




A FRESH PERSPECTIVE FOR TODAY'S LEADERS

engaging the edges™

Performance Issue

Harness your power and create a culture of performance for your team.

 interaworks



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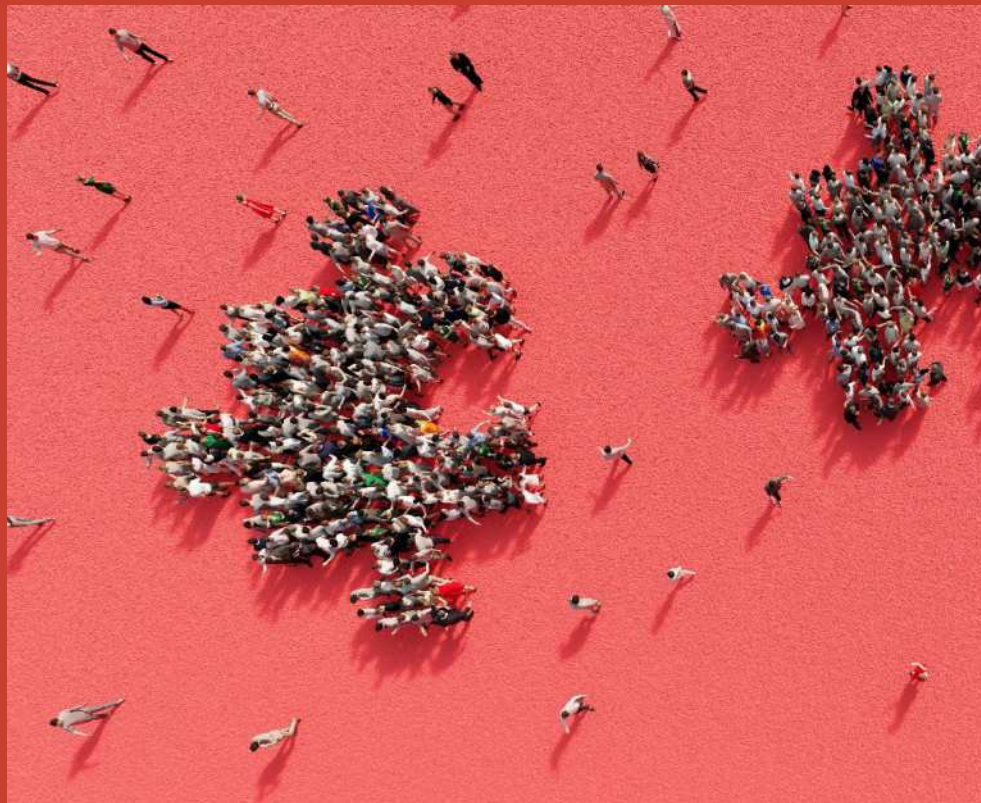
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this is our why

Here at InteraWorks, we recently celebrated our 5th Anniversary. We've come a long way from our early days. Three acquisitions, lots of innovation, and many lucky breaks later, we are indeed elevating the human experience @ work every week just as we set out to do when we created that purpose statement. This is our "why" and we know from experience that it is the key to everything else that business is up to.

In this issue of our e-zine, Engaging the Edges, we connect development and performance via thought leadership shared from our recent white paper, "Individual Performance. Organizational Results". These two activities are usually separate inside most organizations. This perspective piece will open your eyes to the inherent problem with this competing set-up and what's possible by integrating them. By implementing an ongoing process of learning and growth that elevates rather than disengages, performance however you define it, will naturally occur.

Inside is a list of paradigm shifts for businesses to consider and seven elements critical to creating a culture of performance. Both can be used to evaluate where you are and point you toward the best next steps. Our Best Year Yet suite is one offering our clients can leverage here because it delivers an inspiring system and infrastructure whereby individuals and teams create an environment of learning and generate results that work.

There are lots of things we have done well in our first five years to ensure we serve our clients, stakeholders, and profitability to the best of our ability. Our culture, however, is what we are most proud of. We have always maintained a "team first" approach. The rest is important, but at the end of the day, our team and their well-being and achievement is our priority. Do we always get this right? Of course not, but we keep learning and elevating our own human experience at InteraWorks, and that fuels every other result.

Enjoy the journey and please keep letting us know how we can help.

Sincerely,

Laurie Oswald CEO



content

7

*Individual Performance
Organizational Results*



17

12 Perfect Days



15

*Embracing the Winds
of Change*

19

Overcoming Self-Doubt

25

*Power of Productive
Thinking*



31


*'Tis the Season for
Stress*



28

*Grounding + Sleep for
Optimum Well-Being*



A close-up view of a large, orange sail on a boat, set against a clear blue sky. Below the sail, the sea is turbulent with white foam and churning water, suggesting a storm or rough seas. The overall scene is dramatic and evocative.

"I am not afraid
of storms, for I
am learning how
to sail my ship."

— Louisa May Alcott

Individual Performance. Organizational Results.

How InteraWorks is changing
the Performance Game

PREPARED BY

Anne McGhee-Stinson, Director of Practice



interaworks

Traditional performance management systems perpetuate a lack of engagement and responsibility.

For many years, performance systems observed and measured performance improvement by visible behavioral competencies only. While traditional performance systems reward good behavior and penalize poor performance or bad behavior, we now know that what happens inside the minds of individuals plays a crucial role in performance, as well. Ultimately, it is our underlying beliefs that drive our behaviors.

Over the past 25-30 years, developing advancements in the sciences and technology have finally begun to cast light on the inner workings of the human mind. The field of neuroscience leverages these advancements and applies them to human performance so, for the first time, individuals can reliably understand their intrinsic and extrinsic motivations and shift limiting beliefs that impact performance.

This shift means that our approach to performance systems within organizations is no longer adequate. As evidenced by the above example, many organizational systems rely on extrinsic rewards and punishments to foster improved performance. However, a leader that focuses on feedback that is primarily critical or does not acknowledge the positive aspects of an individual's or team's efforts often adversely impacts overall performance within the entire organization.

The preponderance of highly critical feedback over time generates a state of threat, and this stimulates the biological survival response in the face of the perceived threat (flight, flight, or freeze). As a result, performance is driven by fear or anxiety, inducing a state of stress that compromises the very outcomes we wish to achieve and significantly impacts engagement, creativity, learning, and growth!

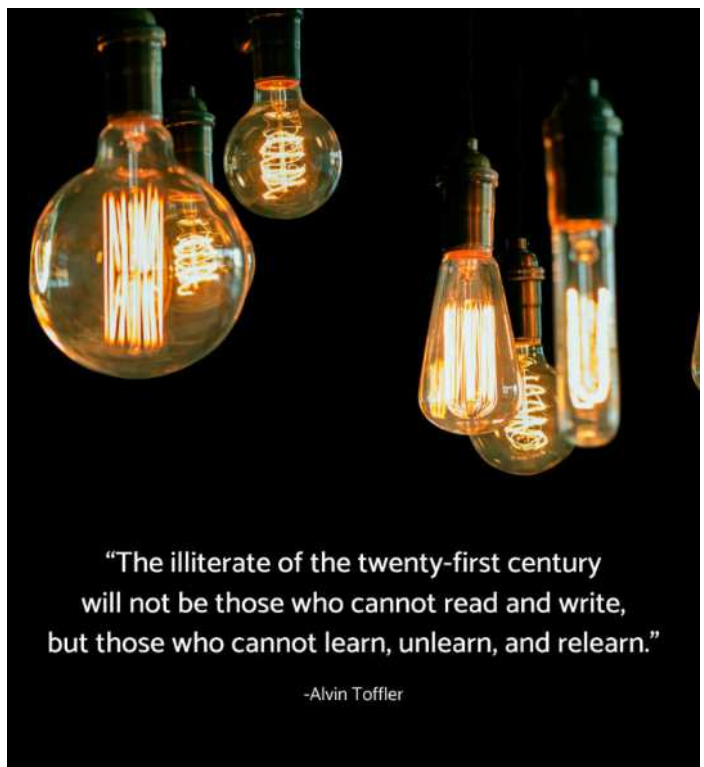
Conversely, simply praising performance without specifically addressing areas for improvement can lead to complacency and lack of engagement. When we look even more closely, we find that extrinsic rewards are not as effective as we once thought.

Overall, the motivation provided by extrinsic rewards is fleeting or inauthentic at best. Consider what happens when the extrinsic motivation to perform is removed, or what happens if a team or individual is solely performing for reward.

This type of reward/punishment approach appeals to the most primitive part of the human brain and sets us up for a Pavlovian culture based on habituated behaviors rather than allowing for authentic engagement, innovation, or inspiration.

While this type of reward system got us through the industrial age with its repetitive and monotonous work environment, our workforce today faces nothing short of disruptive chaos with a constant stream of challenges brought on by an ever-changing landscape.

In such environments, we must activate the more creative and intuitive brain functions available to us and establish new ways of engaging when the environment is so complex and continually changing.



Design a link between **performance** and **development**.

Another scenario we see is that people set development goals but fail to follow through on them. It is equally common for people to attain results but achieve no sense of satisfaction in having achieved them or being able to replicate them. Both scenarios limit future performance and the motivation to excel.

Our best practices highlight the need for performance feedback to be more growth- and learning-oriented in its implementation.

How can leaders do this effectively?

- Provide feedback collaboratively and frequently.
- Acknowledge wins early and often.
- Improve the link between performance and development.
- Challenge the link between performance and self-worth.

(Gallup, 2023)

Workers need to receive developmental feedback, as well as encouragement on a frequent basis, according to several key factors highlighted in Gallup's well-known engagement poll.

In his popular book entitled *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*, (Pink, 2011), New York Times bestselling author, Daniel Pink makes a compelling case that the human need to learn, grow, create new things, and to “do better by ourselves and our world” is a basic human drive that is much stronger than external motivators such as rewards and punishments. (Pink, 2011)

The *Gifts of Imperfection* by Brené Brown discusses how detaching self-worth from performance leads to greater life satisfaction and a sense of fulfillment. We naturally become more resilient and adaptable when we do not rely on external validation for our sense of self-worth, and that leads


to improvements in our relationships and mental health and establishes a growth mindset. (Brown, 2022)

Human beings are innate learners. We love novelty and constantly seek out new and different experiences that enhance our lives, our relationships, and our communities.

It is only through cultural conditioning over time that we tend to dampen this innate desire.

Organizational cultures that reward only achievement and do not pay heed to or reward the process of learning and growth stunt the creative expression. However, given the right cultural conditions, the human drive to create, learn, and grow will be revitalized and developed.

Performance, therefore, should not be mandated and driven from on high. Appealing instead to inherent values such as creativity, meaning, and purpose is much more effective, sustainable, and rewarding. This stance is supported by a growing field of science and scientists such as Dan Goleman, author of *Emotional Intelligence*, John Medina, author of *Brain Rules*, and renowned Harvard psychologist, Dan Siegel, author of *Mindsight*, among others. Siegel argues that the ability to tune into our own operating belief system is the basis for all emotional and social intelligence and the key to learning, growth, and individual development.



“The three things that motivate people -
autonomy, mastery, purpose.”

-Daniel Pink

Engagement is a function of creating **intrinsically motivated** goals.

When priorities do not tap into these inherent values, they become transient and temporary. Performance is lacking, and even if the results are achieved the sense of satisfaction or accomplishment one feels is temporary.

Developmental opportunities must pay heed to the innate voice of the individual and integrate all four aspects of performance:

Values, Mindset, Focus, & Prioritization

Integrating performance with an individual's values creates intrinsic motivations that are aligned and generates a sense of ownership and engagement that far exceeds what extrinsic rewards provide.

As a result, individuals:

- Demonstrate and sustain a higher level of engagement.
- Increase their long-term level of commitment.
- Can replicate or exceed the results.
- Develop a pattern of applied learning and growth.

(Ruderman, 2014)

These attributes are created at the individual level before they are imbued at the organizational level. Below are some key distinctions between the more traditional approach to performance development and the InteraWorks approach.

	Traditional Approach to Performance	InteraWorks Approach to Performance
 Reviews	Performance reviews are static annual event	Dynamic weekly, monthly, quarterly reviews
 Relationship to Goals	Goals are unrelated to individual values	Goals directly related to and reflect individual and team values
 Connection to Goals	Lack of connection between individual and organizational goals	Individual and organizational goals are directly connected
 Motivation	Extrinsic rewards and punishment	Intrinsically motivated - meaning and purpose provide deep sense of engagement and satisfaction
 Team Connection	Leaders disconnected from the intrinsic motivations of their teams	Team Alignment - Leaders understand and support individual and team values
 Connection to WHY	Teams disconnected from the "Why" or the purpose and meaning of the goals	Team Alignment - Teams understand and aligned with the purpose mission and meaning of organizational goals
 Systems	Complex systems for reviews	Simple system, engaging and fun
 Daily Engagement	Disconnected from day to day activities	Motivates day to day activities
 Leadership	Focus on leaders to drive and manage team performance	Shared leadership with individual and team responsibility for performance
 Mindset	Dreaded requirement for everyone - Check the box so we can get back to work	Ongoing opportunity for feedback, learning and growth
 Complete Picture	Performance management is separate from personal, professional, leadership, learning and development activities	Performance "Game-plan" directly reflects personal, professional, leadership learning and development activities
 Individual Performance	Individual performance is disconnected from team performance	Individual and team performance are directly linked to organizational goals
 Results	Leaders reward or punish results	Leaders encourage development, learning, growth and results

Creating a Culture of Performance: Individual to Organizational



Our empirical research and 35+ years of experience demonstrate that creating engagement and stimulating both personal and organizational responsibility is a function of creating the right environment. These distinctions combine to create the conditions for alignment, focus, integrity, and accountability to come forth within an organization. When individuals are operating on intrinsic motivations, the entire organization becomes more holistically activated, and we begin to see a self-generative culture of performance.

We believe there are 7 critical elements to creating this type of culture within an organization. Leaders must establish the necessary structures that support a positive focus on: Transparency, Equity, Autonomy, Meaning, Consistency, Acknowledgement, and Relationships. To remember these more easily, we use the acronym T.E.A.M. C.A.R.

These structures do not need to be complicated or cumbersome, but they do need to be practiced and modeled consistently across an organization.

To create a culture wherein these elements are common, we must leverage every interaction, be rigorously consistent, and shift mindsets into ones that look for and acknowledge areas of growth and learning. At InteraWorks, we see a need for an evolutionary shift in the way we think about performance and how we manage it. There is a need to go beyond the boundaries of rewards and punishments and begin asking ourselves and our teams, "what inspires us and others?" It's an inside-out approach, but one that is urgently needed to guide us into a still-uncertain future.



Turn Talent Into Teamwork – Turn Teamwork Into Results

What would it feel like to have this be the year your team accomplishes all that matters the most to your business even in the face of change? Our Best Year Yet program is a practical and proven system that quickly generates team alignment and performance regardless of the environment. This program uncovers untapped potential and leverages the power of habits, mindset, values, and planning to help teams achieve more than imaginable.

Individual Performance

CHALLENGE

Traditional Performance Management Systems Perpetuate a Lack of Engagement and Responsibility

We must activate the more creative and intuitive brain functions available to us and establish new ways of engaging when the environment is so complex and continually changing.



Design a Link Between Performance and Development

Provide feedback collaboratively and frequently.
Acknowledge wins early and often.
Improve the link between performance and development.
Challenge the link between performance and self-worth.



Engagement is a Function of Creating Intrinsically Motivated Goals

Demonstrate and sustain a higher level of engagement.
Increase their long-term level of commitment.
Can replicate or exceed the results.
Develop a pattern of applied learning and growth.



Creating a Culture of Performance: Individual to Organizational

Transparency Equity Autonomy Meaning
Consistency Acknowledgement Relationships

MINDSET SHIFT

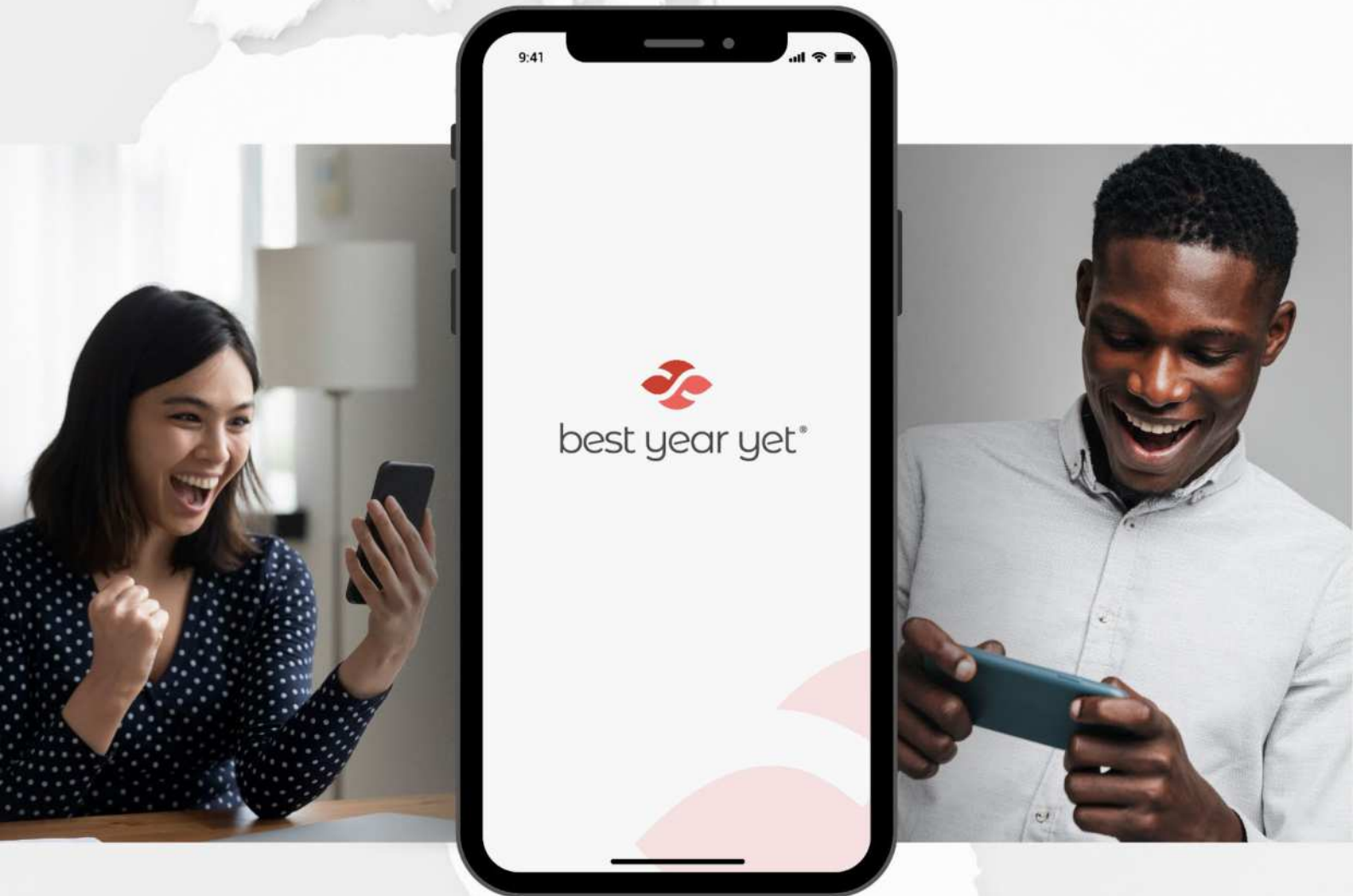
Leveraging Interactions, Ensuring Consistency, and Shifting Mindsets for Growth and Learning

At Interworks, we see a need for an evolutionary shift in the way we think about and manage performance. This shift is not a typical one. It is an inside-out approach that begins with a simple question: **what inspires us and others?** By asking ourselves and our teams this question, we forge the path necessary to guiding us through an uncertain future.

Organizational Results

COMING SOON!

The App to Change the World



The Best Year Yet program suite has long enabled individuals and teams to create plans to learn, achieve and transform year-after-year.

Our biggest innovation to date will launch next year in the form of a fully self-paced Best Year Yet app for any device. We endeavor to provide the means for any human and team on the planet to unleash their full capacity and capability.

Let's create a ripple effect for the better across the planet!

Stay tuned for updates and for more information on this launch.

SERVING PEOPLE WHO SERVE

Through decades of working at all levels in enterprise companies across many industries, we've built a reputation for helping people and organizations harness their focus, mindset, talent, and energy to produce results that matter most. Our systems work because we combine theory and science with belief and behavior transformation.

Our Best Year Yet Foundation provides InteraWorks programs and other support to non-profits to help them organize, focus, and increase effectiveness while reducing the burnout so often associated with service work. **We are pleased to share our newest grantees for 2023!**

Paonia Experiential Learning Academy
Paonia, CO

National Alliance on Mental Illness
Englewood, CO

Village Exchange Center
Aurora, CO

Douglas County Community Foundation
Castle Rock, CO

Thistle Farms
Nashville, TN

For more information or to apply for a grant, please contact info@interaworks.com.



In today's fast-paced and ever-evolving work environment, change is the only constant. Whether it's technological advancements, organizational restructuring, or shifting market demands, the ability to navigate and adapt to change has become a vital skill for success in the workplace. Let's explore strategies and techniques to help you master change, enabling you to thrive amidst uncertainty and harness new opportunities.



Accept and Embrace Change

The first step in mastering change is adopting a growth mindset. Understand that change brings new possibilities and challenges, rather than viewing it as a threat. Embrace a mindset that values learning and personal development. Cultivate curiosity and be open to acquiring new knowledge and skills. Recognize that setbacks and failures are valuable learning experiences that can propel you forward. By reframing change as an opportunity for growth, you can approach it with enthusiasm and resilience.



Enhance + Develop Relationships

Change often brings about uncertainty. During such times, furthering strong relationships with colleagues, managers, and mentors becomes crucial. Seek support and guidance from those who have successfully navigated similar changes in the past. Collaborate with others, share ideas, and engage in open communication to create a sense of unity and shared purpose within the team. Actively listen to others' perspectives and be empathetic towards their concerns.

By building strong relationships, you can create a support network that will help you adapt to change more effectively.



Learn the Skills Required to Excel

To master change, it is essential to develop and learn adaptive skills that enable you to embrace new technologies, processes, and methodologies. Identify the skills that are in demand in your industry and invest time in learning and mastering them. Seek out training programs, online courses, or workshops that can enhance your skill set. Additionally, focus on developing transferable skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and effective communication, which will enable you to adapt to a wide range of changes.

A culture of continuous learning by seeking out new challenges and opportunities for growth is a great way to stay ahead of the coming changes. Be willing to step out of your comfort zone and take on tasks that stretch your abilities. Actively seek feedback and learn from both successes and failures. Adopting a growth mindset and constantly expanding your skill set will not only make you more adaptable but will also increase your value as an employee.

Consider creating a personalized learning plan that outlines specific skills or areas of knowledge you want to develop. Set goals and milestones to track your progress and celebrate your achievements along the way. Explore various learning resources such as online courses, webinars, podcasts, or mentoring programs. Engage in continuous learning activities both within and outside of your workplace to broaden your perspective and stimulate innovative thinking.



Stay on Top of Industry Trends

Yet another way to stay on top of change in the right mindset is to keep yourself updated with the latest industry trends and developments. Read industry publications, attend conferences, and participate in professional networks to stay informed. Being proactive and anticipating potential changes will give you a head start in preparing for them. Engage in ongoing conversations with colleagues and leaders within your organization to understand their vision and any potential shifts that may occur. By staying ahead of the curve, you can position yourself as an asset to your organization and take advantage of emerging opportunities.

Additionally, be aware of technological advancements and their potential impact on your role or industry.

Technology has the power to disrupt traditional processes and workflows, so being proactive in understanding and adapting to these changes will be essential. Consider joining industry-specific forums or online communities to stay connected with experts and thought leaders in your field.

Mastering change in the workplace is no longer an option but a necessity for professional growth and success. By embracing a growth mindset, building strong relationships, developing adaptive skills, staying informed, and embracing continuous learning, you can position yourself as a resilient and valuable contributor in times of change. Remember, change is an opportunity for growth and innovation, and by mastering it, you can unlock your full potential and thrive in an ever-evolving workplace. Embrace change as a catalyst for personal and professional development and seize the opportunities it presents to create a fulfilling and successful career journey.

If you would like to learn more about how InteraWorks can help you start mastering change or learn new skills, be sure to check out our [Mastery Practices](#) and [Essentials Programs](#) for more information.



Sustainable
high performance
comes with practice.



12 Perfect Days



Right now, it is 10 a.m. and I am still in my pajamas from yesterday. Why, might you wonder? Well, my mornings typically kick off with a frantic dash to prepare my child for the school bus, and then immediately following I sit down at my desk and get sucked into work and email. By the time I look at the clock, it's already noon, and I haven't given a second thought to taking care of myself.

This scenario has sadly become a recurring theme in my life. It's ironic, given that I work for a company that specializes in productivity and performance. How have I allowed myself to prioritize work, family, and friends over self-care? Is it the societal pressure to put others first or do I grapple with self-esteem issues? Perhaps this belief that strong individuals make sacrifices stems from my upbringing.

Psychology Today asserts that our behavior, including self-care, stems from our beliefs. We often neglect self-care because we perceive it as selfish or believe we haven't earned it, lack the time, or have no control. But here's the catch: when an airplane's oxygen masks drop, we're instructed to secure our own masks before assisting others. There's a mere 8-12 seconds before potential incapacitation. Yet, here I am, in my pajamas, 12 seconds away from burnout.

Amidst the whirlwind of my racing thoughts, I often find myself daydreaming about a life where self-care and everything else falls into place. On my ideal day, I wake up

early, make my bed, exercise, meditate, eat healthily, read, connect with loved ones, seal a significant deal that moves my boss to tears, and wrap up the day in a hot tub or with a captivating book. My family is content, my house is immaculate, my wardrobe is organized, and my inbox brimming with praise. If only, I tell myself, if only I could have that, then I would be truly happy.

Realistically, I know that happiness isn't waiting at the end of this tunnel. Still, it begs the question:

**What if I lived my 'perfect day' every day
for a sustained period?**

**What would I learn about myself, my beliefs,
and my habits during this journey?**

Thus, I embarked on a quest to make this perfect day a daily reality.... for 12 days.

My daily routine began to revolve around the actions that constituted my ideal day. Before work started, I made my bed, exercised, showered, prepared nutritious meals, tidied up, followed my skincare regimen, and meditated. In the afternoon, I dedicated time to reading and nurturing creativity, while the evenings included more healthy meals, quality family time, cleaning, skincare, gratitude practice, reading, and sufficient rest—all while maintaining the quality of my work.

Seems easy enough, right? Here's what I discovered during this experiment.



Stephenie Rockwell, InteraWorks Director of Culture + Client Experience

You complete what you track.

Author Peter Drucker wisely said, “You can’t improve what you don’t measure.” Over these 12 days, I realized that tracking had the most significant impact on my success. To stay on top of things, I needed to start my day with intention, not play catch-up later. I began to track my habits and commitments on paper, which played a pivotal role in my success. Key performance indicators (KPIs) for self-care are just as worthy of tracking as work-related metrics. I even incorporated recurring self-care tasks into my Outlook calendar.

If it takes 2 minutes or less, knock it out.

Embedded in our programs and practices is the two-minute rule: if you can complete a task in two minutes or less, tackle it immediately. For example, spending a few minutes tidying up in the evening saved me from wasting hours on a Saturday cleaning. This shift in behavior was highly rewarding, as it made a substantial impact on my day-to-day life. Process the mail in two minutes, make my bed in two minutes – there’s no excuse not to!

Habits ease decision-making.

Researchers at Cornell University estimate that we make thousands of decisions each day (roughly 227 on food alone)

and sometimes even small decisions can become mentally exhausting. Habits help us deal with these complexities. The more habits we cultivate, whether good or bad, the less mental energy we expend. The habits I established during those 12 days significantly reduced decision-making time and mental exhaustion. This explains why my work quality remained consistent while I invested more time in self-care.

Happiness is a choice, not a reward.

Yes, you saw this coming. I embarked on this experiment with the hope of instant happiness being the result. While I did find moments of joy in completing these tasks and focusing on self-care, it didn’t dramatically increase my overall happiness. However, it did clear my mental space, allowing me to be more present, adopt a service-oriented mindset, and experience gratitude – all of which contribute to happiness. I was less overwhelmed by my racing thoughts about what I should be doing, which gave me more time to choose happiness.

Today marks the early afternoon of my 13th day in this experiment, and I’ve continued to complete over 80% of my perfect day items. I’ve made my bed, exercised, stayed hydrated, meditated, and, most importantly, I’m not lounging in my pajamas.



Overcoming
Self-Doubt

Craig Andrews, InteraWorks Facilitator

Self-doubt is a natural emotional experience that most people go through at some point in their lives. It can be a significant obstacle that prevents individuals from achieving their goals, following their dreams, and living their lives to the fullest. However, it is possible to overcome self-doubt and build confidence in oneself. In this blog, we will explore the causes of self-doubt and some strategies for overcoming it.

What is self-doubt?

Self-doubt is a feeling of uncertainty or lack of confidence in oneself and one's abilities. It can manifest in various ways, such as doubting one's decisions, abilities, or worth. Self-doubt can be triggered by external factors such as criticism from others, failure, or rejection, or internal factors such as negative self-talk and past experiences.

Causes of self-doubt

Self-doubt can arise from various causes, including:

Past experiences

Negative experiences from the past can leave a lasting impact on an individual's self-esteem, leading to self-doubt. For instance, if someone faces constant criticism and judgment from their peers or superiors, they may develop self-doubt and insecurity.

Fear of failure

Fear of failure is a common cause of self-doubt. Many people doubt themselves because they are afraid of failing, which can lead to them not trying at all or giving up easily.

Comparison with others

Comparing oneself with others can also lead to self-doubt. When someone constantly compares themselves with others, they may feel inadequate, leading to self-doubt.

Lack of confidence

A lack of confidence in oneself and one's abilities can also lead to self-doubt. When someone does not believe in themselves, they may doubt their ability to succeed or achieve their goals.



Defeating self-doubt

Now that we understand where self-doubt comes from, it's important to identify our triggers from above and then find a way to overcome these causes to better ourselves and put our best self forward. Let's look at a few strategies that have proven to be successful in overcoming self-doubt.

Recognize and acknowledge you have it.

One of the first steps in overcoming self-doubt is to recognize and acknowledge it. We need to accept that we have self-doubt and that it is a normal feeling everyone experiences. When we recognize our self-doubt, we can start to identify the triggers and the negative self-talk that reinforces it. We need to challenge these negative thoughts and replace them with positive ones. One way to challenge negative self-talk is to use evidence to counter it. For example, if we doubt our abilities to complete a task, we can remind ourselves of past successes and accomplishments.

Take action against it.

Another strategy for overcoming self-doubt is to take action. When we act on an issue, we build momentum and confidence. Even small actions can make a big difference. If we doubt our ability to write an article, we can start by writing a paragraph or two. By acting, we start to see progress, and our self-doubt begins to fade away. Be sure when you are taking action that you set realistic expectations and goals because when we set unrealistic expectations, we are setting ourselves up for failure.

Promote yourself with self-care.

Self-care is also an essential strategy for overcoming self-doubt. When we prioritize our physical and emotional well-being, we build resilience and inner strength. Self-care can take many forms, such as exercise, meditation, spending time with loved ones, or engaging in a hobby. When we care for ourselves, we are better equipped to handle challenges and setbacks that can trigger self-doubt.

Don't be afraid to seek support from others.

It's important to surround ourselves with positive and supportive people who believe in us and our abilities. These people can provide encouragement, validation, and



feedback to help us build self-confidence and overcome self-doubt. In addition, seeking guidance from a professional, such as a therapist or coach, can also be helpful. These professionals can provide tools and techniques to overcome self-doubt and build resilience.

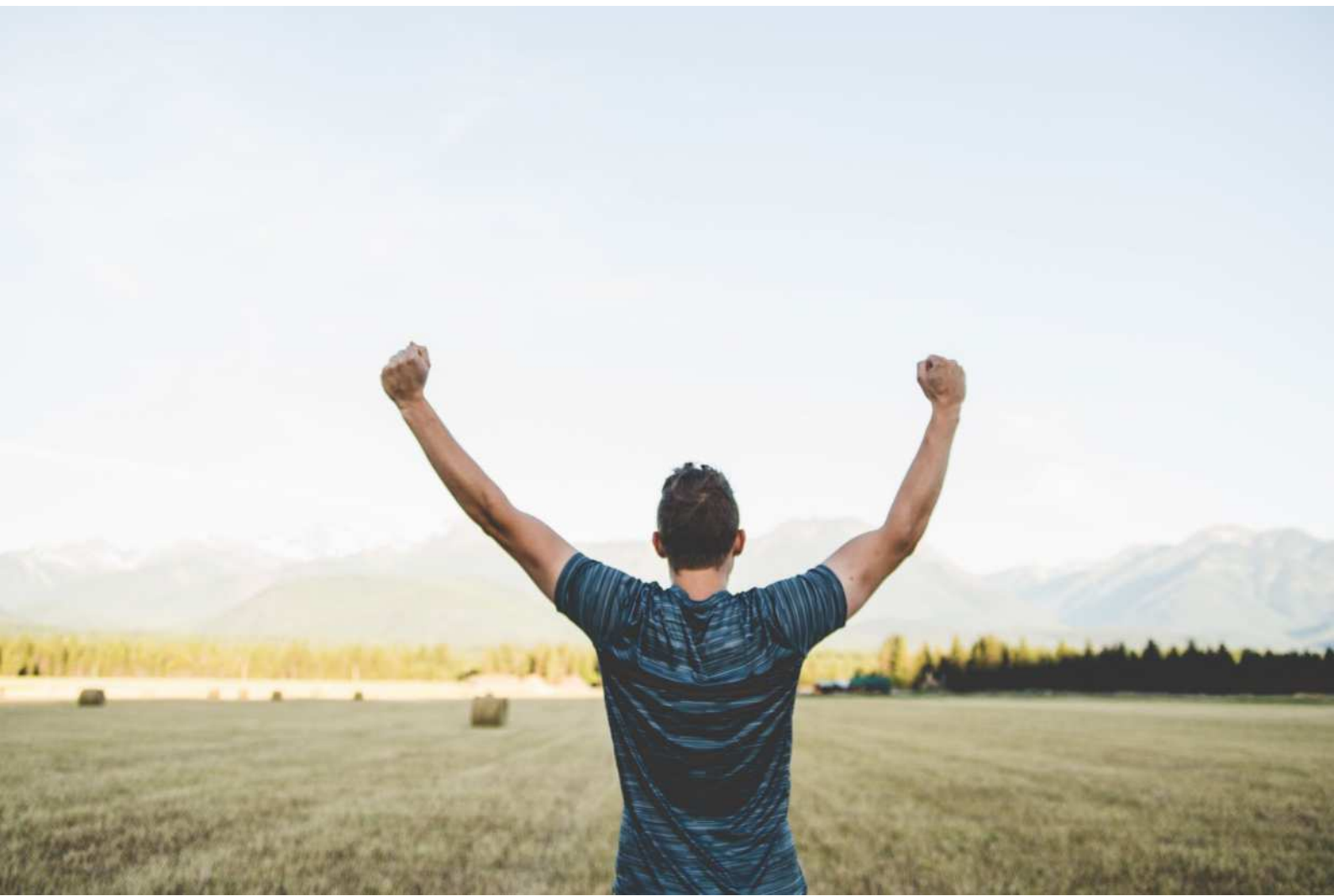
A purpose to excel

We've talked about the causes of self-doubt, and we addressed ways to defeat it. However, there is more to the story: discovering the purpose behind conquering this negative thought pattern and forming a more positive outlook on ourselves. We have all heard stories about how having a purpose in your job is a key building block to being a successful leader, manager, or any other role we partake in. It's why we do what we do. Have you ever stopped to think about how having this same type of purpose for our own self-care is an essential building block for our personal lives as well?

Having a purpose in life can help guide tough decisions, influence behavior, shape goals, and create understanding. Having a clearly defined and motivating purpose of why you want to erase self-doubt from your emotions not only clears

the path for our current objectives and tasks but also opens the doors for so many more opportunities for us to explore. Now it's true that some people are hesitant to pursue a self-purpose because they worry that it makes them too self-serving. However, to really contribute to the world and help those around us, we must positively identify our purpose and recognize how great we really are, what gifts and talents we bring to the show, and how much better we can serve others if we first take care of our minds. I encourage you to think about a meaningful reason why you would be better without self-doubt and then set up a plan on how to defeat it.

It's important to remember that overcoming self-doubt is a journey, not a destination. It takes time, effort, and persistence to build self-confidence and overcome self-doubt. We need to be patient with ourselves and celebrate our progress, no matter how small it may seem. We can overcome self-doubt by identifying our triggers and using the strategies listed above. The first step is admitting there's an issue, and then we can realize our purpose and begin to build self-confidence, resilience, and inner strength to achieve our goals and reach our full potential. Now go out there and be the superstar you were meant to be!



Welcome to the

take back your life

Productivity Thought Leadership Series

Enjoy this new series as we continue the legacy of the world-renowned **Take Back Your Life** brand.

QUESTION

?

What does
Take Back Your Life
mean to you?

“When you look back at your life, you won’t remember the thousands of emails you sent or the hundreds of meetings you attended, or the endless hours you invested to show the world how hard you worked. You’ll remember who you were being and the difference you made to those around you. Make yourself a priority, use your knowledge to add value to those around you. In the long run, it’s about living a life of contribution, quality and fulfillment, and sharing that life with others.”

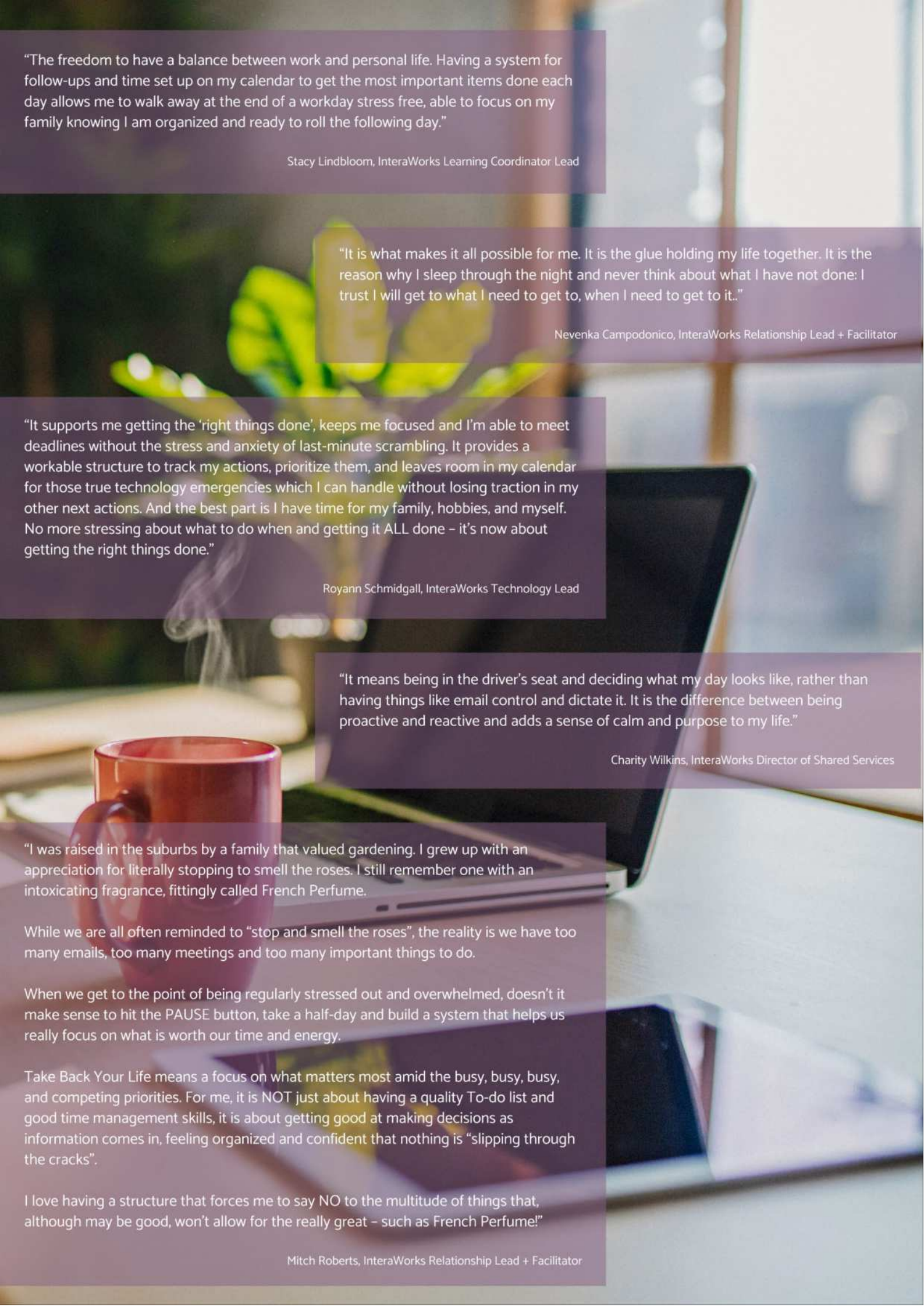
Joel Sutliff, InteraWorks Facilitation Lead

“Manage distractions, create a sense of control, focus on the right things, and win back time while fostering life/work synergy.”

Steven Crawford, InteraWorks Director of Sales

“Taking control of my work and life and do it in the way I need to in order to achieve both my personal and work goals. It means having the clarity to decide what I would like to do and what I can say no to, thereby reducing undue stress and being overwhelmed by other people’s priorities.”

Sanjay Mehta, InteraWorks Facilitators



"The freedom to have a balance between work and personal life. Having a system for follow-ups and time set up on my calendar to get the most important items done each day allows me to walk away at the end of a workday stress free, able to focus on my family knowing I am organized and ready to roll the following day."

Stacy Lindbloom, InteraWorks Learning Coordinator Lead

"It is what makes it all possible for me. It is the glue holding my life together. It is the reason why I sleep through the night and never think about what I have not done: I trust I will get to what I need to get to, when I need to get to it.."

Nevenka Campodonico, InteraWorks Relationship Lead + Facilitator

"It supports me getting the 'right things done', keeps me focused and I'm able to meet deadlines without the stress and anxiety of last-minute scrambling. It provides a workable structure to track my actions, prioritize them, and leaves room in my calendar for those true technology emergencies which I can handle without losing traction in my other next actions. And the best part is I have time for my family, hobbies, and myself. No more stressing about what to do when and getting it ALL done - it's now about getting the right things done."

Royann Schmidgall, InteraWorks Technology Lead

"It means being in the driver's seat and deciding what my day looks like, rather than having things like email control and dictate it. It is the difference between being proactive and reactive and adds a sense of calm and purpose to my life."

Charity Wilkins, InteraWorks Director of Shared Services

"I was raised in the suburbs by a family that valued gardening. I grew up with an appreciation for literally stopping to smell the roses. I still remember one with an intoxicating fragrance, fittingly called French Perfume.

While we are all often reminded to "stop and smell the roses", the reality is we have too many emails, too many meetings and too many important things to do.

When we get to the point of being regularly stressed out and overwhelmed, doesn't it make sense to hit the PAUSE button, take a half-day and build a system that helps us really focus on what is worth our time and energy.

Take Back Your Life means a focus on what matters most amid the busy, busy, busy, and competing priorities. For me, it is NOT just about having a quality To-do list and good time management skills, it is about getting good at making decisions as information comes in, feeling organized and confident that nothing is "slipping through the cracks".

I love having a structure that forces me to say NO to the multitude of things that, although may be good, won't allow for the really great - such as French Perfume!"

Mitch Roberts, InteraWorks Relationship Lead + Facilitator

AHEAD

DO IT

ON TIME

NOW

FORWARD

TODAY

FOCUS

ACTION

Power of Productive Thinking



PUT OFF

NOT NOW

LATER

TOMORROW

NOT YET

DELAY

SOMEDAY

 take back your life™
thought leadership series

PERHAPS

Joel Sutliff, InteraWorks Facilitation Lead

A mentor of mine used to say, “When was the last time you thought about how you think?” We used to pose this question to our learners at the beginning of every seminar, and many of them met that question with that deer-caught-in-the-headlights-look. “Think about how I think?” “What does that even mean?”

It is no secret that our results come from what we do, and what we do is a result of our values, character, and beliefs. Connecting our actions to our beliefs encapsulates what it means to harness personal productivity. When purpose and outcome are linked, the opportunity to gain the Effective Edge at work increases, thus making it easier to “Take Back Your Life.” **Peak** productivity requires understanding and living this principle. It means being willing to adopt an expansive mindset, open to **innovative ideas** and patterns of thinking. Let us explore how **productive thinking** shows up as a driver for productive actions leading to optimized results.

We regularly collaborate with Executives who express similar challenges, “...no time to answer emails...no one I trust to do the job besides myself...too many competing priorities-I can’t keep them all straight.” With a lot of luck and a bit of finesse, we can uncover the root cause of these beliefs. However, this takes time and patience because actions and

behavior are easier to see than feelings and emotions. As we unlock the limiting beliefs underpinning depreciative comments, we simultaneously create a path to positivity—a chance to rethink ideas and respond differently.

Last week, I read a story about a graduate student under a good amount of stress who came dangerously close to stealing a police car. The night before, he decided to blow off some steam by playing a popular video game *Grand Theft Auto* until the wee hours of the morning. In retelling this story years later, he realized his brain was wired to a thinking pattern over the five hours of play: *find a car to steal, engage in a high-speed chase, and reap the reward (i.e., get paid)*. The next morning, he found himself replaying the game scenario in the real world before his rational brain had time to correct the misfire. He left his apartment looking for a car to steal. Upon seeing his reflection in the window of the police car, he at once walked away, shook it off, and reset himself to ‘normal’ status. True story. He (of course) had no desire to commit the crime that morning, and for that moment, his actions reflected the pattern he trained his brain to see.[1]

Productive Thinking

What is the first thought that comes to your mind when you look at your Outlook Email inbox? If you are like me, it is,

“Seriously? This is too much for a Monday morning”. If this is what I think, what do I do? Do I ignore, hunt and peck for the junk mail I can delete, skip the annoying or insignificant information that is adding to my stress, snack on less important communications, or distract myself with something else? All truly relevant and legitimate thoughts to be having, right?

What about that project you really do not want to do but it is burning a hole in the proverbial work pocket, and nothing is happening? You know it is there, but you are not doing anything about it. Why? Perhaps some part of you THINKS it is less important than the other more fun things on your plate, so you might tell yourself *not urgent, not important, and no one will notice if it never happens*. And this becomes a pattern that determines your reality. The next time you go to work on a project, you think:

Ignore now, do something else, and get back to it later.

Not urgent, not important, and no one will notice if it never happens.

And then it becomes true.

Unproductive thoughts or a “fixed mindset” impacts access to possibility and affect overall performance. Similarly, if you believe in your own ability to succeed (if your thoughts are productive), you will. Productive thinking is different from analyzing, deciding, innovating, and creating. Productive thinking is a shift in perspective to consider more creative or innovative approaches. One of my favorite quotes by Albert Einstein sums it up, “You cannot solve problems with the same thinking you used when you created them.” How we think is as important as how we do. How about this instead:

Make decisions, act now, and create space for what matters!

If your team was adopting a pattern like this, how would your team be different?

Productive Action

I recently had a visit from my mother, who loves to travel and explore, but her partner is always working, preventing vacation flexibility. She feels guilty not including her partner on trips because she thinks “I should include them” and “I don’t want to hurt their feelings.” For about 3 years, she let go of trips to Scotland, Africa, the UK, Maine, and Colorado, waiting for the right opportunity and time to set off on an

adventure. Her thoughts created her reality: no action, no trips, no exploration. She has since changed her thinking and established a new perspective. Now she sees her grandchildren and her children more often.

Productive thinking – productive action – productive results.

I am currently involved with a local government association that is seeking greater clarity, efficiency, and overall improvements to their communication and meeting culture. In speaking with their CEO, he expressed that organizational health is a top priority for them, and the well-being of his employees leads to better outcomes and better results. That shift in perspective led them to seek better communication and better meetings to support this vision. What many leaders view as impossible, this leader made it possible through productive thinking.

Productive Results

Work environments continue to accelerate. Can you feel it? To manage the present and encounter the future, we are exploring the concepts of collective wisdom and heart intelligence as pathways to success. How you think (more than ever) is vital to individual, team, and organizational performance. This is about taking control of your own life to further optimize your performance both professionally and personally, whether that be with your family or being available to do the things you love the most, or making time to do nothing at all. Preparing for the future is less about guessing what will happen or what needs to be done, but taking the much-needed time to consider the thinking that will drive productive action, which translates to the long-term success of your organization.

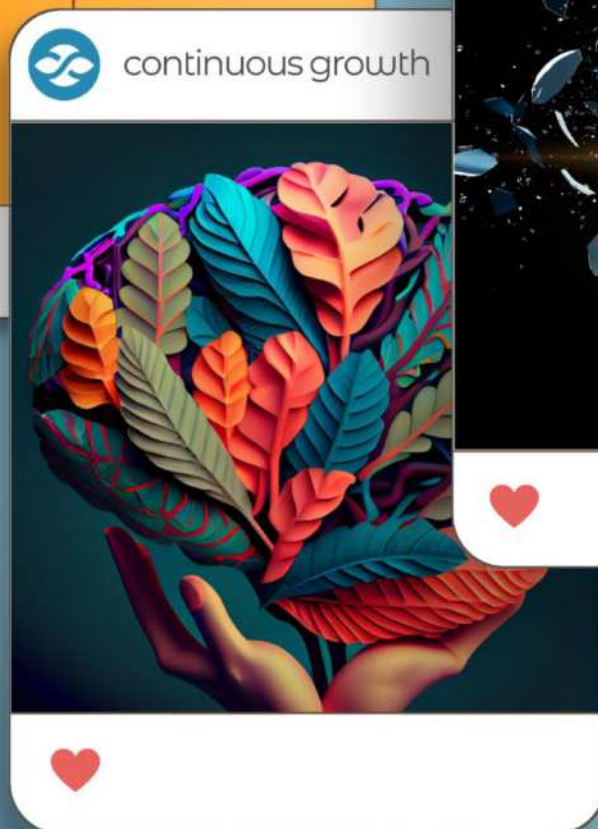
So, where do our thoughts come from? Our thoughts, values, and belief systems come from our background, experience, education, and culture. Thoughts and emotions are intrinsically linked and if we are mindful of our thoughts, we may gain access to a deeper wisdom that already exists within us, and a deeper connection to our world and those around us.

[1] Anchor, Shawn. The Happiness Advantage. 1st ed., Currency, 2010.

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Prioritizing and implementing a health and well-being practice is as important as it can be challenging. In this expansive information age where facts and data are readily accessible, there are a multitude of solutions for how to be healthy. Each of us must discern and evaluate the options, keeping in mind that what works for one person may not work for another.

In this ever-growing bank of health suggestions, I have identified three practices for optimum health and well-being. These include maintaining proper Circadian Rhythms, Grounding, and ensuring a full night's Sleep.

Let us explore each practice.



Circadian Rhythms

Circadian rhythms are the natural, internal timekeeping systems that regulate a wide range of physiological and behavioral processes in humans. These rhythms cycle every 24 hours (approximately), aligning with the Earth's rotation. They play a crucial role in maintaining our overall health and well-being by synchronizing various biological functions with the daily changes in the external environment, primarily the light-dark cycle.

Key aspects of circadian rhythms:

1. **The Master Clock:** In humans, as well as other organisms, a small cluster of cells in the hypothalamus known as the suprachiasmatic nucleus (SCN), serves as the master clock. It receives input from specialized light-sensitive cells in the retina and uses this information to regulate the body's internal clock.

2. **Light as the Zeitgeber:** The most potent external cue for resetting the circadian clock is exposure to light, particularly natural sunlight. Light helps to synchronize the internal clock with the external day-night cycle, ensuring that biological processes are synchronized with the appropriate time of day. Here are the steps to begin changing your light environment:

Step 1: Power-Up Your Morning and gaze toward the Rising Sun

Step 2: Catch the UVA Rise (early morning sun rays within the first 1-2 hours)

Step 3: Make Vitamin D with UVB (Get More Sunlight in General, preconditioned with sunrise and UVA Rise)

Step 4: Sunset: Block Artificial and Blue Light!

3. **Circadian Regulation of Sleep:** Perhaps the most well-known circadian rhythm is the sleep-wake cycle. The SCN helps regulate the release of melatonin, a hormone that promotes sleepiness, in response to changes in light exposure. This regulation is why people tend to feel more alert during the day and sleepy at night.

4. **Metabolic and Hormonal Rhythms:** Circadian rhythms also influence various metabolic processes, including the regulation of body temperature, digestion, and hormone production. For example, cortisol, a stress hormone, follows a circadian pattern, with higher levels in the morning and lower levels at night.

5. **Impacts on Health:** Disruptions to circadian rhythms, such as those caused by shift work, irregular sleep patterns, or jet lag, can have adverse effects on health. Chronic circadian misalignment is linked to increased risks of various health issues, including sleep disorders, obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and mood disorders.

6. **Individual Variability:** While there is a general pattern of circadian rhythms in humans, there is also considerable individual variability. Some people are “morning larks,” who are naturally more alert and active in the morning, while others are “night owls,” who are more active at night. This variability is partly influenced by genetics.
7. **Aging and Circadian Rhythms:** Circadian rhythms can change as individuals age, with older adults often experiencing alterations in sleep patterns and reduced sensitivity to light cues. These changes can contribute to sleep problems and other health issues in the elderly.
8. **Circadian Medicine:** Understanding circadian rhythms has important implications for the field of medicine. Chronotherapy, the practice of administering medications at specific times of day to optimize their effectiveness and minimize side effects, is one application of circadian medicine.



In our fast-paced, modern world, it's easy to become disconnected from the natural world that surrounds us. We spend most of our days indoors, separated from the Earth's surface by layers of concrete, carpets, and shoes. However, there's a simple yet profound practice that can help us reestablish a vital connection with nature – grounding bare feet on the Earth.

Grounding, also known as earthing, is the practice of coming into direct contact with the Earth's surface, typically by walking or standing barefoot on soil, grass, sand, or even water. This age-old practice has gained renewed attention in recent years as people seek ways to reduce stress, improve sleep, and enhance overall well-being.

The concept behind grounding is based on the idea that the Earth carries a natural, subtle electrical charge, and when we connect with it directly, we can absorb its energy.

Here are reasons why grounding bare feet on the Earth is worth incorporating into your life:

1. **Stress Reduction:** In our hectic lives, stress can take a toll on our mental and physical health. Grounding can help rebalance the autonomic nervous system, reducing the body's stress response and promoting a sense of calm and relaxation.
2. **Improved Sleep:** People frequently struggle with sleep disorders and insomnia. Grounding can help to regulate circadian rhythms and improve sleep quality, making it easier to fall asleep and wake up feeling refreshed.
3. **Pain Relief:** Grounding may have anti-inflammatory effects, reducing pain and discomfort. This can result in the relief of conditions such as chronic pain, arthritis, and migraines after regularly grounding themselves.
4. **Enhanced Mood:** Connecting with the Earth's energy can elevate mood and boost feelings of well-being. It is not uncommon to experience a sense of peace, joy, and increased vitality when practicing grounding.
5. **Increased Energy:** Grounding has the potential to replenish the body's energy reserves by restoring its electrical balance. This may result in increased energy levels and improved vitality.
6. **Connection to Nature:** In our increasingly digital and urbanized world, grounding is a straightforward way to reconnect with the natural world. It reminds us of the Earth's beauty and the importance of preserving our environment.

There is also evidence of a reduction of inflammation, and pain, and improves blood pressure.

Practice grounding!

Find a natural surface like grass, sand, or soil, and simply take off your shoes and socks. Stand or walk on the surface for at least 20-30 minutes daily, preferably in a quiet and peaceful environment. You can also sit or lie down if that is more comfortable.



Sleep



The universal key to health is sleep. It is the dishwasher for the brain as it cleans the brain from waste toxins. The shorter you sleep, the shorter your life span. Sleep is the most effective thing we can do to reset our brain and body health each day. Your circadian rhythm is one of two factors determining wake and sleep. Melatonin helps regulate the timing of when sleep occurs by signaling darkness throughout the organism but has little influence on the generation of sleep itself.

To identify sleep deficiency:

- If you don't set an alarm, do you wake up on time?
- Do you find yourself re-reading things?
- Can you function optimally in the morning without caffeine?

12 Steps for Healthy Sleep

1. Stick to a sleep schedule
(WAKE UP AT THE SAME TIME EVERY DAY!!)
2. Exercise is great, but not too late in the day. Try to complete 2-3 hours before bedtime
3. Avoid caffeine and nicotine

4. Avoid alcoholic drinks before bed
5. Avoid large meals and beverages late at night
6. Examine your meds – do the ones you take during the day cause drowsiness? Swap them for the evening and vice versa
7. Avoid naps after 3 p.m.
8. Relax before bed
9. Take a hot bath before bed
10. Dark bedroom, cool bedroom, gadget-free bedroom
11. Sunlight exposure for 30 min every day
12. Do not lie in bed awake

Resources:

- Grounding Mat www.Earthing.com
- Earthing Movie (YouTube) Josh and Rebecca Tickell

Suggested Apps for Light, Circadian, and Sleep tracking:

- DMinder, Tracking your Vitamin D
- Circadian Your Natural Rhythm
- Rise: Sleep & Energy Tracker



'Tis the Season for Stress

Craig Andrews, InteraWorks Facilitator

With the holiday season upon us, some of us may start to struggle to get in the right frame of mind to enjoy ourselves and our loved ones during these special occasions. Some of us are overwhelmed at work with end-of-year projects that must get done before we can go on vacation. A lucky few of us may be done with work and already on vacation, but the day-to-day bustle of shopping, wrapping gifts, and traveling to our vacation spot seems never-ending. With all of this going on, it's no wonder the holiday season has historically been rated as one of the highest stressful periods people ever encounter.

So how do we fix it?

How do we get to a place of sensibility and calmness so we can continue our paths toward enjoyment – Children's books are a great place to start!

I know, I know. I can hear it now, "Kids books? Are you crazy? How is that going to help me be less stressed?!" But let me ask, when was the last time you read a children's book? Not just flipped through the pages but actually read one and thought about the lessons they can teach us on so many levels. 'Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day,' written by Judith Viorst, tells a story of helping us realize we are not alone when it feels like everything is going wrong, and it's OK to talk about emotions and negative reactions we all tend to get caught up in. 'The Huge Bag of Worries,' by Virginia Ironside, is another great example of how a book meant for children can also be useful for an adult. It demonstrates how to sort through your stressors and make them more manageable. It emphasizes that we all have stress and worries, but there is something we can do about them.

Not only are some children's books great at teaching adult lessons, but many of them are also fun to read! Take this example from the Dr. Seuss book, 'Oh the Places You'll Go!'

"You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself in any direction you choose. You're on your own. And you know what you know. And YOU are the one who'll decide where to go."

What this book is trying to convey is that life is full of ups and downs, and sometimes things are downright scary, but it'll be fine if we just take things step-by-step. We as adults can use that same advice in our own lives every now and again. When things seem to be dragging us down, we only need to turn our direction toward the things that make us better.

Now that we've read some children's books and realized we aren't alone in this stressful season, what are some tried and true methods to help us, not only now in the holiday season, but whenever we start to feel stressed out? While there are hundreds, if not thousands of ways to reduce stress according to science and the experts, most agree on a few simple techniques that are proven to help get your stress under control.

Take a mindfulness break.

Being mindful helps elicit the relaxation response by bringing you to the present moment; it can break a cycle of stressful thoughts. One way to do this is to take a drink of something and focus on what your body feels during this activity. Reflect on and feel the hot or cold of the glass on your hands, the scent of the item you are drinking, and what sensation you feel as it moves down your throat. Simply spending a few minutes with this can drastically reduce the stress you are experiencing at the moment.

Ask if it's worth it.

Try to put things in perspective by asking if the cause of your stress will matter a day, week, or year from now or if it's worth the health problems that stress can cause. As soon as you realize that something may not be as important as you thought, it buffers the stress and helps you start to relax.

Reassess Your To-Do Lists.

If you're trying to squeeze 30 hours of work into a 10-hour workday, you're going to be stressed. Reducing your workload could be key to helping you get through the day feeling better. Whether that means stepping away from a committee you joined, or it involves hiring someone to complete some of your household chores for you, perfecting your time management skills can allow you to minimize the stressors that you experience, and better manage the ones you can't avoid.

Take a break.

Do not forget about your own needs. Take a nap, go for a short walk, read a book (like a children's book) or watch a funny movie. Laughing relaxes the whole body and can relieve physical tension and stress.

All these methods have been proven to work to help us overcome stress no matter where it stems from. You just need to make a conscious effort to focus on one or more of the suggestions above. Also, remember that it's better to manage your stress moment by moment rather than trying to get caught up on stress reduction after the fact. That's because once the body becomes chronically stressed, it can take a long time to recover, and often much longer than most people realize.

So, the next time you feel yourself becoming stressed, or better yet before you give yourself a chance to get stressed out, pick out a good children's book and discover the magic that it has for the young and the old, and focus on the four steps above. By doing so, I am positive you will be able to spend the holidays as they were meant to be.

**From all of us at
InteraWorks – We
wish you a happy
holiday season full of
warmth, laughter,
and love!**



Gratitude starts from within

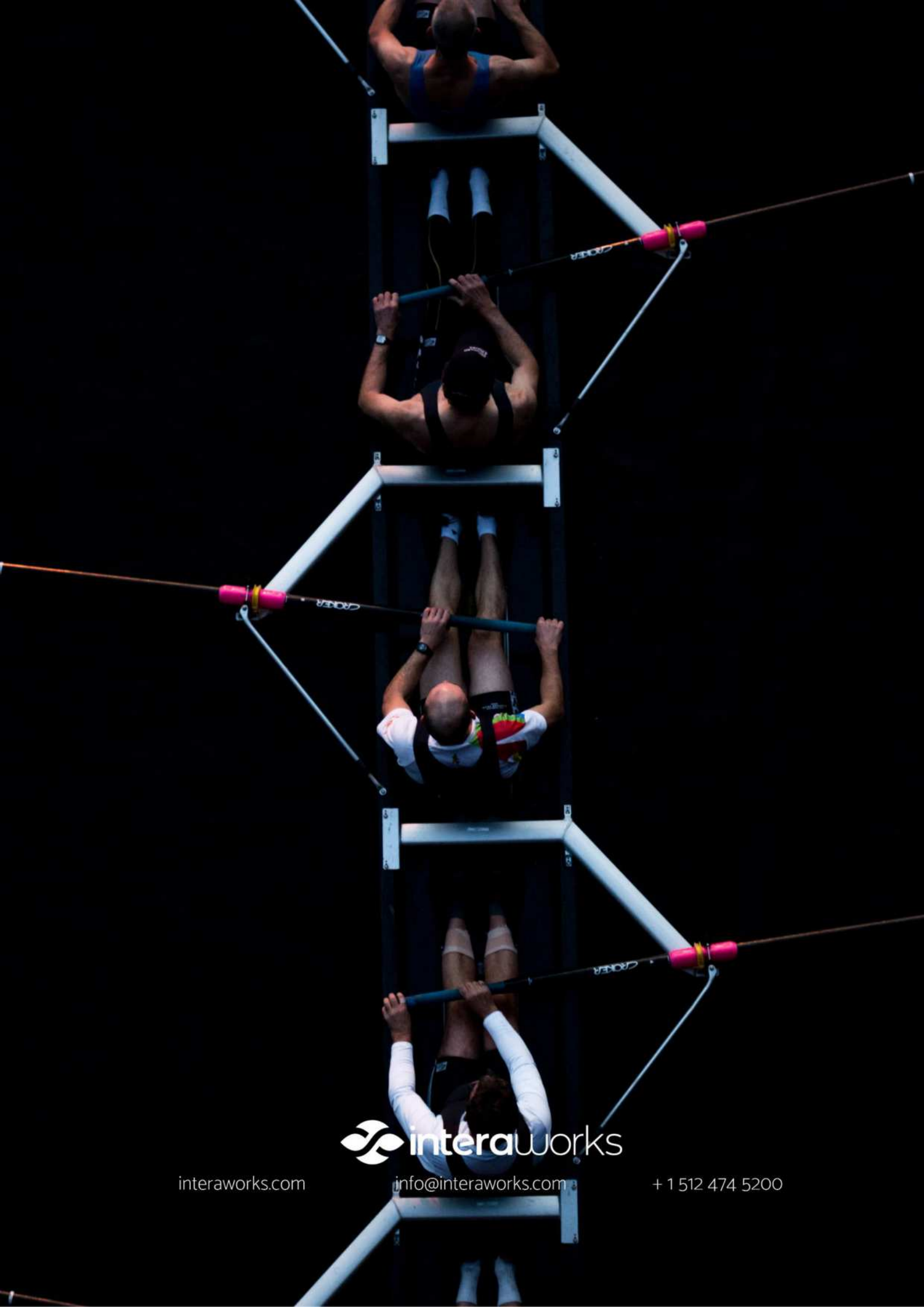
As you reflect on your own
wisdom, talent, and efforts
**what accomplishments
are you celebrating
as we close out the year?**

Share your accomplishments
and celebrate each other!



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