

Leaders...Are You Taking Care?

Law firm leaders who devote all of their time to the health of their firms often sacrifice their own physical and psychological health.

Here are four steps to taking care.

By Sean Larkan, Edge International Communiqué, April 2011



Law firm leaders and senior managers spend most of their time focused on the well-being of their firms, their colleagues and the firm's clients. They give little attention to themselves. As a result they are too often over-worked, over-stressed, and possibly unfit and over-weight and don't get to spend nearly enough time with family and friends. They are also not as effective as they would like to be.

I regularly come across this in my work. The signs are obvious. Once a consulting assignment is underway I sometimes raise these issues in conversation, mainly as I believe they are as important as any other in ensuring effective leadership. The reason is simple. A healthy leader in body and spirit is much more likely to be effective over the long term and, just as important, happy in their work and within themselves and with time to spend with their family and friends.

I recommend a four-pronged approach in such cases. It is simple but effective. That does not mean it is easy to implement, involving as it does changes in thinking and behaviour. As usual it takes a fair dose of dedication, research, and support from trusted others and a strong will quotient!

- **Exercise** - not only encouraged but essential. If nothing is being done, start small - daily brisk walks are best - come hail, rain or sunshine, and wherever you may be. For most, quick-fix promises like 'gym membership' don't seem to ever have lasting benefit. In time you can build to introducing weight-training exercises, so important, particularly in later life.
- **Personal Scientific Diagnostic** - go beyond gut-feel and relying on experience - get yourself tested and reported on using input from trusted and respected colleagues using a respected scientific diagnostic like Human Synergistics. You will be amazed what you will learn about yourself. Ideally assisted by some coaching, you will have a sound basis upon which to implement necessary changes in thinking, behavior and interactions with others.
- **Diet** - due to the proliferation of processed foods we invariably consume, our consumption of essential vitamins is reduced with enormous potential downsides for our health. Subject to your individual circumstances and medical advice I would urge consideration of at least 3 safe, essential supplements (after medical advice):
 - pure fish oil capsules for omega 3s
 - magnesium - called the wonder mineral
 - vitamin B complex for stress
- **Spiritual** - lastly, but arguably most important, address your mind and mental well-being. If you are already following a traditional religious belief you are possibly well catered for. If not, you may wish to consider meditation and related practices. Tackled with the

right approach with the right guidance this can be enormously beneficial. Maintaining a calm disposition in the heat of stressful situations, being able to focus only on the job at hand and at the same time focus on the well-being of others is challenging. It often depends on your ability to manage your sometimes unruly and over-active mind, your ego and your self-will. A spiritual discipline can certainly work wonders here.

Each of these steps can be a great help to a stressed, pressured leader or manager. In combination they can be life-changing. I speak from experience - for myself, and for many friends and colleagues who have made some or all of these changes with wonderful transformative results.

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