# EXECUTIVE VITALITY: EFFECTIVE LEADERS AVOID BURN-OUT

In my experience, I have seen that certain things bear repeating. Here is one: There are 24 hours in a day for all of us – what differentiates productive leaders from burned out, overcommitted, and oppressed ones is how they use that time. Leaders cannot be effective if they are exhausted in mind and/or body. We have all seen the unraveling that can come from an executive pushing him/herself to do more, more, more.

Look at your calendar. Do you see your own name on it? What would be different if you made a commitment to yourself, the way you would commit to your direct reports, customers, peers, or boss?

I have long advocated "white space" on calendars for reflection and strategic, long-term thinking – this is an extension of white space. This is the vitality space and it is about finding the time for self-care in recognition of the fact that your own personal well-being is actually the core of your effectiveness as a leader.

You can't be effective if you are exhausted. How can you find this time? How can you not?

- Block off the time and "lock" it in your calendar. It will be uncomfortable at first. That is normal. Do it anyway.

- Know when to say, "No." No to stakeholder requests, no to meetings you don't have to be at, no to a meeting that would take you away from an important family/personal commitment.

- Set the tone and the expectation in your organization by asking people:  Do I really need to be there? Do you (does your direct report) really need to be there? Can you delegate this meeting/task? Does this meeting or task reflect your vision, mission, values, strategy, important goals…or is it dispensable?

- Ensure your team is ready to step up. That is a long-term commitment to coaching, mentoring, and supporting the growth of those reporting to you. Make yourself dispensable.

And, by the way, I hope you have read the abundant research that proves that no one can really get by on four or five hours of sleep – not if they want to perform optimally and experience executive vitality. If you haven't, here is an interesting start: [There's a Proven Link Between Effective Leadership and Getting Enough Sleep](#) from two McKinsey professionals, Nick van Dam and Els van der Helm, via *Harvard Business Review,* February 16, 2016. The latter author is McKinsey's sleep specialist in Amsterdam. Yes, McKinsey has a job for a sleep specialist – that should tell us something!

*Can you prioritize yourself as you would others and put yourself on your calendar? How can others help you achieve more "me-time"? And how can you promulgate that philosophy in your organization?*