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Maximising Leadership Impact with Silega Commander helps develop self-awareness in order to maximise leadership capacity and potential and embrace a proactive, values-driven leadership posture to effectively influence others to deliver business goals. This workshop takes a practical approach to equip leaders with essential leadership skills in order to lead others effectively. Contact training@leaderonomics.com for more details.

By CHRISTINE COMAFORD editor@leaderonomics.com

As leaders, we are expected to be highly present, have clear and consistent insights, maintain significant levels of energy, and stay grounded regardless of circumstances. Yet, in today's world of relentless change, this can be challenging. When's the last time you focused on you? It's not selfish; it's necessary.

There's an infinite amount of work to be done, especially as the leader in your organisation.

Sometimes, you just need to put the brakes on, because there will always be more work.

Your mind is active all day long with some 60,000 separate thoughts each and every day.

With all of those thoughts, it's not surprising that your mind becomes so loud that we lose focus.

We know we shouldn't get freaked out and anxious, we know staying present will enable us to find better solutions, we know we should be getting a good night's rest to tackle the situation with a fresh mind the next day, but we can't always get there without help.

We've been hijacked. Our patterns are in charge. We're human.

If you don't take time to pause and decide to keep going on your current path or change a few things that will make a big difference in your life, you may burn out.

It's okay to take a look and say: "Hey! This isn't working", and implement a few changes that will steer you towards a destination that is less painful.

No one has time to process every single blip in their life. We can't track down the source of every pattern and sometimes it's not a pattern, it's just life. We experience burnout when we resist and when we create meaning.

So how do we take care of our health and stay mindful of what's important when life throws us a curveball?

Here are tools that my executive coaching clients use that have empowered them to avoid burnout.

RESISTANCE VERSUS ALLOWING

- Look at 10 things in your life/the world that you don't want/like (tacky wallpaper, etc.) and look at each one and say out loud "I do not consent to you" (it's not OK that they are there). See how that feels in your body.
Now look at the 10 things again. They didn't disappear even though you didn't consent to them.
Now look at each of the 10 things again. Say "I consent to you" for each (heck, they are there anyway, not much point in resisting this fact - consent isn't approval, it's just acknowledgment). See how that feels in your body.

Reflect on the feelings associated with not consenting/resistance to it versus consenting to/acknowledging it.

Optimism isn't universal consent. It's OK if things aren't OK with you. Notice what it's like to let them be not OK and yet acknowledge that they are there without energetically resisting them.

MANOEUVRES OF CONSCIOUSNESS

First, think of something you are resisting. Now take the following steps.

- Negative Evaluation (three minutes): Say out loud all the things you don't like, what's bad about them, what you can't stand. Really trash them. Do you notice what the feelings are here? Break state (ask non-sequitur questions; count to 100; shake your body out).



HEADED TOWARDS BURNOUT?

HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO DO TO ENSURE YOUR BATTERIES STAY ENERGISED

Curiosity (three minutes): Now get really curious about these situations. How did they come to be? What is familiar about them? What good things come from them? What are the feelings here? Break state again.

Amazement (three minutes): Now become amazed that they came to be. Wow! This is fascinating! What's amazing about them? What are the feelings here? Break state.

Full Appreciation (three minutes): Now honour everything about this situation/state. Yes! This has been so very helpful in order to bring me to the next level. What are the feelings here? Break state.

Now do a short Outcome Frame below. Map out a clear vision of your desired state for 15 minutes minimum - bask in it, ask each question in detail.

OUTCOME FRAME

- What would you like? This must be something you can create and maintain.
What will having that do for you? What benefits will it bring you?
How will you know when you have it? Notice criteria or proof will there be?
When, where, and with whom would you like it? Give an idea of the scope and timing.
What of value might you risk or lose?
What are your next steps?

EMOTION WHEEL

Use the Emotion Wheel (see Figure 1) to help understand what you are feeling. The centre feelings are the "core feelings."

The Emotion Wheel can help you get to the core emotion you are experiencing, increase your emotional

vocabulary and make connections you may not have otherwise made.

CHOOSE THE MEANING

No matter what happens outside of us, we always get to choose what we make of it on the inside.

Example: Lots of things are changing, lots of short notice client requests and deadlines.

Meaning-making option #1: This is so stressful! I am emotionally exhausted by this, it's all too much!

Result of this meaning: Missed deadlines, incomplete work, stress for yourself and those around you, low quality work, no fun for anyone.

Meaning-making option #2: Yes! Change means movement and growth and a chance to really shine and pace myself.

I will show up fully to serve our awesome tribe. How great that I get to tap into my awesome brain to become even clearer and find even more solutions.

Result of this meaning: Empowerment, choice of how to respond versus compulsively reacting, support of yourself and others, shine my light, honour my company values, choose my reality.

Which meaning would you like to make? Our words shape our reality, and meaning-making and reframing are key to shape our reality.

What if nothing happens to us, it only happens for us to help us grow?

The key to avoiding burnout is to visualise who you want to be, set your intentions and get out of your own way.

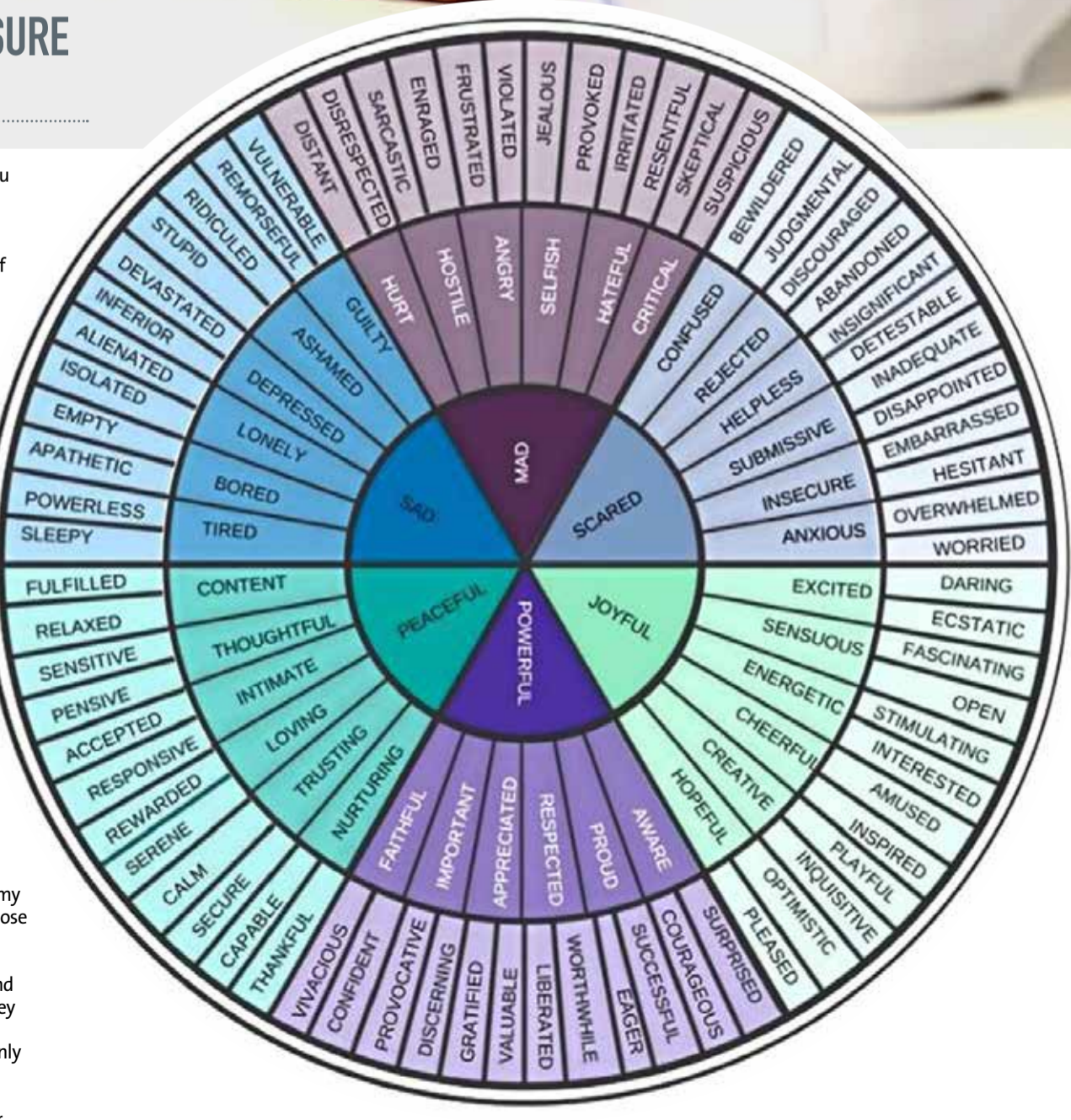
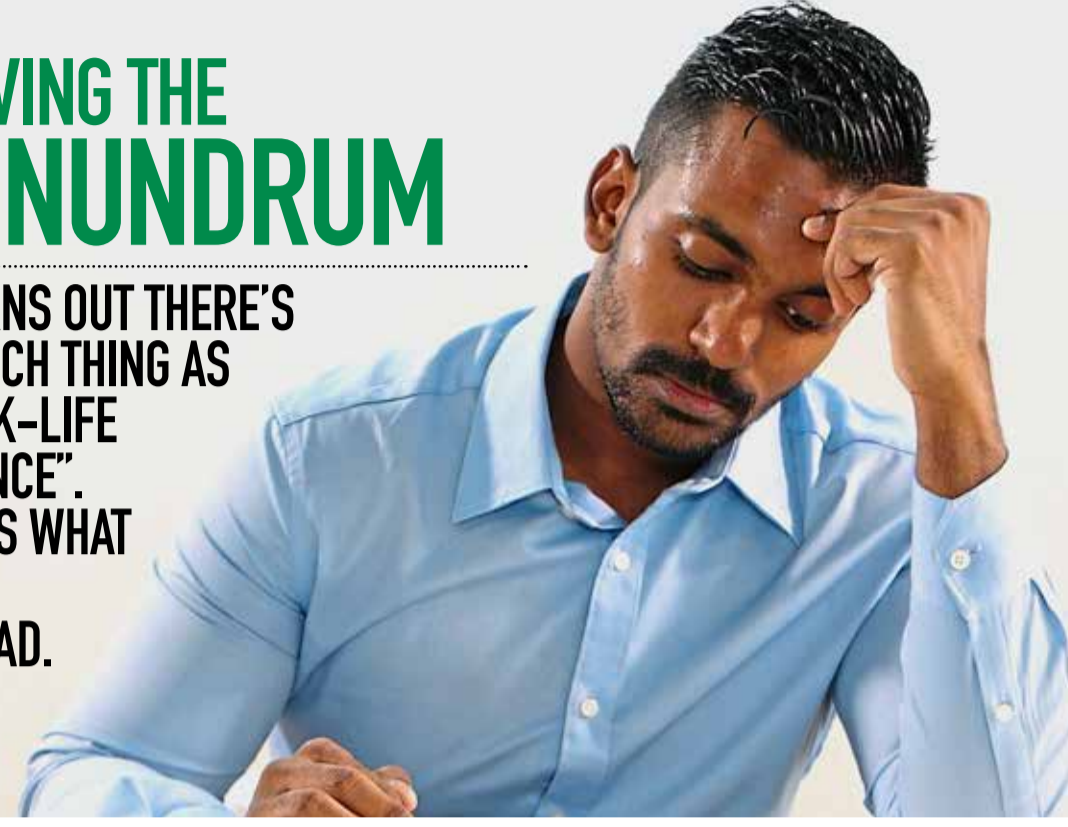


Figure 1: The Emotion Wheel

SOLVING THE CONUNDRUM

IT TURNS OUT THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS "WORK-LIFE BALANCE". HERE'S WHAT TO DO INSTEAD.



By MINDA ZETLIN editor@leaderonomics.com

YOU struggle with work-life balance. I know you do because just about everyone does.

For entrepreneurs, but also for everyone else, it seems impossible to get everything we would like done in the space of 24 hours.

It can be deeply frustrating - unless we change how we think about work-life balance.

In the town in which my husband Bill and I live, there's an event every Thursday evening in a wonderful local eatery called The Hungry Pelican.

It's nominally an open mic night, but in fact it's a big happy music jam party attended by most of our friends, whether they're musicians or not.

I often work in the evenings, so sometimes I go to the party, sometimes I skip it, and sometimes I go for a little while and then head home to work.

One such evening, as I was about to leave, an unusually blunt friend told me: "You're going to be dead someday. And all you'll have done is work."

I think a lot about work-life balance, mostly because it often seems to be missing in my life, so his comment stuck with me.

A while back, I wrote a column from an interview I conducted with executive coach and best-selling author Wendy Capland. As a follow-up, we decided she would coach me and that I would write about it.

At my first coaching session, when she asked me what I hoped to accomplish, better work-life balance was high on my list.

We talked it through for a while, and some lessons emerged:

1 YOU'RE NOT ALONE

"I've coached thousands of people and work-life balance is on everybody's list," Capland said. Maybe a change of terminology can help.

"Now they call it work-life integration," she added. "I laugh at that - but in some ways it really is less about balance and more about having an integrated life."

2 IT'S A SEESAW

"There are very rare moments when a seesaw is balanced," Capland told me.

"Either one side is up and the other side is down or you're flowing up or down."

In other words, work-life balance is cyclical. "There are periods when we all have to work our asses off.

"We have a commitment, we have a deadline. For a period of time, we choose to do that for all the right reasons."

"Then there are times when it's done or it's not such a heavy push period when we can integrate more of our personal life into our day. It's about feeling satisfied with where you are at the moment."

That made a lot of sense to me. There have been times in my life when I spent much less time working, though I had the low income to show for it.

There were other times when I've taken an entire month off so Bill and I could go on vacation.

Moving house recently required substantially reducing my work schedule for almost three months while we packed, prepared our house for rental, and made the long trek from coast to coast.

Work may be dominating my time at the moment, but it hasn't always been this way, and it won't always be.

3 IT'S ABOUT FINDING HAPPINESS

The question of what makes you happy brings another element into the whole work-life equation, or at least it does for me.

Most of the time, I enjoy my work. Spending many hours working may not seem like a sacrifice if you feel like the work you do is fun, or meaningful, or both.

And if you don't feel that way, then it might be time to consider making a change.

4 IT'S ABOUT VALUES

How you spend your time should be about making yourself happy, but also about what you consider important. We have a friend who spends most of her time caring for her elderly mother.

She's not really happy about it - she would rather be more focused on her career - but no one else in the family is available.

When people step up in this way to care for a family member in need, or do work that makes the world better or support a cause they believe in, they're making a choice that reflects their values.

Whether those choices tip you toward the work or the life side of the equation, the way you spend your time should sync up with what you consider valuable, at least most of the time.

If the two don't match, consider making a change.

5 DON'T SACRIFICE YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

A couple of years ago, my husband told me that I had to make some time to talk with him every day.

The request brought me up short, and it led to some changes in my work schedule. Things are better now but I'm still working longer hours than I'd prefer, so I mentioned his comment to Capland.

Her response surprised me. She told me how her husband, who'd been a stay-at-home-father until the children had left for college, decided to go back to work.

She was all for it, until she discovered that his new real estate job was pretty much a 24/7 commitment.

"We had a hard time," she says now. "You have to renegotiate. What your husband said means: 'I miss you and I want to be with you.'"

"It would be a mistake to ignore it unless you don't care about your marriage." Point taken.

6 IT'S ALWAYS A WORK IN PROGRESS

Just as the seesaw is always moving, finding work-life balance - or integration - is never a done deal.

It's a constant flux where work sometimes takes over your life, and life sometimes takes you away from work.

When things go wrong on either side of the equation, it's important to address them or they will bleed over. As Capland pointed out, you take yourself wherever you go, so if things are all wrong at home, that will affect you on the job, even if it doesn't actually prevent you from working.

If you're miserable at work, that will equally affect your home life.

7 WATCH FOR THE WARNING SIGNS

If work-life integration is a constantly moving target, I asked Capland, are there warning signs that can tell you when you've tipped too far for too long toward the work side of the equation?

"You're sick, you're stressed, you can't sleep, or you're cranky," she answered. If that starts happening, it's time to take action.

"Take a vacation, or at least a day off. Have a massage or have a bubble bath." Sounds like very good advice to me.

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