



## Chapter Seven: Balance

All four elements impact the circulation of forces in your life, but it is the Third Element that most directly affects energy. Two basic underlying concepts of energy balance are:

**1. Nature will always attempt to find balance.** When there is a vacuum in your life, nature will fill it with *something*. The debit and credit sides of an account have to balance. If you give more than you take in, for example, energy will be blocked. The blockage will show up *somewhere*. If you spend more money than you have, the universe will stay in balance by extracting energy from you in whatever form it is available. This might include depression, muscle tension, chest pain, headaches, sleeplessness, or weakened immune function. This is why being in debt saps life energy. The inverse is also true. You can get out of balance by withholding. The law of balance will exact something else from you. The tendencies of debt and hoarding are both based on the belief that there is not enough.

**2. When energy is blocked in your physical or mental world, nature will find a way to work around or through it,** as water does a boulder, or blood flow does an arterial obstruction. Something will have to give. If you experience distress or disease, your energy has been diverted. To restore health and balance, your energy flow needs to become unobstructed. By modifying your habits or lifestyle, you can restore this balance. The purpose of this Element is to create an optimal balance of energy, both for you and for your workplace.

The speed and amount of information that the average person is required to process surpasses the ability of the brain to process it. According to Ed Hallowell in *Crazy Busy Overstretched, Overbooked, and about to Snap*, there is been a 375% rise of untreated Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) year after year.<sup>34</sup>

Rather than develop new and different strategies, many are attempting to control this new world with old strategies, resulting in a constant and inefficient struggle. It won't work to try to get back in control with strategies that used to work, such as working

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<sup>34</sup> Author's Note: this percentage increase might be an artifact of the increased popularity of the diagnosis, and the tendency to discover false positives.

longer and harder, making more lists, or worrying more.<sup>35</sup>

### ACCEPTING A NEW NORMAL

The first step to learning energy balance is to adapt to high stress levels<sup>36</sup> by seeing stress as your 'new normal.' Feeling 'out of control' might be your new normal. That means that you are not 'losing it' if you feel that way. You can stop worrying about it. The worry you have about feeling 'out of control' is causing you more stress than actually feeling out of control. If you can relax into feeling off balance, and start to focus on other things, such as how you are using your time and balancing your energy, you'll do better. If you are caught in fast-moving rapids, you're caught. Stop agonizing over that fact, and start figuring out how you can get out.

Worrying about being worried and worrying about being overwhelmed are a waste of time. Worrying about something is a sure sign that you're using the wrong strategy.

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<sup>35</sup> Burnout is a clear sign you are using the wrong strategies. Take the Burnout or Balanced assessment in the Journal, and follow the recommendations to get back into balance. If you are still struggling, a psychologist can help you with perspective that you might not see yourself.

<sup>36</sup> Paul Rosch, Professor of Medicine and Psychiatry and NY Medical College.

## ENERGY DRAINS

Currently, the corporate landscape is filled with excitement, opportunity, and fast growth. It is also filled with exhausted people. I hear from so many: “We’re tired. Just tired. I’m not sure they know how tired we are.” Workplace stressors are everywhere and unavoidable. I hear these issues cited most often: “The type of job I have, hectic and routine tasks with little meaning and little sense of control, constant IT changes, heavy workloads, long work hours and infrequent breaks, lack of support from supervisors and coworkers, physical isolation, little input in decision making, communication problems, unclear job expectations, difficult in satisfying the customer’s needs and the company’s expectations at the same time, lack of opportunity for growth or promotion, budget cuts, job insecurity, physical conditions, long working hours, work-life conflict.” Do any of those sound familiar?

## YOU HAVE CONTROL

Perhaps “they” aren’t aware of these conditions. But **you, not your company, are responsible for your well-being.** It is up to *you* to keep track of your energy reserves. The primary cause of stress that you experience is not environmental. The primary cause originates within you, and is based on your perceived control over your environment and your reaction to it. That is, you have a great deal of choice over whether

you are going to feel stressed or not. By the time you complete the exercises in your Journal, you should have techniques to manage feelings of stress.

Before you blame your workplace, or the difficult people in it, for your stress – explore these top 10 energy wasters and see if any have crept into your life.

### 10 TOP ENERGY DRAINERS

- 1. Doing anything for anyone over the age of 18 that they can and should be doing for themselves.**

This behavior weakens the recipient and usually causes resentment in the caregiver. Resentment can be powerfully disabling. If you are rescuing anyone over 18, consider that you are not helping them, are meeting your own unmet needs, and it is time to meet them from other sources.

Don't do anything for anyone over the age of 18 that they can and should be doing for themselves.

- 2. Trying to fix other people.** Similar to #1, this drainer tries to change what can't be controlled. The motivation is typically a kindly one, a genuine effort to make sure that others are safe. You believe that you have the answer to other people's

problems and if only they would listen to you, their lives would be better. Unfortunately, you create only resentment in both them, and in you ... after all you have done for them! People don't want to be told what to do. Your greatest gift would be to accept them the way they are. It's not your path. Let them live their lives. If they ask for help then step in, but otherwise, read #1 again.

□ **3. Beating yourself up.** The highest form of love in the Greek language is *Agape*, which literally means, 'Look for the Good.' If our command is to love one another<sup>37</sup> and if we treat others the way we treat ourselves (we do), then isn't it our responsibility to learn to love ourselves first? In so doing, it becomes effortless to look for the good in others.

If you are scratching your head wondering why your customer service training is not as effective as you predicted, do you see the business case for teaching self-acceptance among your employees? A program to teach people how to stop self-punishment can make a transformational difference in customer service.

Self-punishment is common among otherwise educated and sophisticated people. If it happens with you, it is a choice you are making. I suggest you make

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<sup>37</sup> John 13:34-35. "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

a better choice by supporting and not discouraging yourself. You gain nothing by putting yourself down. All you are doing is expressing your disbelief in your current reality, and setting unrealistic expectations for yourself that you can never meet.

You can change this. First, get that it is useless thinking. Second, know that simple thought-stopping and thought replacement will work, if you work it. If you don't work it, it won't work. If you find that you're being "hard" on yourself, don't get mad for being hard on yourself. Just observe what you're doing and sit with it, understand it and make an alternate decision. When you hear, "Well, that was stupid, dummy," thought-stop with "No it wasn't stupid. Stop it. You did your best. You always do." When you get frustrated with yourself you activate a part of your limbic system that reinforces circuits that only increase the problem.

If you only gave yourself credit for all the things you do that you do not give yourself credit for, you'd be astonished to learn how much you accomplish in a single day. And how amazing you really are.

**4. Reacting to other peoples bad behavior.** Take nothing personally, it's never about you. Don Miguel

Ruiz's<sup>38</sup> analogy of our individual theaters and personal movies is helpful. As he relates it, each of us is sitting in front of our own films, in our own theaters. We are the star of our own movie, with our chosen cast of characters – some have leading roles, some supporting roles, and many are extras. Issues develop when we demand to be the star of someone else's movie, or we insist on a larger role than their script calls for.

“Angels must not allow themselves to feel hurt or rejected by the choices made by others, no matter how much they've done for them, nor how great their love.”

People run their own script and their own movie. If people get mad at you, it is because they are people who get mad at others. If people are nice to you, it is because they are nice people and are feeling so disposed. If people are mean to you, it is because they are mean people, and are

feeling so disposed. Other people's behaviors are not directed at you. You may stop being injured over the injustices that people do to you, because they are *not doing it to you*. They are just doing it. When you can get this, you free up more energy you need to prevent the injustices from being done in the first place. It is a more effective use of energy to instruct others how to behave

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38 *The Four Agreements and The 5th Agreement.*



in your presence, and what minimum standards you expect. This is your right.

### **5. Comparing yourself to others.**

Comparing yourself to others, either in a positive or negative way, is doomed to failure. Don't compare. Instead, measure your growth as a rough percentage of change using your own baseline. Ask yourself: "Am I a percentage better at this than I was last year? Six months ago?" Perhaps 20% better? If so, your goals are being met. The only comparison to do is with your former self, and the only projections will be to your future self.

Others will always have more or less than you have, because they are walking on a different path. Is the path better than yours? No, it's just different. You label it as better. Comparing yourself is a low self-image activity, one that you no longer need. It is energy not well spent, because it doesn't change where you are and move you toward where you want to be.

**6. Impatience.** Within Type A Behavior, there are three patterns: Competitiveness, Job Involvement, and Speed and Impatience. The one factor that is predictive of cardiovascular disease is Speed and Impatience (SI).<sup>39</sup>

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39 M. Friedman and R.H. Rosenman's concept and measured by various assessments such as the Bortner Rating Scale Type, the Framingham Type A Scale, the Jenkins Activity Survey (JAS) and the Structured Interview (SI). There is a short assessment in your Four Elements Journal.

The hostility that goes along with impatience can, and will, kill you and isn't endearing. It is like emotional second-hand smoke and can make you unbearable to be around.

"Grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I  
cannot change, the  
courage to change the  
things I can, and the  
wisdom to know the  
difference."

The higher your score in the assessment in your Journal, the more that SI is an energy issue for you. You are wasting energy getting mad at situations and other people, wishing they would do things differently, wishing they would get out of your way, wanting them to be different than they are. Hitting the elevator

button repeatedly and yelling "Hurry up!!!" won't bring the elevator any faster.

This is the method you've developed to try to change things 'out there' so that you won't have to deal with what's 'in here.' It is a waste of energy and keeps you always struggling, and never achieving. It is an impossible struggle.

Choose where you spend energy. Discipline yourself to 'let it go.' Give yourself permission to give away some of your responsibility for the world. When you are tempted to intervene in others' lives in ways such as giving advice or hurrying people up, just relax, take a big breath, and let it go. Repeat this sentence whenever

you feel frustration with the way things are: “Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.”

Lack of patience can result from a belief that the world should center around you and not interfere with your comings and goings. People should do things your way because you know better. If everyone did what they were supposed to do, the world would be a better place and you would be much happier.

If you can see the futility of this thinking, you’re half way there. The other half is to notice times when you’re impatient and either recite the serenity prayer mentioned earlier, or for a quick fix, take a glance at this card. Words spoken and actions performed out of impatience will haunt you the rest of your life. The story on Page 195 of your Notes section is a poignant illustration. Don’t let impatience steal the joy and the love from your heart. Let it go. It’s not worth it. It’s not your road. It will work out. Really.

**let it go.**

**7. Regretting the past.** Here's how to view every decision you've ever made: It was right at the time. Here's how to view every path you've ever chosen: It was the best choice at the time. No matter what has happened, you did the very best you could. And so did those who may have let you down. Learn what you can, give what you can, and make a decision to create a better future.

In regretting the past, you spend energy where it can do no good, and all it does is rob you from taking action now. It is a kind of magical wish that if we regret enough, it will change it. Magical thinking drains energy. Just do it differently the next time. That is all that life can expect of any of us and certainly that is all that you can expect of yourself. The same strategy is used with regret as with worry: thought-stopping and thought replacement. "Stop it, don't go there; you did the best you could. If you could have done better, you would have done better."

**8. Worry.** Worry is not a strategy. Just as regretting the past puts your energy in the past while your body is in the present, worry places your energy squarely in the future while your body is still in the present. Either way your energy is wasted. If you followed a plan for getting worry in order from Part II, continue it, because it works. Write down your worries and plan a time to focus on them.

**9. Indecision and Procrastination.** Preserve your energy. Don't waste time and mental energy debating life's trivial decisions. Make a choice and be done with it. It's not that serious, and it's not forever. You can fix it later. You are making a bigger mistake debating, putting it off, and doubting, than you ever will by deciding the wrong thing. At least by deciding and doing, you are moving forward. By sitting and ruminating, you are being stagnant while the world moves ahead of you. Just do it, for heaven's sake. If you don't know where to go, turn right. You can change directions on the move.

Don't wait until you feel better to go to the gym. Go to the gym, and chances are you will feel better. Don't wait to start writing until you *feel* like writing another chapter in your book. After you write a chapter, you'll feel like writing. Don't wait until you *feel* the urge to get your paints out of the box and onto the canvas and start painting. Don't wait until you are a genius to produce clever ideas. Start producing clever ideas, and you may become a genius.

Don't wait until you are wealthy before you become happy. Be happy first, and wealth will follow. Just start, and you will feel like writing and painting and creating once you have begun.

"The more we struggle  
and debate, the more we  
reconsider and delay, the  
less likely we are to act."

William Johnson

**10. Pessimism.** Pessimism is a perceptual state in which one anticipates negative or undesirable outcomes, or believes that negative trumps positive. In the pessimistic world view, life has a consistently negative value or, “this world is bad and is apt to get worse.”

There is much written about optimism, its definition and how to achieve it. In the book, *Positive Spin*<sup>40</sup> several chapters examine optimism and happiness. The practice of optimism has a strong positive effect on physical and mental health. A pessimistic style, on the other hand, is linked to helplessness, poor coping, depression, and poor health. The choice for optimism is crucial to energy balance.

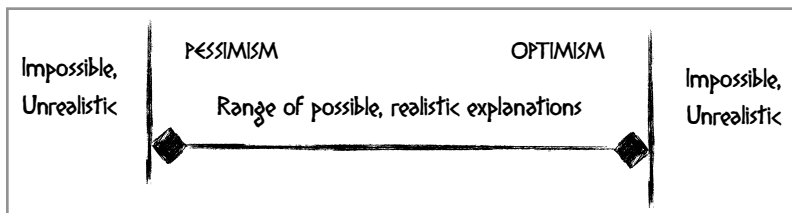
## OPTIMISM

Optimism is not positive thinking. It is an interpretation of reality at the highest end of possibility. Optimism is the ultimate energy conservation tool. Given the range of possible and realistic interpretations of a given event or situation, the optimist chooses the right side, and the pessimist chooses the left side (see graph, following page). Both choices are within the realm of the possible, and both are realistic. Because optimistic interpretations are within the realm of possibility, there is no such thing as “overly optimistic”

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<sup>40</sup> Available on Amazon.com.

or “unrealistically positive.” In the end, optimism is a choice.



Studies show that optimism surpasses other known predictors as a measure of sales performance. In a study by Seligman and colleagues, 15,000 Metropolitan Life Insurance applicants took both an Attributional Style Questionnaire<sup>41</sup> (ASQ), and Met Life's own career profile. One thousand agents were hired based on the career profile alone. Because of agent shortage, MetLife also hired 100 agents who scored below the cutoff point on the career profile, however in the top half of the ASQ. After two years, the optimists in the regular group of hires were outselling the pessimists by 31%. Surprisingly, the special hires outsold the pessimists in the regular force by 57%.

Optimists interpret the reactions of others in the same way they interpret all events – at the highest possible level. If an optimist is ignored by a friend, for example, the optimist will figure the person in question is having

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41 Measures causal attributions people make for the events in their lives. Peterson, C. et al (1982), The Attributional Style Questionnaire. *Cognitive Therapy and Research*, Vol. 6, No. 3, pp.287-300.

a busy day, or doesn't feel well. Pessimists on the other hand, will interpret the perceived rejection at the bottom of the scale, with the most negative and self-punishing response. It would sound something like, "I knew it, he's mad at me; in fact, nobody likes me that much, what's the use."

Both pessimism and optimism are learned responses. You were probably optimistic before they conditioned you not to be. When you were a kid playing with other kids in the park, did you ever run into someone who didn't want to play? Did you go home? No, you made the rounds until somebody would play. You focused on the playing, not on the reaction. Optimism is a choice.

Truth and error can't occupy the same space. Optimism and pessimism can't occupy the same space. Let go of pessimism and cynicism, and choose optimism.

Optimism is a choice.  
Focus on playing,  
not on the reaction.