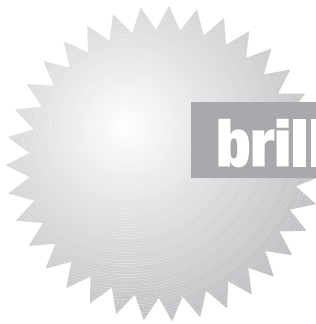


Brilliant BRILLIANT PERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS

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Schwartz encourages us to tune into our own emotions – using our emotional intelligence – what we’re thinking, how we are feeling and what our current energy levels are. You will see below some of the words we associate with these zones. As you work through the zones consider the words that you have used to describe your current state and ask which zone they best fit into.

Burnout zone: Low energy, Negative feelings

We associate these words with this state: exhausted, empty, depressed, sad, hopeless

Survival zone: Higher energy, Negative feelings

We associate these words with this state: impatient, irritable, frustrated, angry, defensive, fearful, anxious, worried

Renewal zone: Low energy, Positive feelings

We associate these words with this state: carefree, peaceful, relieved, mellow, receptive

Performance zone: High energy, Positive feelings

We associate these words with this state: calm, optimistic, challenged, engaged, invigorated

At one time or another we’ve all experienced the ‘performance’ zone – when we’re deeply connected with what we are doing and operating at an optimal level. We are also unstressed. The ‘challenge’ we feel creates a degree of positive pressure that fuels us rather than diminishes. So, here’s the next question. Although we’ve all experienced the ‘performance zone’ we don’t experience it all of the time. Where do we go? The dangers of being in the burnout zone for too long are well-established and those associated emotions such as ‘empty’ and ‘hopeless’ will do us

great psychological and physical damage if we stay there too long.

Aware of this danger, and of the difficulty of accessing the performance zone, many revert to the survival zone. Some of us opt for the survival zone because we find it hard to say ‘I feel depressed’ or ‘I’m exhausted’ at work so we choose to ‘hide’ what we’re really thinking and feeling. Of course many of the emotions connected with the survival zone ‘leak’ out even if we try to conceal them. You can only be irritable and anxious for so long and successfully hide it.

Perhaps the zone that is utilised the least is the renewal zone. Even those operating consistently in the ‘performance zone’ need to refresh, recalibrate and restore energy levels so that when we return to performing we are at our best.

Renewal

‘If fitness is described as the speed of recovery physically then resilience is the speed of recovery emotionally.’

Tony Schwartz, author and founder of ‘The Energy Project’

Optimal performance requires us to take a step back from performing if those high-performance levels are to be sustainable. To be consistently effective at work you need to know when and how to replenish – even when you are performing well and feeling unstressed. We have already looked at some of the symptoms that reveal themselves when we are in the burnout or survival zones. These symptoms are clear indicators that a move to the renewal zone is needed. It’s pointless continuing to perform when there is little energy to draw on and few positive emotions about yourself and the work you are doing. In this section we look at how we can replenish ourselves – building up our energy stores and reinforcing positive emotions.

Connect and disconnect

Many of us find it hard to truly connect with what we're doing and to truly disconnect. Instead we operate in a state of partial connection where we start on something, get distracted by something else (or bored with what we're doing) and then make a start on that before the same thing happens. Similarly when we're supposed to be disconnected, i.e. not at work or 'working', with family or friends, at 'play' (hobbies, etc.) or even on holiday, we are inclined to partially connect. We tend to check emails (and send them) when it's rest time or 'half-think' about work when we don't need to be thinking about it all.

Top sports performers are used to training and performing with high intensity and know the value of total rest and replenishment afterwards before the time comes for the next burst of sustained performance. One feeds the other. Optimum performance comes with a clear strategy for optimal renewal. It starts with truly switching off for a time, from what it is that demands your best performance.



brilliant example

In the Bibliography you will find a YouTube link featuring tennis player and Wimbledon champion Marion Bartoli as she goes through a rigorous practice session. She has various pieces of elastic attached to her arms and legs, pulling against her natural direction of movement to simulate the moments in a match when she is very tired and finds it a struggle to move her muscles. Her coach throws balls at her in very quick succession and she has to return them. It's incredibly intense. But it's also not something she does for hours. She, and other professionals, practise intensely (their version of our 'learning'), perform intensely and then restore themselves to equilibrium. Marion Bartoli talked about how much better 'rested' she was for the 2013 Wimbledon (which she won) compared to the 2007 final (which she lost). Brilliant effort needs the right counterweight of rest and renewal.

Filling the vacuum

Viktor Frankl was one of the great twentieth-century psychotherapists. He argued that a primary driver in our lives is creating meaning for ourselves. Work that we enjoy, interests, strong relationships, spiritual fulfilment and our family can create meaning. But, through misalignment (perhaps we have a job that doesn't resonate at all), or a lack of an outlet to truly express ourselves (a hobby or interest) some start to develop an existential vacuum. Frankl describes it as the blocking of the spirit.

If there is something to fill a vacuum it will, inevitably, fill it. In the same way, if we have this existential vacuum, we too look to fill it. What do we fill the vacuum with?

What are the touchstones that help you to reconnect with the real 'you'? What do you enjoy doing? Can you recall things that you have really enjoyed doing, that challenged you? Getting bogged down can mean forgetting or even losing your touchstones. Domestic circumstances and other things can flip you into 'what I can't do' mode rather than the more positive 'what I can do' mind-set that sparks energising thoughts.

**brilliant** example

Here's something to consider. Do you have people around you offering you free advice about what you should and shouldn't do? The advice is often given with the best of intentions but with little consideration for the real you. What most people do is advise you to do what suits them. So if you've ever heard advice along the lines of 'You should take up tennis' or 'Yoga would be good for you' or 'Why don't you try jogging?' you will have experienced this at first-hand. This is the point where you must think of the real you. What's going to give you renewal is what connects with you most deeply – as we said before, your 'catalysts'. The catalysts are the things that draw you to them rather than the things that you have to force yourself to be drawn to. It might be a physical thing (for this writer it's the pleasure of

being in a pool, three times a week, for 40 minutes intense swimming). It could be some form of mental stimulation. It could also be doing absolutely nothing and enjoying it!

If you give children time and space and switch the gadgets off they might sit in a chair saying 'I'm bored' for a bit. But eventually then they go off and do something – particularly if you really do put the gadgets away. Observe a child who loves to paint, draw and create. Observe another who sets up a classroom in her bedroom and teaches her teddy bears whatever she's learned at school most recently. These are both real examples. That something provides a window into what it is that truly connects the way they occupy themselves with the treasures that lie deepest within them – and possibly also a window into what they could be doing when they start work if they are to be happy.

So, the question for you is 'What is your deepest inner treasure?' – the catalysts and resources within you that allow you to express yourself to the world and be 'you'. The things that give your life true meaning rather than the things that get thrown into the existential vacuum.

First-time experiences

One of the contributors to burnout and survival is repetition. We have to be realistic. Not all jobs offer a conveyor belt of new and varied opportunities each day. But, as curious, intelligent, inventive people variety in a job, as in life, is important. If the job doesn't give new experiences then we need to find them in other parts of life. With stagnation a possibility – and potentially a destructive one – the search for new first-time experiences provides a counterweight to this. A good catalysing question to ask is 'When was the last time you did something for the first time?'

It is said that life speeds up as you get older. Experts in memory say that one of the reasons for this is because we have fewer first-time experiences and it's the first-time experiences in life

that are truly memorable. If you’re young and reading this, keep those new experiences rolling in – in the job and beyond it if you can. If you are older don’t neglect the invigorating effects of doing something new. Avoid ‘stuckness’.

Sensory stimulation

Did you ever get that ‘feeling of being alive’? Think for a moment about this, where it last happened and in particular when it last happened. Some people get this from the rigour of sporting activity (combined with the lovely feeling of hormonal release, post-exercise, that makes us feel mellow). Others from a great holiday, a long walk or stimulating company. There are also other more subtle ways we can reconnect and they relate to the way you stimulate your senses. These can be simple things and in isolation they won’t deliver complete renewal. But as a counterweight to the demands of peak performance they make a significant contribution to our need for renewal.

Here is something for you to try if you think that conscious sensory stimulation can make a difference to you. The first is to think of the most recent occasions you can recall your senses being stimulated. Below you will find some ideas to trigger your thinking. Perhaps those ‘last time’ experiences aren’t so recent? Next to this is an opportunity to write down where and when you might stimulate those five senses in the near future.

Sense	The last time?	The next time?
Taste	_____	_____
Touch	_____	_____
Sight	_____	_____
Smell	_____	_____
Hearing	_____	_____