



EXECUTIVE VITALITY: SMALL CHANGES, BIG IMPACT

Are you feeling calm, focused, balanced, and productive today, every day, or at least, most days? If not, it's possible you need to work on your Executive Vitality.

We'd like to tell you about one of our clients, "Rosemary," who has worked on her Executive Vitality and is now feeling better and leading better. She had felt caught up in a spiral of being unable to consistently behave as a leader in ways that were effective. To compensate, she was working longer and harder; she was actually afraid to relax.

Through Strategic Executive Coaching® and working on her Executive Vitality, Rosemary made a few simple changes in behavior that have reaped benefits personally, professionally and, since she is a senior leader, organizationally.

Rosemary came to recognize for the first time that her real job as a leader is to create an environment in which others can be successful. Keeping a journal helped her to see that when she didn't get enough sleep, she had difficulty managing her own environment for success, let alone anyone else's. She made a major effort to go to bed earlier and get up a little later. This allowed her to think more clearly, focus more on the needs of others, and behave as she believed a senior leader should.

In concert with getting more sleep, Rosemary also stepped up her previously sporadic exercise routine, taking up swimming, spinning, and Pilates. The change she felt as a result was a sense of being more centered and grounded. Colleagues noted her improved composure and even her enhanced attention span.

It sounds simple, but this focus on sleep and exercise and the impact on her performance as a leader—according to Rosemary—was actually a major revelation, although it occurred to her in stages.

As to believing that working longer and harder was the solution, she finally understood that, regardless of how much she *told* others that she didn't expect the same superhuman hours from them, her *actions* spoke much louder than words. We suggested that she practice setting a time to leave the office at night and then just get up and leave—regardless of what's undone. As a result of these changes, it is rare that Rosemary is still in the office past 6:00 or 7:00 p.m. She is no longer the last one in the office every day and she feels happier in other parts of her life. In addition, Rosemary reports that she is receiving lots of positive feedback from her direct reports and is experiencing much more effective relationships throughout the larger parent organization.

All of these changes and outcomes create more reinforcement to continue, as well as more energy—a "virtuous cycle."

What is Rosemary's advice to people who are struggling with their own Executive Vitality in the workplace? "Get a coach!" (That sounds self-serving, but that actually is her advice!) She sees a coach as someone to whom you can "report" on a regular basis to build in accountability. She acknowledges that continuing her growth in the area of self-care is not easy and that it is a journey that requires continued conscious effort and focus.

Rosemary's story is compelling and you may be curious about how EXCN's Executive Vitality coaching works. Last month we noted that EXCN Executive Vitality clients start with an inventory and assessment of their current state, which from there helps them build an Executive Vitality Action Plan. Plans are highly individualized, depending on where an executive is on the vitality spectrum and what areas have been prioritized in the Executive Vitality Action Plan. A series of "workouts," tasks, exercises, even readings or referrals might be assigned. Monitoring is always a requirement.

Here are some ideas to help you with your own Executive Vitality:

1. Keep a journal that helps you see the impact of the amount of sleep you get on how you lead, how you feel, and how effective you are in creating the environment for others to be successful. Rate the impact on a scale of 1 to 5.
2. Try going to bed earlier and/or getting up a little later if you are not getting enough sleep. Track the impact as above.
3. Step up your exercise program—try something new or something you have not done for a long time.
4. Practice setting a time to leave at night and then just leave. The metaphoric "pile on your desk" will be much easier to handle in the morning with fresh eyes and a fresh outlook. Guaranteed.

"Vitality shows in not only the ability to persist but the ability to start over." —F. Scott Fitzgerald