduces our cognitive functioning...which it will... according to neurologists and psychologists. We all need R&R. And not just once a year when we suddenly realize that 90% of our vacation time is as yet unused. Brains and bodies do not function at peak when exhausted and subjected to a constant barrage of cortisol, “the Stress Hormone.”

So how can we ensure that we carve out the time and mental space we need to renew and refresh?

If we do not figure that out, we could end up like “Anastasia,” a senior executive at a retail organization. Anastasia was working punishing, backbreaking hours in a fast-paced, competitive industry, under a boss who stressed her out, with peers (some of them,

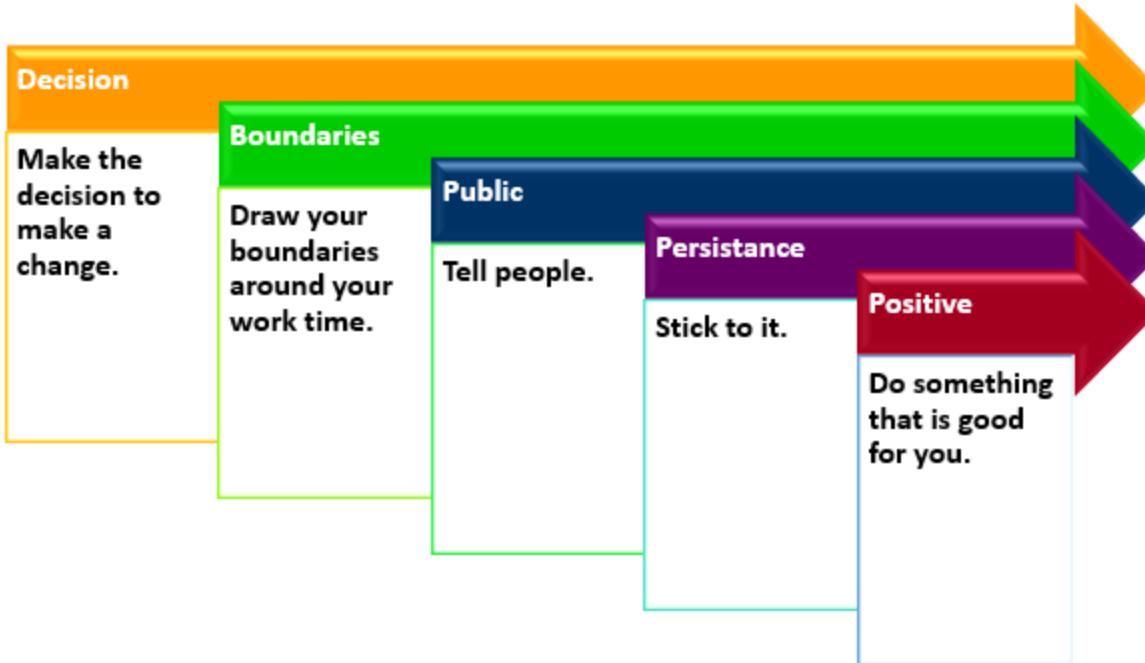
anyway) she viewed as incompetent, and a team that was both new to her *and mostly new to the organization*. She lasted a year and a half in her job (after working a 6-day week continuously during those 18 months) and wound up needing to take a “medical” leave to deal with both emotional and physical issues that she developed.

How do we cut through the demands we have as senior executives and make changes that are to the good of our health; mental, physical and emotional; the health of our organization; and the benefit of those we affect? Here are five parameters we suggest.



**Decision:** If what we need to do in the interest of reducing stress, better integrating our lives, and becoming happier and more productive is to modify our work patterns in some way, then we need to recognize that, admit it to ourselves, and firmly make the decision (the promise to ourselves) to do it.

**Boundaries:** Draw boundaries around work time. That means time in our offices, screen time, time available to schedule meetings...



**Go public:** Don't let this be a secret. Role-model this approach to health and productivity in our organizations. Then, make sure we are held accountable to doing this.

**Persistence:** This might be the hardest one. We need to stick to it. Practice makes perfect.

**Positive:** This gets back to the message in the HBR article referenced in the beginning of this piece. If what we need to do to feel better is do the laundry, do it! Hopefully, our pursuits will be more creative—volunteer work, art, exercise, beach, travel, time with loved ones...

**Success!** It should not take long to feel the relief. Another “re” word. It does not mean we will never take a meeting or do a project on “me-time” but it does mean that we will think twice about it. And it means that we will work smarter, more efficiently, effectively, and potentially, with more joy. Keep track of your success. Monitor and journal it.

*Do you need to make any changes in your work patterns to feel more integrated and balanced? Are you working as efficiently as you can and reaping the benefits in your personal life? If not, what do you need to change?*

Citations:

<https://hbr.org/2018/05/how-to-get-the-most-out-of-a-day-off>

<http://www.executivecoaching.com/executive-vitality-integration-as-balance/>