

Are You Showing Up Every Day as Your Best Self?

In our 24/7 wired world, it is increasingly harder to set and maintain personal boundaries. Think about it - can you point to something you did for yourself today? How about a week ago? Maybe last month? Sometime this year?

If you can't come up with some specific examples, it's time to plan for some alone time.

I know this because I am a self-described workaholic. I am proud of my work ethic. I accomplished most of the things I set out to do in my career, and often worked 10-hour days and 50 to 60 hours a week to get the job done. But I was letting work demands encroach on my free time. I finally reached a point where I felt resentful - mostly at myself because I was the one allowing work to take precedent over my personal life.

So, I started to work on this self-care stuff... slowly. I would put my son's hockey game on my schedule and I would leave work early to attend it. On a Friday afternoon, I would wrap up a couple hours early and play nine holes of golf.

Part of what led up to my changed behavior occurred during my time at Anheuser-Busch **when I led a session for the spouses of members of the company's Strategy Committee.** In preparing for the session, I came across an article from the Harvard Business Review - **"Must Success Cost So Much?" by Fernando Bartolome** - that I thought would lead to an interesting discussion.

At that time, all the spouses were female. As we talked about the article, one woman shared a personal example that made her cry. Before the session was over, all the participants were in tears and each opened up about the sacrifices their husbands and **families had made to ensure their husbands' success.**

I came away from that session with a renewed commitment to work on my own self-care. I made a commitment to myself to use - not lose or get paid for - unused vacation time. I got better at scheduling time to do personal things I could only do during working hours.

Trying to practice self-care in corporate America can be a challenge. But these days, I focus on three areas of self-care: 1) physical; 2) spiritual; and 3) intellectual.

I am committed to going to the gym at least three times a week. Sometimes I get in five days and sometimes, like when I am traveling, I only get in two.

I have my spiritual program and I work at it conscientiously. My intellectual program involves learning new things. I started playing bridge a year ago (two hours for two afternoons a month), which was something I have wanted to do for 20 years. I typically take a fun class through the adult program at UNCW, sometimes during the day and, sometimes, at night.

My biggest accomplishment in self-care has been in the last three years. I have allowed myself a major vacation, in which I take off four to five weeks in a row. At first, I felt guilty. I worked myself to death before I left. Now, I still check my e-mail while I am away, but only once a day. I come back from the time off so energized. I can honestly say people get my best self after one of these trips.

If you are a workaholic like me and want to weave more “me” time into your day, start small. Think about the things you really enjoy and begin finding ways to add it to your schedule, even if it’s just every now and then. And be flexible enough to adjust your schedule or sacrifice a little personal time when necessary.

About the Author

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