

Discover: Coaching!



Listening to Your Life

by Tony Stoltzfus

Afraid that if you get off the treadmill that your ministry will suffer? Actually, slowing down to lead a quality life can actually enhance your productivity. One recent study found that church planters who set aside adequate time for family grew their churches to several times the size of those who spent minimal time with their wife and kids. You don't need to sacrifice a great family life for ministry—in fact, taking good care of your family is taking good care of your ministry.

While working a long week every so often can be productive, over the long haul it may not be producing the results you think. Researchers compared individuals who worked a normal, 40 hour work week with those who worked 10 hours a week of overtime to see which group would accomplish the most. Surprisingly, they found that those who worked seven 50 hour weeks in a row *didn't accomplish any more than those who worked 40 hour weeks* over the same period. In other words, there comes a point where putting in more time no longer makes any difference at all. Finding your personal limits and living within them is the path to a productive life that really works.

So how do you know if you are pushing beyond your sustainable limits? Start listening to your life! Here's a quick self-evaluation to help you do it. Check the items that apply to you:

Listen to Others

- What are the people around you saying? Do people expect you to be too busy to take on anything else on? Are they always commenting, "I know you are really busy..."
- What do your kids really think of your job? Do they feel like you're working all the time?
- What is your spouse saying? (If you already know what he or she would say but you've stopped listening, that's a real danger sign.)

Listen to Your Body

- Are you getting enough sleep to wake up refreshed? Or do cares and worries keep you up at night?
- Is it tough to motivate yourself to keep working in the afternoon? Is every day a grind?
- Do you have to drag yourself out of bed to get started on the first day of the week?
- Are you finding it hard to maintain basic disciplines? For instance, are you shorter with people than you used to be, or is it harder and harder to find the energy to exercise or eat right?
- Do you need to escape? Do you find yourself spending lots of time (especially late at night) surfing the internet, watching movies or with computer games or TV? (When we don't allow ourselves enough down-time, we end up taking it anyway, just in unhealthy ways.)

Listen to Your Heart

- Do you often find yourself saying or thinking that you just need to survive the next few weeks or months "until things ease up?"

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- Do you sometimes have strong feelings of just wanting out of your current life? Do you resent the demands on you?
- Do you have a life outside of work? If your job ended tomorrow, what would be left in your life?
- How many days in the last week did you really laugh out loud? How many days in the last week were “good days”?

Listen to Your Date Book

- When was the last time you regularly took a day off every week, and did no work at all?
- When was the last time you got together with a good friend for an afternoon or evening just to have fun?
- If you decided take a whole afternoon off, how far ahead would you have to look in your date book before you could find a time where you could do it without rescheduling something else? Do you like your answer?

Listen to Your Legacy

- Leaders tend to create followers who are like them, even down to the little things. How would you evaluate your life if your one great accomplishment was that everyone in your company, ministry, or family imitated your lifestyle? (In other words, they had a schedule like yours, friendships like yours, a family life like yours, a marriage like yours, took care of their bodies like you, and had a stress level like you.) If that was your legacy, would you be contributing to the human race or harming it?

Add up your score, and see how many check marks you had (out of 16 total). If doing this little assessment is affirming, congratulations: you have a life worth replicating! On the other hand, if this exercise is painful or discouraging, you *can* begin to choose to find a way out of a stressed-out life. For too-busy people, it can seem that making a change is another huge weight to life when you hardly have the energy to sustain what you are already doing.

That’s why finding a coach is a great solution. Coaches are change experts who can help you marshal your enthusiasm, eliminate the energy drains in your life, and find the courage to start living a great life in place of a mediocre one. Don’t waste your life trying to fight your most important battles alone. Get an ally—get a coach.