

# Managing time vs. energy

Time is a finite resource, and with growing 'lists', expectations and adulating to do, it can feel t.i.g.h.t. After years of going on time management courses that focused around managing my inbox, I started working as a strengths practitioner. The concept of doing more of what you love and what energises you is a huge mindset shift for most of us. Stick with me though, because I'm going to guide you through some principles and activities so you can have a look at how and where you're spending your time, overlay that with managing your energy and see what happens.

Managing your energy starts with identifying:

- what energises you (your strengths)
- what drains you
- figuring out when you're at your peak performance
- what distracts you
- identifying what's rubber and what's glass (bear with me, I'll explain on the next page!)

...and then adjusting how you're operating accordingly. These might sound like they have the possibility to be huge, seismic changes, but slow and steady is the approach we're going to use.

## Things you need to know about strengths:

1. They are the things that energise us and we are great at (or have the potential to become great at) (Brewerton and Brook, 2014)
2. You may not be the finished article with a particular strength (i.e. something that energises you) but you would be able to develop it if you needed to.
3. This isn't about skills and competencies - these are things that genuinely shift your energy positively. You feel good and motivated when you're working in line with them.

## Questions to help you begin to identify your strengths

- When you have a list of things to do, what do you pick first?

Maybe it's the quick wins or the bigger ticket items, perhaps it's where other people are involved or you're getting to be creative. Go with your gut and try not to overthink.

- What makes you pick those things?

Is it because you're working by yourself or because you like to see a tangible result? Maybe you love being strategic or getting to flex your courage. It might be the first time you've thought about the 'why' so be kind to yourself, the answers might not come straight away.

- What keeps your focus and attention?

The things that make you forget where your phone is!

- What do you love doing?

It might sound frivolous, but the stuff that you have a passion for, that really lights you up when you're doing it and you might feel a physical shift in your body when you get to do it.

- When is your energy at it's highest?

Think about specific times of the day, days of the week and weeks of the month!

- When you're relaxed and time passes quickly, what are you doing?

What was happening the last time you didn't clock watch or maybe even uttered the words 'where has the time gone?!'

## Moving forward with your strengths knowledge...

You're building a picture of when you're at your best, and what contributes towards that now. This isn't a one off exercise and you have the answers, it's something to repeat, practice and update.

As you begin to grow your answers in their depth and scope, you can use the questions below to build up a picture of how you're managing your time vs. your energy.

Am I maximising my time when I'm at my most energised?

When I'm feeling low on energy, how could I use my strengths to re-energise?

Now I have a view of my strengths, what are my biggest drainers?

How can I limit my exposure to my biggest drainers?

### A note on distractions...

Not all distractions are made equal. Some days you might be more distracted than others, and different things may trigger that roving eye. We're nuanced humans after all! There is still value though in reflecting on what causes the most (and longest lasting) distractions for you, and the behaviour patterns that follow. Use the questions in the next box to help you have a think about what's going on.

1. Is there a time of day when you're more likely to be distracted?
2. Is there anything in particular that causes it?
3. Are there particular types of activities that leave you open to distraction? (think the opposite of what keeps your focus and attention)
4. What's within your control to change your distraction habits?
5. What's one action you could take today to make that change?

### Rubber and glass is where it's at...

This analogy has helped me out of many a pickle. When the overwhelm is hitting and everything is feeling like it needs your attention, we have to look with a critical eye at what's on the list (metaphorical or otherwise!).

The categories work like this...

**Rubber:** if you drop these things they'll bounce back up and are able to be caught another day.

**Glass:** if you drop these things, they shatter. They need prioritising, it's not as simple as moving a deadline and all will be corrected. Think mental and physical health first and foremost!

Now if you go through all the things you need to do, what's rubber and what's glass? How do you need to adjust your time accordingly?

It's important to remember we're not aiming for perfection here. I'm under no illusion that planning every inch of your time is unachievable (and actually not the goal for many of us) and doing absolutely everything in line with your strengths / peak energy is also a massive journey. Keeping focused on what we can control and looking at time management with a fresh pair of eyes can shift our mindset though, and whilst I can't give you the gift of time I hope this perspective opens up some new possibilities for you!