

Blood

Sweat

Cheer

Full Engage

It, and s: ngement

The Full Engagement
Training System
turns some common
thinking on its head,
and can make you
fully present in your

work and your life.

The first step might be
to stop multitasking.

By Haidee E. Allerton

First, they take your blood.

That's when you know this is serious. Blood chemistry—followed by a healthy breakfast—is the first item of business for corporate athletes in the initial stage, Face the Truth, of the Full Engagement Training System at LGE Performance Systems.

The blood analysis reveals your cholesterol levels and other data; later, they measure your body fat composition in the Bod Pod, a capsule that measures air displacement, and you have to don a bathing suit. So far, it doesn't sound like the typical corporate training program, does it? The reason for the physical assessment is because "Physical" is the foundation of the Full Engagement Model pyramid; the other components of the pyramid are Emotional, Mental, and Spiritual. You can't achieve full engagement—in your work, in your life—if you don't have reserves of physical energy to draw from.

I went to LGE Performance Systems in Orlando, Florida, as part participant, part reporter. But staying strictly in the role of observer became untenable; the program just hits you in too many personal places. Talk about Face the Truth. I had suspected that I'd become disengaged in some aspects of my life, but in Orlando, I couldn't deny or rationalize that fact any longer. I saw the same realization to different degrees come over the 13 official participants during the two and one-half days. Sobering, yes, but the experience was also enlightening, rejuvenating, and even fun.

The sweat

The Full Engagement Training System grew from the insights of Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz, senior partners and principals of LGE Performance Sys-

tems, and Jack Groppe in his 2000 book, *The Corporate Athlete*. Loehr, a performance psychologist, has coached hundreds of professional athletes, including tennis player Monica Seles and Olympic speed skater Dan Jansen. Loehr began to think that corporate executives are under even more brutal competitive pressures than professional athletes. In point of fact, we are all athletes

"Think about it," says Loehr. "Athletes train and compete, but then have downtime in which to recuperate. And their careers are shorter than those of business executives. Corporate leaders are expected to sustain a high level of performance for 30 or more years, with little downtime."

No wonder more and more people are feeling a loss of energy and a lack of engagement in their work and personal lives, notes Loehr. A 2002 Gallup poll found that 75 percent of employees are not engaged and the cost of active disengagement to U.S. organizations is in excess of US\$250 billion.

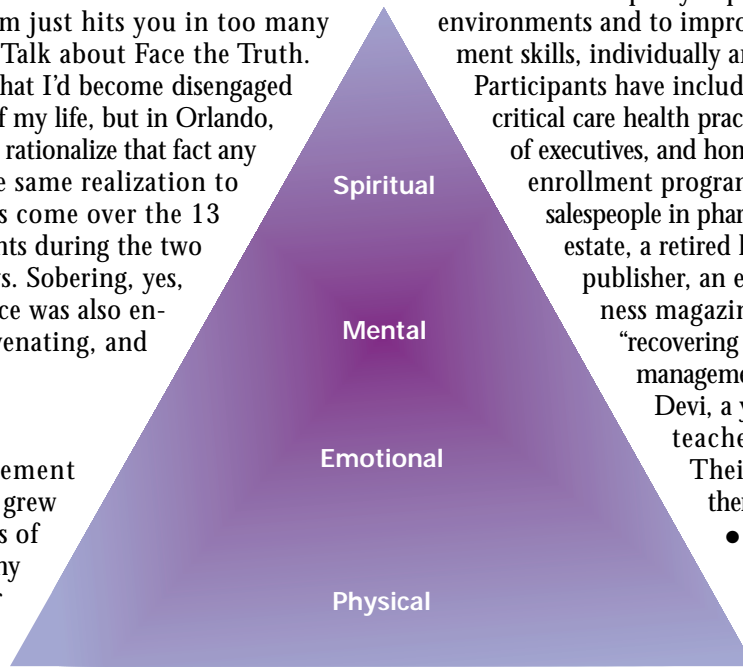
Why is this so?

Poor time management, right? Wrong, according to Loehr. Disengagement stems from insufficient capacity and poor energy management. Thus, the objective of the Full Engagement Training System is to build and sustain capacity to perform in high-stress environments and to improve energy management skills, individually and organizationally.

Participants have included FBI SWAT teams, critical care health practitioners, thousands of executives, and homemakers. My open-enrollment program brought together salespeople in pharmaceuticals and real estate, a retired lawyer, a newspaper publisher, an editor of a top business magazine, a self-described "recovering psychologist turned management consultant," and Devi, a yoga instructor who teaches in the program.

Their reasons for being there forged a theme:

- "I'm the primary earner and care giver in my family. I have no downtime."
- "I have four differ-



Full Engagement Model

Energy is four-dimensional.

ent job titles. I tend to be over the top and don't know how to pull back."

- "I need energy output to meet the pace and demands of my clients."
- "I have two young sons and want to be an example of balance."
- "I've been in a startup situation that's now successful, and I'm contemplating my next move. I feel scattered."
- "I had three businesses going at once and reached the point where I couldn't make decisions. That wasn't like me, so I knew that I needed help."
- "I want to know how to sustain my energy when I get home from work."
- "Sometimes, I feel I'm going to implode."
- "I figured the situation at work wasn't going to change, so I needed to do something proactive."

The principles

The gist is that you have to have energy, so take care of yourself physically. That means—no surprise—proper nutrition and exercise. You also have to recover energy. That means taking what the program calls "recovery breaks," in which you disconnect from the sources of speed, reflect, and reconnect to the outside world. Managing your energy—not time—is the key. And energy is the capacity to do work. It's your—and your organization's—most precious resource. Taken further, great leadership is the capacity to mobilize, focus, and renew energy in the service of the corporate mission. Full engagement requires that we draw from the four dimensions of energy on the pyramid: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual. That's Principle 1.

Principle 2 is that to maintain capacity, we must balance energy expenditure with energy recovery—the way athletes do during off-season or even in the few seconds between shots when a tennis player adjusts the strings on his or her racket or a golfer strides to the next hole.

Easier said than done, you're thinking.

I asked Loehr, "What if you find you can't take recovery breaks at work? What if your organization isn't friendly to this?"

"You can start with your own team and affect that little culture you're in. They see you drinking more water, keeping your emotions in check, and telling your stories about dealing with the storms," he says. "The stories should reflect your values, state

the truth, and leave those you just talked to with a sense of hope. You change the way you lead and the dynamics of the team. And maybe they carry the message home. It's kind of like you start a little pocket of energy, and that starts to spread." Words of a man with a mission. And Jim Loehr's personal mission, as he will tell you, is to be "extraordinary, even though I'm an ordinary guy. I want to be an extraordinary father, an extraordinary son to my mother, and an extraordinary leader in my organization." The way for anyone to become extraordinary, believes Loehr, is through full engagement and managing energy. "You learn how powerful this concept is when you get it into your DNA. It's personal to me because I think the work is very important. We're trying to build a case—a very persuasive case—for including the whole person in the business formula."

Energy management Principle 3: To build capacity, we must push beyond our limits, training in the same systematic way that elite athletes do. Principle 4 involves positive energy rituals—highly specific routines for managing energy. That's where the rituals can hit home: habits. Is your idea of breakfast a donut and caffeine? Croissant and triple-shot latte? Do you skip lunch? Too tired at night to go to the gym, help your kids with their homework, have a meaningful conversation with your significant other? Work all day and don't really accomplish the goals that are meaningful to you? Uh, huh.

Counter-thinking and rituals

By now, it's clear that the full engagement philosophy is founded on several ideas that run counter to current thinking. 1) Manage energy, not time. 2) Multitasking is nonproductive because you're not fully engaged in any one task. Come on, can't you tell when someone's typing on his or her computer while talking to you? And how engaged in interacting with you do you think that multitasker is? Add to that, 3) manage energy by habit and not by willpower or self-discipline. That has to be a relief to those—probably most of us—who weren't endowed with the self-discipline gene. But if we take the ideas of full engagement to heart, we can use our limited quota of self-discipline to create energy-positive rituals that become automatic.

The workbook and program provide exercises that take you through a process of gathering the facts

Step Away From the Pretzels

Raquel Crocker-Malo, the nutritionist at LGE Performance Systems, provided eye-opening food for thought during the program. Basically, you want to eat five to six small meals spread out through the day, choosing mostly from grains, fruits and vegetables, and a small amount of protein. Yes, you can still have chocolate, pork rinds, or whatever does it for you, but try to follow the 80/20 Rule: 80 percent nutritious food, 20 percent fun food.

Or think of it this way: Most people should eat about 15 to 20 handfuls of food a day, using their hands, which are proportionate to their body size, to measure. And try to choose snacks that are low to moderate on the Glycemic Index. Foods that are high on the index are processed into glucose too quickly to provide sustained energy. Limit the bad fats—transfats and saturated—and eat the good fats—mono- and polyunsaturated found in such foods as olive oil and peanut butter.

Quick quiz: Think fat-free pretzels are a good energy snack? Wrong! They're high on the Glycemic Index and so spike your glucose level. If you don't use up that glucose within 30 minutes, it can get stored as fat—even though the pretzels were fat-free. A better snack is a palmful of almonds or tablespoon of peanut butter on a multigrain cracker. Even though nuts are high in fat, they're low on the Glycemic Index and don't raise your blood sugar as quickly. Instead, they keep your glucose fairly level so you have a chance to use it up and keep it from getting stored as fat.

about your physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual capacity—where and who you are now versus where and who you want to be. Then you can determine the appropriate rituals for you having to do with nutrition, physical activity, work breaks (every 90 minutes is recommended), as well as rituals that target your emotional, mental, and spiritual “muscles.” Speaking of exercises, the program in Orlando combines sit-down workbook duty and presentations from instructors (such as performance consultant and former professional hockey player Garth Weiss) with get-up and grab the Dynaband, hit the treadmill, and take yoga time. And there I was in the yoga class, learning

how to breathe from my belly and twisting beyond my capacity. That night, I was fully engaged in a good night's sleep and thinking there's definitely something to this.

The possibilities

“This is new and the ideas that we need oscillation [full engagement interspersed with recovery breaks] in our lives and that we've separated the body from the whole performance equation, it's so blindingly obvious,” says Chris Osorio, the newest senior partner and principal at LGE who came from the Covey Leadership Center. Osorio, who looks like an athlete and, in fact, played sports in high school and college, read about Loehr's coaching methods when his son was involved in football and track. “When I think about the times in my life I've been most engaged... I go back to college where I was in a stimulating intellectual environment, but I had a break from that every day when I went out to the practice field, and that relieved a lot of emotional stress and helped facilitate my mental alertness so I could go back to my studies in the evening and have creative energy for that. And thinking about the spiritual dimension, when you have a mission and purpose, and I certainly did at that time in my life... I look at that equation and say it's a shame that we've severed the physical dimension from the performance equation. We've focused on interpersonal, management, and technical skills, but it has been exciting to bring in these other dimensions and the rituals. You know, sometimes the little things are really big things. One little habit, such as nutrition, if we apply that every day in a meaningful way—just that—what an impact that can make.

“I just started seeing the possibilities. If we can begin to develop the skills here of large organizational change and develop the tools, products, and services of that—what an opportunity.”

Osorio adds, “We want to have fun, grow, and make a difference. We know the executive program here has the potential to make a difference in people's lives, and we want to reach out beyond and get into organizations and make a difference there, too. We're

all in an energy crisis. It's not about having more time. If we were fully engaged during the course of the day, we could probably get everything done and be surprised at how much we did get done."

Osorio says people should ask themselves, How can I create a series of sprints in my work life, versus going linear? The key, says Osorio, is to make that practical. "For example, what if you never have a meeting longer than 90 minutes?" In one of the sessions, Weiss asked a participant who shared that she over-schedules at work and with family and friends, "What if you start assigning a one to 10 priority to conflicting tasks?"

I ask Osorio whether LGE follows up with participants to see if and how the principles are working for them. "We're coming out with the Full Engagement E-Coach," says Osorio, "which will give participants the opportunity to have a coach that integrates all of their feedback, rituals, and focus areas they want to work on. If as a manager you want to work on your listening skills, the questions in the 360 portion would be in the listening area. You can work with an outside coach, boss, peer, or all of them. The E-Coach creates a consistent email process on that area of focus and links you with the purpose and mission you defined. You can get ongoing, living feedback and coaching that invite development from a manager, something many managers want to do but have a hard time doing.

"The other product coming out is a ritual builder. Let's say you come out of the program thinking, 'I'm going to do an exercise routine, get up at 6, and do it before work.' You plug in your ritual and ask for an automated email or call (you can choose the voice and name the caller) to ask if you did that ritual, how much time you spent, what results you got (heart rate or miles run or whatever), and so forth. And you get a monthly report and a pointed question as to why you're not achieving the goals you set if you, in fact, aren't." Osorio points out, "It's not invasive, it's not like having someone on your case. You can turn it on or off. It's a source of motivation."

Adds Osorio, "There's the individual side and the organizational side."

Indeed. During lunch the second day on the patio overlooking the tennis courts (a small percentage of LGE's business is still athlete coaching), two of the men participants were talking about putting the

principles and rituals in action at work and at home. Said one, concerned, "If I want to make some of these changes, I'll have to get my wife's buy-in and she hasn't been here."

Osorio responds, "The advantage of creating a community of people who are fully engaged is that you can reach out to individuals and get them enrolled. Our market includes a *Fortune* 1000-type audience, the training and development audience, so we're interested in making large-scale organizational change and that's where we'll throw a lot of expertise. We're developing programs for organizations that their own performance coaches can deliver and that won't have the blood work or Bod Pod, for instance. And we're developing modules for self-directed learning. You could show those to your spouse."

Over the last morning's al fresco breakfast with the best granola (specially blended) I've ever tasted, one participant from a high-powered New York company thinks what he has learned will be hard to sustain, though he very much wants to. Another says that he wishes he could come back every 10 days and plans to bring clients for an intact-group workshop.

I followed up recently with participant Foster Mobley of Organizational Technologies in Santa Ana, California, one early morning on the phone. I asked if he'd tried to incorporate the rituals and principles and how that was going.

"When I went to Orlando, I already was trying to keep up on health trends, so I didn't lack the knowledge. I lacked the structure and discipline, and that hasn't changed," Mobley says. "But my knowledge improved, and the program gave me a tangible, tactical structure to use. I downloaded the accountability tool on my PDA, and I do about half of the 20 rituals I created for myself."

"Half?"

"Well, the ones that require the most change—or are most different from my norm—tend to fall off. So, I'd say the program resulted in some changes, but I'm still struggling with the daily rituals. I am exploring yoga, which I really enjoy.

"What has been really helpful is that we formed a small team [of other participants] to hold each other accountable. That dropped off a bit when the first deadlines came along—we're all busy people—but we're getting back to it. Once a week."

"So overall, you feel positive about the program,"

Energy is
currency,
and stress—
energy
investment—
is the
stimulus
for growth.
Recovery
is when
growth
happens.

which I think I can actually hear in Mobley's voice.

"It's more palatable and packageable than anything else I've seen. It makes sense in my head."

The cheers

The full-engagement approach caught Oprah Winfrey's attention, and sales of Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz's book *The Power of Full Engagement* have soared. Regarding being featured on *Oprah!*, that's an interesting story. A tour guide in Italy for Ms. Winfrey did her a big favor and she told him, "If there's anything I can ever do for you...." The tour guide's son was being groomed as a professional tennis player but lost all of his matches for two years. The father heard about Jim Loehr's coaching, contacted him, and Loehr worked with the young man for a year at no cost, and the boy started winning. So the father called in his

chips with Oprah, and she embraced the full-engagement concepts.

Olympic gold medal winner Dan Jansen, who monitors 20 rituals daily, also credits Loehr with helping him overcome personal tragedies and slips on the ice just short of victory to finally winning in Lillehammer. A video of that triumph in Loehr's session at the ASTD Conference in May brought some audience members to tears.

However, Loehr says, "This isn't touchy-feely. We measure everything, and we're building a database of the impact."

Putting it to work, at work

Talking about the implications for business, Loehr concedes that the four dimensions of the pyramid don't seem as directly linked to business objectives as other factors. "It's clear the software between your ears is important and anytime we can upgrade that knowledge base, we invest a lot of money and that makes sense. But it's also pretty clear that we bring in people with a lot of talent and intelligence who went to the best schools and we give them the best training, let them go, and put them into the storm and think they'll be fine. But from our perspective, you'll just be a recruiter throwing people into the lion's den until they burn out and then you have to replace them."

Loehr continues, "If you look at the engagement data, it's tragic. Only one in four people is really engaged at work, and 19 percent are toxically disengaged. That's an enormous cost to the business and to those individuals. You have them there, but they're not really showing up."

Adds Loehr, "It's much deeper than firing people up. From everything we know in medical and sports sciences, in a defensible way, what's the best thing we can do to keep people engaged for the longest period of time? We know that people perform better when they're healthy and happy. We came to the conclusion of our three decades plus that energy is the best platform to understand how human beings operate. It's the granular level...getting down to where there's no jargon and everyone can understand it. This approach is grounded in the way we operate every day in our skin. Then we try to wrap

as much science around it as possible to distill the important concepts—how the mind, body, and spirit work and how those interface with productivity, longevity in the workplace, and completing whatever mission you're on in that business.

"It's a win for the person and the company. If the company wins and you lose, there's going to be a train wreck somewhere along the way. So, you have to figure out how you can complete your mission as a person and how the company can complete its mission. It's human beings that make that happen, and their energy makes the mission possible or impossible."

The Full Engagement Training System lists some common performance barriers—you'd recognize them: impatience, defensiveness, negative attitude, among others—and asks what the energy consequences are. It's not difficult to find examples in our lives when such behaviors sap our energy. Part of the program is helping participants align their values with their behavior.

All leadership is, says Loehr, "is recruiting, managing, and mobilizing individuals collectively in the service of the corporate mission. People don't give their energy easily because it's precious to them. So if they're not aligned with the mission they may show up for a paycheck, but they'll fake it. You see that in sports, too."

"What if your organization gives you so much work that you feel you don't have the time to put these principles into practice?" I ask.

"That's an appropriate question. There has to be a receptive environment for change to occur and what the organization allows you to do affects what you're able to do. We've learned by breaking up work and life into manageable sprints and recovery periods, you tend to be more fully engaged at work so you don't have to work as much. We've found that in every arena.

"It's about investing this gift of energy to get a great return. Corporations have already invested in their people, but they don't give them what they need to make a full impact on the bottom line. So, there's cancer growing all over organizations and it's costing them hundreds of millions of dollars, and no one sees it. It won't fully come until I can get enough research data, in concrete terms like we do with athletes, to show organizations that *this* leads to *that*. We have the data on disengagement and the cost, though most companies deny it at first—until you do the surveys. We plan to take

groups through, with a control group, and track their productivity. There's a big banking firm mobilizing to do this on a massive scale. And we've had companies like Merrill Lynch coming through the programs. The data will come from those companies, so it will be objective. They'll want to know if their investment paid off."

Merrill Lynch's Rob Knapp, first vice president and managing director, Indiana Complex, Indianapolis, has been taking groups to Orlando for the program every year since 1997. "We've taken large groups of 40 of our financial advisors and best producers, as well as smaller groups matched up with their clients. When we include our clients, they begin to see us differently—more interested in them as people and their lives and not just their business.

"Sometimes [the rituals] are hard to manage, but there's no question that the program is a great team-building tool. It makes the team perform at peak and feel part of the organization. I use [the principles] to carry back to my corporate athletes. It helps me be a better executive and helps my executives perform better. And the attention to health is a great dividend."

"Once corporations get it," says Loehr, "they'll get more ignition and productivity from people. We have only so much capacity. When demand exceeds energy, it's like when you're overdrawn at the bank; bad things happen. Energy is currency, and stress—energy investment—is the stimulus for growth. And recovery is when growth actually happens. It's like working out with weights. You lift one day and rest the next. The resting day is when your muscles recover, and grow."

I left with some personal rituals having to do with nutrition and recovery breaks, have been moderately successful sustaining them, and am still inspired to do better. And I'm perhaps adding to the community of the fully engaged by sharing the ideas with my son, a trader, who because of the fast pace of his business often doesn't leave his phone all day and says all he does is multitask.

I leave you with Osorio's parting words: "We want to create a full-engagement community of people who are committed to being fully engaged for life. What does it mean to be physically energized, emotionally connected, mentally focused, and spiritually alive? Aren't those worthy goals?" TD

Haidee E. Allerton is editor of T+D; hallerton@astd.org.