

EXECUTIVE VITALITY: SUCCESSFULLY HANDLING DOWNTURNS IN LIFE

Many forces can affect your — or any executive's — vitality, and consequently, leadership effectiveness. Sometimes life's arrows point downward — the arrows for the market, for bottom line results, a child's report card, or a loved one's health report. In our executive coaching practice, we have seen executives successfully handling downturns in life; they have found ways to keep their heads up and move forward and thrive!



What have they done to maintain their sanity and their physical health during these times?

First of all, they did not keep their concerns to themselves. They talked to their executive coaches, their friends, and trusted colleagues. Secondly, they leaned into their teams; they recognized it was time to exercise the delegation skills they had been working on. Thirdly, they leaned into their peer team, taking advantage of the strong, collaborative relationships they had invested in over time. Importantly, they realized that, even more than normally, it was time to take really good care of themselves and to recognize they can't be good spouses, parents, friends, or leaders if they are falling apart physically or mentally. "Symptoms" they noticed were that they were less patient, more tired, forgetful, headachy. They knew that, at these times more than ever, they needed to get adequate sleep, to exercise and get those endorphins going, to remember that alcohol is a depressant, and eating too much can be as well.



What should you do when you face life's downward arrows? What would you tell a friend or a direct report to do? Experiencing a wide range of emotions is healthy. If you are resilient and willing to see the good when difficulty arises.

Be kind to yourself. Be sure to continue things that give you joy — fun novels, plays, movies, sports — are you rested? Work on balancing all the important issues so that you are ready to weather any storms, and to have more vitality at work and in your life. Pay attention to what you need to pay attention to, and give yourself permission to engage in healthy and productive activities. For example:

Here are some tips to weather the storm.

1. Follow healthy practices to take care of your health, strength, and mental outlook. Are you continuing your meditation? Do you keep a gratitude journal? During these times, it is helpful to be grateful for all the good facets of your life. Can you lose yourself in an activity, like when time just flies by? Keep up with your spiritual practices?
2. It may be time to go through your "back to basics" leadership checklist. For example, how effective is your team? Trust your team to do the jobs you have been coaching them to do. How much trust exists between you and your peers? Rely on your peer team.
3. Be open and communicative with important people in your life about what is going on.
4. Cut yourself some slack. Additional responsibilities and stresses will be there when the time is right to take them on.

What practices have you used to get through the tough times? What have you seen colleagues do that you may want to emulate?