

There's Another Tax That Will Cost You In Big Ways If You Don't Do These 3 Things

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What if I told you there was an entire column missing from your profit and loss statement? That sentence undoubtedly shakes you up a little.

Now, what if I said, *"Are you calculating the effects of your business as a result of your physical and mental health?"* I bet that question probably doesn't have the same effect.

It's easy to brush off things that aren't quantifiable on paper. You can't put a number on a "panic attack" or "16-hour day," thus, it can't be deducted from your loss column. But the hard truth is we do pay for these things. They're called emotional taxes, and they're ones that your CPA won't tally on your Schedule C, because these are things that we pay using our most prized, wise and often ignored currency: our health.

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What is emotional tax?

Think of emotional tax as the interchange of energy and value. If you're depleted, this exchange of person or project is a cost. If you're energized and have received value, the exchange is a plus or profit. However, emotional taxes cannot be measured by a singular example, because the triggers of stress and emotional tax are unique to the entrepreneur or

leader.

One example is continual conversations with team members about performance and nothing changes. You've gone the formal route where you've documented the issue and they've acknowledged it. But somehow, you're still at square one. Each of those conversations begins to compound the interest on your emotional expenditure.

In 2023, I took on way too much. When I looked back at the end of the year, I realized that most of the stress I had experienced was tied to holding on to an avenue of lead generation in my business. This avenue made sense when I started it and my business was in its infancy. But six years later, my business had grown exponentially and my team had quadrupled. Trying to juggle everything caused a ripple effect of overwhelm, resentment and feelings of neglect from those I cared about. And when I paused, I realized a hard truth – I simply did not enjoy this way of working anymore. I was done paying the emotional tax.

If you're ready to stop overpaying your emotional tax, here are three practical ways to identify how to lower your emotional taxes – and what to do next.

1. Start with your strengths and weaknesses

Emotional intelligence is a term we've become very familiar with as entrepreneurs thinking about our leadership capacity and how we relate with our team members. But you can also turn those principles around on yourself. Self-awareness is knowing your biggest stressors because these can point to your weaknesses.

A quick way to identify them is to make a list with two columns. In the left column, write down the most stressful

aspects of your job, those things that make your stomach turn when you know you have to deal with them. In the right column, write down the things you enjoy most about your work.

Note which column is longer. If your left column is overflowing, then it's time for something to change. Try and identify which traits the items in that column share in common. Brainstorm ways to delegate your weaknesses to someone who has those strengths.

Running a business isn't going to be a bed of roses all the time, so eliminating all of your stressors is unreasonable. But it also shouldn't be miserable or emotionally draining. If you aim for a better balance between your columns, you'll begin to see the weight of the emotional taxes distributed in a way that's easier for you and the business as a whole to bear.

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2. Incorporate culmination time

Culmination time is a fancy way of saying "give yourself space." It's the dedication of a specific unit of time in order to collect your thoughts, evaluate your business and see what's working, what needs tweaking and to check in on your physical and mental health. Maybe it's one week every month, maybe it's just one day of the month or two hours in a month. Whatever you can manage is great.

You can also custom-design the parameters to work harmoniously with the nature of your life and business. For me, I pre-plan this time on the company calendar so that my team knows that I'm effectively out of office. I turn off notifications for emails and keep my phone on silent so that I know the space I need for deep thinking is free from distractions.

Many entrepreneurs do this as a year-end practice, which is

great for big-picture thinking. More frequent personal and company health check-ins can help identify the cyclical nature of life and work.

3. Learn how to say “no”

In my early days as an entrepreneur, I forgot this word existed. and if it did, I definitely didn't think I could use it. Push away potential business? Heck, no! I was hustling and trying to gain momentum. It was the season of “yesses.” And that was okay – back then, at least.

Once my media company began to gain traction and clients were coming to me, I still wasn't quite ready to put the brakes on. It took a pattern of consistent overwhelm and that feeling of being pulled in 17 directions at once for me to recognize that I was firing on cylinders that didn't even exist.

Here's what I learned the hard way: It was time to grow my support team, and it was time to exercise my right to say “no.” Yes, hiring and delegating took time, but it was an investment in my future health, both personally and for the business that bears my name. Saying no felt odd at first, but the podcasts I produce have a certain offbeat quality to them. To stay true to that ethos, I had to get comfortable being more selective.

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Getting more emotionally intelligent with what you're taking on, what's depleting you and energizing you is a straight path to delegation. But like with anything you've created successfully in your business, it takes time and you need to make that time. It's the rinse and repeat of awareness, reflection and placing the appropriate boundaries around your energy by saying no. These are baby steps that result in big changes for your business, your body and your emotional taxes.

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