

How to Avoid Burnout

By Rob McKelvey

I think we can all agree that times are tough and may be getting even tougher. And the tough times continually are thrown up in our faces. We read about it in the papers, and hear it on the news, and talk about it among our work colleagues and friends. The sad thing is that if we continue to focus intently on the bad and tough times we will be dragged down by it. As I have said in other articles “we get what we focus on”.

I also keep hearing these days from people who tell me how exhausted they are when they get home, and even when they are at work. They blame it on working longer hours and “wearing more hats” at work. They are also “depressed” by the tough times. They just can’t seem to get balance in their life these days.

I’m not sure that anyone can maintain perfect or total balance...what ever that happens to be...all the time. However, I will tell you that if we continue to live an imbalanced life for long periods of time (and your body and mind will let you know when enough is enough) then we are candidates for burn out. And that is not good.

So how can we avoid burn out? Well hopefully I can help somewhat with the following 4 tips.

Focus on What is Important.

What are the 3 to 5 most important activities that will help you accomplish your goals or objectives; both at work and personally? Focus on them. Avoid wasting time on the trivial and time wasting activities that come your way on an all too regular basis. Spend your valuable time on what matters. Once you have finished the 3 to 5 most important activities then you can move onto the next 3 to 5 important activities.

Set Realistic Goals

Setting unrealistic goals, that can’t be met, creates a sense of failure if it is done on an ongoing basis. It causes stress and anxiety which can be part of the lead up to burn out. It is important to make sure that your goals are realistic and meaningful. Use the SMART approach as discussed in a previous article of mine. [The Art of Goal Setting](#). It also is useful to ask yourself why you want to achieve a certain goal. If you can’t come up with at least 5 good reasons for achieving it, then perhaps it isn’t worth achieving.

Learn to Say NO

Sometimes learning to say no is much easier to say than to do. It is important to do though. Saying yes to everybody that wants you to do something, including yourself, simply over loads the system. Think of a truck that continually takes on more heavy loads until the axle finally breaks. That truck can no longer go anywhere. It is the same with people when burn out hits. The way to say no is to relate the request to what is important and what is a

goal. If it is not related to those two things then an appropriate response to the request could be NO.

Plan Your Day

There are 24 hours in a day. How many do you want to use, and for what? If you don't allocate time in your day to focus on the important activities and your goals, then the day will become filled with the unimportant, time wasting, make work activities that will get you no closer to what you want to accomplish. It will only get you closer to burn out. And when you allocate time to your day, remember to allocate time for yourself. If **you** don't respect your time who do you think will?

Although times may be tough, it is no reason for you to do it tough. Be true to yourself, follow the above 4 tips, and you can avoid burn out.

By the way, for those of you that may think I have this "life balance" thing sorted out 100%. I don't. I still have to remind myself about the 4 points occasionally.