

The Emptiness of Busyness

Long hours, no life, little joy and potential burn out. This is how most of us spend our lives and we feel that for the rest of our time this is what we have to look forward to. IF, we ever even stop to think about it.

I have had the privilege and blessing of coaching many worn out executives and employees that cannot break out of this cycle. For some, their self-worth is so tied up in their job/title/position or, in the worst case scenario, it is tied up in being "soooo busy" that it's exhausting just to listen to how busy they are.

Imagine if you asked someone how they are, and they didn't say "hectic" or "it's just so busy right now" or "things are crazy" but instead they said, "I'm great actually. I'm spending quality time with my family and friends, I'm feeling joy, having fun and work is great too"

Once I had a senior employee in my team who would hold her forehead in an exasperated way every time I met with her. I realized that this perpetual "busy-ness" or impression of having too much to do was such an integral part of her being that she in fact created chaos to feel like she was contributing (sound familiar?). I started off by asking her to just "stop doing the forehead holding thing" and already things seemed more manageable.

In another scenario, a senior gent ran around like a maniac after a particular launch didn't go as planned. Again, I asked him to stop, calm down and imagine the impact his behaviour was having on his team and the people around him. Creating chaos to justify your worth or to prove something does not serve anyone and actually does not earn you the respect, admiration or the desired reactions you may unconsciously be craving.

Are these the people we envy? Do we envy the executive that leaves home too early to see his/her children open their eyes and gets home when they are closed again? Or do we envy the executive who knows what is going on in his/her children's lives.

Or, do we really envy the people that love what they do even when they are really busy. They have a lightness of being and are not walking around feeling burdened by this imposed obligation to be busy. They also don't leave you feeling depleted after interacting with them. Energy vampires, we all know one!

We envy the ones that somehow wake you up and have an infectious energy that makes you want to get going!

I would guess that the admired executive or leader is one that makes their teams feel secure by being a solid human being. By being a balanced human being. Not a "human doing".

Imagine if that energy sapping behaviour (and trust me it's energy sapping for everyone around you, including your family) could be transformed into a focused energy that gets you out of bed every day feeling motivated and inspired.

You can start by admitting you have a problem. We also need to acknowledge that this behaviour can be addictive and so we need to get to the bottom of how this serves us? What are we getting out of it?

Once you have done this then you can start to make changes that will help you to live a much more fulfilling life. A life of your choosing and a life that inspires others to do the same.

Take some time, if you dare, to ask yourself whether your "busy being busy" serves some warped need to get attention (wow I don't know how she/he copes ...) OR to win the "who's busier or most stressed" competition OR to avoid something. Either way it's probably not going to end well, and it might be time to realize that your life doesn't have to be this way. The people you're trying to impress are most likely too busy to notice and the one that should matter the most (you) will wake up one day and wonder where the time has gone.