



EXECUTIVE VITALITY: SELF-CARE UNDER STRESS

We work with many leaders in our executive coaching practice who travel frequently – and we have personal experience with logging millions of miles – literally. We know business travel is a hot topic, especially during the holidays, when you will likely be facing personal travel in addition.

Our recent Breakaway Performance tips have been about planning, being prepared, making sure you have what you need for your trip so that traveling is a positive experience. We have also addressed how to self-coach along the way. We cannot emphasize enough the importance of preparation and taking action.

Harvard Business Review just published “The Daily Stat” with this headline: “Excessive Drinking Cost the U.S. \$249 Billion in 2010.” Wow. Most of that number is accounted for by **loss in productivity** in the workplace, with health care costs a distant second. And what about the emotional costs: personal, family, friends, and colleagues? Binge drinking, underage drinking, and drinking while pregnant made up significant portions of this huge overall cost. (Let’s not forget the importance of having a “designated driver” or car service for the holiday party.) The losses, both financial and non-financial, are very serious for any business executive.

Our goal in writing about executive vitality is to ensure that you are emotionally, financially, mentally, physically, and spiritually inspired and invigorated.

To that end, we suggest:

1. Be prepared for exceptional self-care. Before you get on the plane, in the car, or outside of your “safe zone,” be self-aware and have a plan. What causes you to eat more, drink more, or lose focus on your self-care goals? Identify those triggers. Being aware of the triggers is an enormous help in resisting them. And remember, you can avoid some triggers; some you can’t.
2. Prepare and have ready a response or alternative. For example, I always say, “Sorry, I am training, I’ll have a glass of club soda.” On special occasions, I will go for something different. I have learned that, as a woman traveling alone, less is more – simple is smart. If you don’t want alcohol (or too much alcohol), make sure you have available something else you can enjoy drinking. If you want that piece of cake, pick the one you want, enjoy it and then STOP. Have gratitude for the time you have with family and be prepared for the typical annoyances so they don’t wear you down. It is important that you have your own point of view about this.
3. Implement your new alternative: Know how to calm yourself at those family or stressful work events. For example, take a five-minute “air break” outside or call a friend. When I visited my family on the East Coast, I always had an escape plan should I need one. Keep up with your routine. For example, exercise. See [Regular Exercise is Part of Your Job](#) from *Harvard Business Review* for a good summary of the effects of exercise, not only on your physical well-being, but also on your stress level, interactions with others, and mental acuity.
4. Evaluate how you are doing and journal about it.

Take some time for yourself. Enjoy the holidays and come back rested, refreshed, and rejuvenated. See you next year!