

The Best Strategies for Tapping Into Physical and Mental Health to Maximize Success in Business



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Our physical and mental health can either be our greatest asset or biggest obstacle when it comes to excelling in business.

Nagging health issues, be it a recurring headache, digestive symptoms, fatigue, insomnia or mood issues, can sneakily affect how we show up in our business. We may pass on networking or socializing opportunities, do the bare minimum to get by or forget important details (I say it because I've lived it). To add insult to injury, humans are adaptive

creatures by nature. We will adapt to pretty much anything, including symptoms. Working with clients with chronic issues on a daily basis, I often hear statements like, overall, I feel really healthy, despite being in pain 24/7. Or, it's normal for me to only have a bowel movement twice a week. And my favorite, I'm a zombie until I've had my coffee in the morning. Entrepreneurs are driven and motivated by definition. This increases the tendency to ignore or disregard symptoms or the impact they may be having on their pursuits. Awareness is the first step. Thankfully, health can be optimized and become your power partner by making a few simple nutrition and lifestyle tweaks.

According to the Institute of Functional Medicine, functional medicine “determines how and why illness occurs and restores health by addressing the root causes of disease for each individual.” For more information about root causes, check out my article *Inflammation: Friend or Foe*. Essentially, root causes are environmental factors that are driving the symptoms and health conditions. Improving these lead to long-term health improvement rather than simply putting a band-aid on the symptoms. Functional medicine is also founded on the concept that health is not simply the absence of disease, but rather the thriving of mind, body and soul. Under these principles, the keys to thriving are prevention, early detection and utilizing the root-cause approach to combat existing health issues.

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Prevention

Any auto mechanic will tell you that having your car regularly serviced will ensure it will operate well into 100,000-plus miles. The human body is the same way. First, look at the things in your immediate environment, such as diet, stress

levels, relationships, a sense of meaning and purpose in life, sleep and exercise. The goal here is creating an environment that makes it difficult for disease to occur. Dis-ease can manifest when any of these are out of alignment. It is about intentionally prioritizing your health and being a proactive participant in your life and caring for your body. While this formula will look a little different for each person, the factors listed below outline a general framework. For some people, this process will be intuitive. For others, overcoming challenges (in life or in health) may set them on this path to prioritizing their health and well-being. And still for others, receiving guidance from a professional ensures they're engaging in what is best for their body and not merely acting on generalities. The best part is that it is never too late to start. Self-care and prevention is one of the most empowering things we can do for ourselves and our business.

In addition, prevention is also about going in for tune-ups. What does your blood work look like? How about hormones? Do you have any genetic predispositions? Evidence shows that markers for certain diagnosable conditions can be measured years before symptoms appear. This study shows that the underlying mechanisms of autoimmune conditions (determined by the presence of antibodies programmed to attack healthy tissue) can be active for years. Sometimes it is decades before the person ever shows symptoms or reason to investigate further. Work with a healthcare professional and run lab work routinely (annually is sufficient for preventative purposes). Doing so will provide a useful comparative baseline and ensure that nothing is simmering beneath the surface. And if it is, it can be detected early before it becomes clinical.

For a more personalized approach, functional medicine practitioners often utilize more specialized forms of lab testing. These are based on your unique needs and goals. The intent is to not only uncover the potential root cause(s) to any nagging health issues but also reveal areas that hold

opportunity for fine-tuned optimization. For example, a food sensitivity test may expose foods in your diet that are causing inflammation. An organic acid test looks at nutrient and metabolic patterns that may be affecting cognition, energy, sleep and overall well-being.

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Prevention in action

The following provides a solid framework of lifestyle factors to optimize when working to achieve optimal health and prevent disease:

- **Nutrition:** Organic, whole, minimally-processed, low sugar, anti-inflammatory. Eating an abundance of brightly colored vegetables and wild-caught animal products. Also, healthy fats such as avocado, olive and coconut oil all provide the raw materials for optimal functioning. Conversely, processed foods laden with industrialized oils and sugar can contribute to inflammation and metabolic disturbances that rob your body of energy. Check out the Whole 30, Mediterranean and Paleo diets for more specific information.
- **Manage stress:** Approximately 75 percent of all doctor's office visits are stress-related. Engage in relaxing hobbies, long walks, yoga, meditation and exercise. These have all been shown to lower cortisol levels and boost serotonin, our calming feel-good brain chemical. One of the best methods for increasing stress resiliency is heart rate variability biofeedback training. I've referenced it in one of my previous articles.
- **How much sleep are you getting?:** Contrary to the belief of many, no one can optimally function for a sustained period of time on 5-6 hours of sleep (re: adapting). The brain is actually more active during sleep than it is

during wakeful hours, orchestrating many aspects of healing and repair. Getting a sound, restful seven to nine hours ensures these processes are completed, and that you are running on rest and recovery rather than stress hormones.

- What does your exercise routine look like?: Exercise does not have to be done at the gym. It can be literally any sustained movement you enjoy – dancing, swimming, yoga, running, skating, biking, skiing. The goal is to engage in regular, sustained movement, most days of the week.
- How connected are you to friends and loved ones?: This is huge. Isolation, or feeling a lack of love, connection and community. These affect our physiology as much as an infection or anything we can actually measure, if not more. In fact, studies show that people with terminal cancer that have a close-knit support system actually live longer than those who do not. Humans are pack animals. Regularly seeing and talking to friends and loved ones is as necessary for our well-being as food and water.
- Do you feel like you're honoring your calling, your sense of purpose?: It is everyone's dream for their hobby to be their career. For some people this is reality. Although I do recognize that this will not be the case for everyone. Nevertheless, actively engaging in your passion – be it travel, raising ferrets, knitting, cooking, basket weaving – is like nutrition for your soul. Lacking a sense of purpose, or worse yet, feeling a sense of purpose but stifling it, slowly poisons the soul. Even if it's just a few hours each week, following and honoring your passion provides a deep sense of joy and gratitude. Two emotions that literally change our genetic expression to promote that of health rather than dysfunction.

It may seem like another thing on your to-do list to cook a

healthy meal or take the time to exercise. But, health is truly an investment with compounding returns. In addition, healthy isn't about being perfect. It's about connecting to what your prime health feels like. Not settling, and being in tune with your body to know what needs to be done to maintain that state most of the time. It's about harnessing the power of your physical and mental health so it's working for you rather than against you. If you're reading this article, you're already a go-getter. With dialed-in lifestyle routines and dedication to self-care, you'll be unstoppable.

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