

THE BIG IDEAS

Full Engagement:
The 4 Principles.

Sprinters
vs Marathoners.

The Pulse of Life
Honor it.

Points
& The time between 'em.

Drink Plenty of Water!
And other tips. :)

Turn Off the TV!
(Please.)

To Be Fully Engaged
Emotionally.

"How Am I THAT?"
Fun shadow work.

Purpose
Intrinsic (vs. extrinsic).

Precision & Specificity
Need both to get it done.

Positive Rituals
Build them. Now. Plz.

Jump Ahead
...to the end of your life.

The Power of Full Engagement

Managing Energy, Not Time, Is the Key to High Performance and Personal Renewal

BY JIM LOEHR AND TONY SCHWARTZ · FREE PRESS © 2003 · 256 PAGES

"Every one of our thoughts, emotions and behaviors has an energy consequence, for better or for worse. The ultimate measure of our lives is not how much time we spend on the planet, but rather how much energy we invest in the time that we have. The premise of this book—and of the training we do each year with thousands of clients—is simple enough: Performance, health and happiness are grounded in the skillful management of energy."

~ Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz from *The Power of Full Engagement*

The Power of Full Engagement is a *great* book.

I read it on my Kindle and I basically highlighted half the book. It's so densely packed with Big Ideas we can apply to our lives that, if you're feelin' low on energy or if you're the kinda person who likes to play full out and is always looking for ways to optimize, this book is on the "must buy" list. :)

Grounded in the research and consulting they've done with the world's greatest athletes, Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz provide a set of Ideas and tools to help "Corporate Athletes" function at optimal levels of performance. At the heart of their wisdom is the fact that: "Energy, not time, is the fundamental currency of high performance."

In this Note, we'll start with the 4 Principles of Full Engagement and then take a look at a handful of some of my favorite Big Ideas on how to get our Full Engagement on. The book is loaded with case studies and practical tools to help you take your energy and life to the next level. Powerful stuff.

THE 4 PRINCIPLES OF FULL ENGAGEMENT

"Principle 1: Full engagement requires drawing on four separate but related sources of energy: physical, emotional, mental and spiritual.

Principle 2: Because energy diminishes both with overuse and with underuse, we must balance energy expenditure with intermittent energy renewal.

Principle 3: To build capacity we must push beyond our normal limits, training in the same systematic way that elite athletes do.

Principle 4: Positive energy rituals—highly specific routines for managing energy—are the key to full engagement and sustained high performance."

That's the brilliant book in an *itty bitty* nutshell. :)

Now let's explore a few of the dozens of Big Ideas on how to bring those principles to life!

SPRINTERS VS. LONG-DISTANCE RUNNERS

"Think for a moment about the look of many long-distance runners: gaunt, sallow, slightly

"To maintain a powerful pulse in our lives, we must learn how to rhythmically spend and renew energy."

~ Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz

We build emotional, mental and spiritual capacity in precisely the same way that we build physical capacity."

~ Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz

sunken and emotionally flat. Now visualize a sprinter such as Marion Jones or Michael Johnson. Sprinters typically look powerful, bursting with energy and eager to push themselves to their limits. The explanation is simple. No matter how intense the demand they face, the finish line is clearly visible 100 or 200 meters down the track. We, too, must learn to live our own lives as a series of sprints—fully engaging for periods of time, and then fully disengaging and seeking renewal before jumping back into the fray to face whatever challenges confront us."

Picture a world-class marathon runner in your mind. Got it? Sorta corpse like, huh? Now, picture a world-class sprinter. Beautiful, powerful, radiantly alive and BURSTING with energy, eh? (Of course, Marion Jones was also on steroids... but, hey! You get the idea. :)

The book is all about the fact that we need to approach life like a series of sprints—oscillating between periods of intense engagement and equally intense renewal. Unfortunately, most of us try to break the naturally oscillating rhythms of life and wind up "flatlining."

THE PULSE OF LIFE

"Nature itself has a pulse, a rhythmic, wavelike movement between activity and rest. Think about the ebb and flow of the tides, the movement between seasons, and the daily rising and setting of the sun. Likewise, all organisms follow life-sustaining rhythms—birds migrating, bears hibernating, squirrels gathering nuts, and fish spawning, all of them at predictable intervals. So, too, human beings are guided by rhythms."

Beautiful. So, nature has rhythms. We have rhythms. If we want to live our greatest lives, we've gotta be good animals and line up to the deep rhythms of life.

Loehr and Schwartz discuss one way the pulse of life has been applied to our lives: "The concept of maximizing performance by alternating periods of activity with periods of rest was first advanced by Flavius Philostratus (A.D. 170–245), who wrote training manuals for Greek athletes. Russian sports scientists resurrected the concept in the 1960s and began applying it with stunning success to their Olympic athletes. Today, 'work-rest' ratios lie at the heart of periodization, a training method used by elite athletes throughout the world."

If you're an athlete or ever had a personal trainer you're familiar with the idea of "periodization." If you want to increase performance, you've gotta balance work and rest. It's *"The Pulse of High Performance."*

It's powerful, simple stuff that, unfortunately, is too often ignored. Rather than honor the natural rhythmic needs for rest following exertion (or for exertion if we're resting too much!) we tend to artificially compensate and keep ourselves running a marathon through caffeine, sugar and other quick fixes. Not a good idea.

Can you notice the rhythms in your life? Are you in harmony with them?

THE TIME BETWEEN POINTS

"To live like a sprinter is to break life down into a series of manageable intervals consistent with our own physiological needs and with the periodic rhythms of nature. This insight first crystallized for Jim when he was working with world-class tennis players. As a performance psychologist, his goal was to understand the factors that set apart the greatest competitors in the world from the rest of the pack. Jim spent hundreds of hours watching top players and studying tapes of their matches. To his growing frustration, he could detect almost no significant differences in their competitive habits during points. It was only when he began to notice what they did between points that he suddenly saw a difference. While most of them were not aware of it, the best players had each built almost exactly the same set of routines between points. These included the way they walked back to the baseline after a point; how they held their heads and

"If nothing succeeds like success, it is equally true that nothing fails like excess. Because change requires moving beyond our comfort zone, it is best initiated in small and manageable increments."

~ Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz

"Energy is simply the capacity to do work. Our most fundamental need as human beings is to spend and recover energy."

~ Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz

"Periods of recovery are likewise intrinsic to creativity and to intimate connection. Sounds become music in the spaces between notes, just as words are created by the spaces between letters. It is in the spaces between work that love, friendship, depth and dimension are nurtured. Without time for recovery, our lives become a blur of doing unbalanced by much opportunity for being."

~ Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz

"At the most practical level, our capacity to be fully engaged depends on our ability to periodically disengage."

~ Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz

shoulders; where they focused their eyes; the pattern of their breathing; and even the way they talked to themselves."

That's REALLY cool. Loehr and Schwartz continue by discussing the fact that in the sixteen to twenty seconds BETWEEN points, the best tennis players were able to lower their heart rates by as much as twenty beats per minute. The heart rates of their competitors who didn't have the same dialed-in rest rituals often stayed at the same levels.

Now, imagine a tennis match going from the first set to the second to the third to the fourth and perhaps to the fifth. If I'm playing against you and I can squeeze in twenty seconds of rest after an intense burst of activity dozens and dozens of times while you can't, who do you think will be sharper at the end of the match (and, therefore, of course, more likely to win consistently)?

The one who knows how to oscillate, eh? Same with life!!! If we're going ALL the time and don't build in the practices that allow for work-rest cycles, we're gonna burn out.

DRINK PLENTY OF WATER, YO!

"Drinking water, we have found, is perhaps the most undervalued source of physical energy renewal. Unlike hunger, thirst is an inadequate barometer of need. By the time we feel thirsty, we may be long since dehydrated. A growing body of research suggests that drinking at least sixty-four ounces of water at intervals throughout the day serves performance in a range of important ways. Dehydrate a muscle by as little as 3 percent, for example, and it will lose 10 percent of its strength and 8 percent of its speed. Inadequate hydration also compromises concentration and coordination."

You drinking enough water? If not, get on that!!! :)

As stated in Principle #1, we have four primary sources of energy: physical, emotional, mental and spiritual. Our physical energy is our foundation. If it's wacky, the rest is in peril. They give oodles of ideas on how to rock our physical energy, from drinking water and breathing deeply (HUGE source of energy) and getting plenty of sleep (research shows your performance will STRONGLY atrophy with even slight sleep deprivation and that when most people are put in rooms without external stimuli they'll still sleep 7-8 hours a night... so get your rest!!!) to eating breakfast (it's called "break the fast" for a reason and if you don't eat then you screw up your energy rhythms... so eat a great low-glycemic, slow burning breakfast!) and having 5-6 smaller meals throughout the day.

What can you do to build *your* physical energy starting now?

TURN OFF THE TV! (PLEASE.)

"Television, for example, is one of the primary means by which most people relax and recover. For the most part, however, watching television is the mental and emotional equivalent of eating junk food. It may provide a temporary form of recovery, but it is rarely nutritious and it is easy to consume too much. Researchers such as Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi have found that prolonged television watching is actually correlated with increased anxiety and low-level depression."

D'oh! So, we clearly need to relax and recover. But skip the TV, will ya?

Go for a walk, hang out with your family and friends, take a bath, read a book, open your journal, get a massage, meditate, do yoga, whatever! Just unplug the TV, pretty please. :)

TO BE FULLY ENGAGED EMOTIONALLY

"To be fully engaged emotionally requires celebrating what the Stoic philosophers called *anacolutia*—the mutual entailment of the virtues. By this notion, no virtue is a virtue by itself. Rather, all virtues are entailed. Honesty without compassion, for example, becomes cruelty."

"Take a moment to consider how broad a range of emotional muscles you have in your own life. In all likelihood you will discover that you have considerably more strength on one side of the spectrum than on the other."

~ Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz

"From an energy perspective, negative emotions are costly and inefficient. Much like a gas-guzzling car, they draw down our energy stores at a rapid rate."

~ Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz

"A value in action is a virtue."

~ Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz

Anacoluthia: the mutual entailment of virtues. Me likes. To be fully emotionally engaged we've gotta be able to hold opposites and go full-spectrum with our emotions. In fact, being able to hold contradictory emotions is the sign of a healthy individual.

We tend to want to pick sides and be EITHER tough OR tender. EITHER spontaneous OR self-controlled. Demonstrate openness OR discretion. Have a sense of patience OR urgency. Either, or. Either, or. Either, or.

Part of the power of full engagement is to work out our emotional muscles and learn to hold BOTH. Can you use a little emotional strength training? Are you emphasizing one side of an emotion a little too much? Try consciously working the other side and hold both!

"HOW AM I THAT?"

"Difficult and unpleasant as it may be to accept, we often feel most hostile to those who remind us of aspects of ourselves that we prefer not to see. 'Ask someone to give a description of the personality type which he finds most despicable, most unbearable and hateful, and most impossible to get along with,' writes Edward Whitmont, 'and he will produce a description of his own repressed characteristics.... These very qualities are so unacceptable to him precisely because they represent his own repressed side; only that which we cannot accept within ourselves do we find impossible to live with in others.' Think for a moment of someone you actively dislike. What quality in that person do you find most objectionable? Now ask yourself, 'How am I that?'"

No space here to get into shadows, projections, etc., but this is a GREAT exercise.

The next time you're "shadow boxing" with someone and you're REALLY getting frustrated, ask yourself what it is, precisely, that you find so annoying in the other person.

Then ask yourself, "How am **I** THAT??" (Cuz, whether you like it or not, you are. :)

INTRINSIC (VS. EXTRINSIC) PURPOSE

"Purpose also becomes a more powerful source of energy when it moves from being externally to internally motivated. *Extrinsic* motivation reflects the desire to get more of something that we don't feel we have enough of: money, approval, social standing, power or even love. 'Intrinsic' motivation grows out of the desire to engage in an activity because we value it for the inherent satisfaction it provides. Researchers have long found that intrinsic motivation tends to prompt more sustaining energy. A study conducted by the University of Rochester's Human Motivation Research Group found, for example, that people whose motivation was authentic—defined as 'self-authored'—exhibited more interest, excitement and confidence, as well as greater persistence, creativity and performance than a control group of subjects who were motivated largely by external demands and rewards."

How about you? Where's *your* motivation coming from? Are you doing everything you can to accumulate money, praise and toys? Well, that'd be *extrinsic* motivation. Nothing wrong with the money, praise and toys, of course, but if that's your PRIMARY motivation than you're losing out on some opportunities for higher levels of creativity and performance.

The trick is to follow your heart. To be INTRINSICALLY motivated. Build your life from the inside-out, doing the things that really matter to you and that make you feel good when you do them, with or without any potential rewards. As [Ayn Rand](#) says: "You must be the kind of man who can get things done. But to get things done, you must love the doing, not the secondary consequences."

So, what do you love doing?

Rock that and let the secondary consequences flow to you as a by-product of your passion!

"In short, money may not buy happiness, but happiness may help you get rich."

~ Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz

PRECISION AND SPECIFICITY

"A broad and persuasive array of studies confirms that specificity of timing and precision of behavior dramatically increase the likelihood of success. The explanation lies once again in the fact that our conscious capacity for self-control is limited and easily depleted. By determining when, where and how a behavior will occur, we no longer have to think much about getting it done. A series of experiments have confirmed this pattern..."

In perhaps the most dramatic experiment of all, a group of drug addicts were studied during withdrawal—a time when the energy required to control the urge to take drugs severely compromises their ability to undertake nearly any other task. As part of the effort to help them find employment post-rehabilitation, one group was asked to commit to writing a short résumé before 5:00 P.M. on a particular day. Not a single one succeeded. A second group was asked to complete the same task, but also to say exactly when and where they would write the résumé. Eighty percent of that group succeeded."

This is a *REALLY* Big Idea.

I'd heard a million times that what gets scheduled gets done but I always thought it was important, but kinda pom-pom waving time management/self-dev stuff. To see the research so CLEARLY show the importance of this is striking.

In sum: You are FAR more likely to get something done when you set the exact time and place for when you'll do it. So, start making this practice a ritual, will ya?!?

POSITIVE RITUALS

"Creating positive rituals is the most powerful means we have found to effectively manage energy in the service of full engagement."

~ Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz

"We use the word 'ritual' purposefully to emphasize the notion of a carefully defined, highly structured behavior. In contrast to will and discipline, which require pushing yourself to a particular behavior, a ritual pulls at you. Think of something as simple as brushing your teeth. It is not something that you ordinarily have to remind yourself to do. Brushing your teeth is something to which you feel consistently drawn, compelled by its clear health value. You do it largely on automatic pilot, without much conscious effort or intention. The power of rituals is that they insure that we use as little conscious energy as possible where it is not absolutely necessary, leaving us free to strategically focus the energy available to us in creative, enriching ways."

The book is all about optimizing our energy and the authors provide a *very* compelling case that our will power is actually a) *much* weaker than we think; and, b) much more draining when employed than we think. Every time we have to consciously think about whether or not we're gonna do something, we deplete energy. And, that adds up.

Researchers say that 95 (!!!) % of our behavior is habitual. Only 5% is conscious. The challenge is systematically building RITUALS into our lives that allow us to put the energy enhancing behaviors on auto-pilot. As they say: "All great performers rely on positive rituals to manage their energy and regulate their behavior." And: "The more exacting the challenge and the greater the pressure, the more rigorous our rituals need to be."

That's powerful. The more exacting the challenge, the more rigorous our rituals need to be. Robin Sharma ([see Notes](#) on *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*), the greatness guru, says the same thing. In his studies of the world's most exemplary human beings, he's discovered they all demonstrated one key attribute: CONSISTENCY ON THE FUNDAMENTALS. They don't need to THINK about their fundamentals. They're rituals.

"The more scheduled and systematic these rituals became, the more renewal they provided."

~ Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz

How about *you*? Are *your* fundamentals rituals? Or do you need to have "will power" to do 'em? Jack Canfield, in his great book *The Success Principles* ([see Notes](#)) says that "99% is a bitch and 100% is a breeze." If you need to think about whether you're gonna meditate (or exercise or not yell at your spouse/kids or whatever) today, you're NEVER going to have locked-in consistency.

"Character—the courage and conviction to live by our deepest values—is the key muscle that serves spiritual energy."

~ Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz

It's gotta be non-negotiable and made into a ritual that pulls YOU toward IT rather than something you go kicking and screaming to. Make sense?

This is BIG. What ritual do you need to build in your life? Just pick ONE thing. Rock it.

JUMP AHEAD TO THE END OF YOUR LIFE

"Across cultures, religions and time itself, people have admired and aspired to the same universal values—among them integrity, generosity, courage, humility, compassion, loyalty, perseverance—while rejecting their opposites—deceit, greed, cowardice, arrogance, callousness, disloyalty and sloth. To begin to explore more deeply the values that are most compelling to you, we suggest that you set aside uninterrupted time to respond to the following questions: Jump ahead to the end of your life. What are the three most important lessons you have learned and why are they so critical? Think of someone that you deeply respect. Describe three qualities in this person that you most admire. Who are you at your best? What one-sentence inscription would you like to see on your tombstone that would capture who you really were in your life?"

Your spiritual energy is the deepest source of your power. To tap it, we've gotta know who we are and what we stand for. AND, we've gotta live in integrity with those values...

So, who are you and what do you stand for?

Take some quiet time and reflect on those great questions above (and whatever else you feel inspired to explore!) and build your purpose muscles that fuel your spiritual energy as we go out and enjoy the Power of Full Engagement!!

B

Brian Johnson,
Heroic Philosopher CEO

If you liked this Note,
you'll probably like...

[Body Mind Mastery](#)

[Overachievement](#)

[Strength for Life](#)

[Mastery](#)

[Constructive Living](#)

About the Author of This Note

BRIAN JOHNSON



Brian Johnson is the Founder + CEO of Heroic. He's spent half of the last 25 years as a Founder/CEO and the other half as a Philosopher. Brian loves integrating ancient wisdom and modern science to help YOU become the best, most heroic version of yourself so we can create a world in which 51% of humanity is flourishing by 2051. Learn more at heroic.us.