

Introduction

Does the mere thought of embarking on a program to get more energy leave you totally exhausted? Then you might want to read this lying down. “I would love to be more productive!” a reader of one of my first books lamented, “but I’m so exhausted at the end of the day, it’s all I can do to get dinner on the table, put the kids to bed, and crash in front of the television. I have no desire to work on projects around the house, much less exercise or think about organizing the garage.”

It’s a common complaint. Lack of energy is a major culprit at work as well: People sleepwalk through the day, fuzzy-headed and lethargic. Nothing sounds more attractive than putting your head down on your desk for a quick nap. How can you possibly begin that big project that requires high levels of creativity and concentration? Yuck. You’d rather stick pins in your eyes.

You might know all the productivity tips in the world, but nothing will work if you don’t have the energy to give 100 percent. Personal energy is a measure of how strong, invigorated, or up to a task you may feel at any moment. Nobody has an unlimited supply of personal energy. If you feel down, your zest ebbs and you’ll produce mediocre work. In periods of low energy, your productivity sinks, because you feel like you’re slogging through a field of waist-high mud.

My audiences and readers of my other two books, *Find More Time* and *Leave the Office Earlier*, asked me to write this book. “What are you on?” they tease. “Where in the world do you get that much energy?” I didn’t realize my trademark energy was such a key component of my productivity level. But the more I observed the habits and energy levels of productive people, the more I understood how vital your vigor is to your performance. You simply cannot perform if you have no drive or desire – the oomph – to be productive. You may find yourself daydreaming about your goals and all the wonderful things you could do if you could just get up and go; but daydreaming and actually having the energy to *do* things are completely different.

I’m going to show you how to get the energy you need to live a full and productive life. You don’t have to suffer from low energy. I don’t purport to cure any medical conditions, but with consistent applications of the tips outlined in this book, you will realize a huge boost in your energy level – whatever that is for you.

Different people have different energy levels. Some people have the energy to work all day and then run around and clean the house in the evening. Others drag themselves onto the sofa and watch television all night. While it’s true that some people have higher natural energy levels, those with lower energy can use personal energy management techniques to make up the difference. The good news is that you really can change your energy level.

This book is different from other energy books because it takes a holistic, comprehensive approach to energy, not simply a diet approach, or a stress approach, or a spiritual approach. It helps you look at all the “boosters” you need to become energetic – and to beat all the “bandits” that conspire to rob you of your energy every day.

Energy defined [header]

So what is “energy”? This word is kicked around quite a bit and has many loose usages, so let’s make sure we’re on the same page. Let’s start by specifying what I *don’t* mean by energy:

ENERGY IS NOT TIME. Energy is often equated with time, as in “This project will require a great deal of time and energy.” You may have the time, but lacking the energy, the project won’t succeed. You could have all the time in the world but still not feel like doing much.

ENERGY IS NOT HEALTH. For some people, feeling better might lead to more motivation. But plenty of healthy people still have incredibly low energy, thanks to factors that are sapping their strength. For example, if you don’t get a good night’s sleep, you won’t have the energy you need. And while most of us know that a calorie is defined as “a unit of energy-producing potential,” some foods can actually decrease your energy level rather than raise it. If you’re perfectly healthy but don’t eat right or get enough sleep, your energy levels will suffer.

ENERGY IS NOT EMOTION. These two words are also commonly paired, as in “She delivered the speech with energy and emotion.” Which part was the energy and which was the emotion? You can definitely have one without the other. Some very energetic people don’t show much emotion. And some very emotional people don’t have the energy to get off the couch. They *feel* things to an extreme but don’t accomplish as much as they’d like.

ENERGY IS NOT MOTIVATION. Some very energetic people don’t feel motivated to work very hard. Indeed, they may be motivated to sit in front of their computers playing solitaire all day.

ENERGY IS NOT PRODUCTIVITY. Are you surprised to hear me say that? You could have all the energy in the world and still not be productive, due to procrastination, lack of skills, unavailable resources, etc. (My other books, *Leave the Office Earlier* and *Find More Time*, address how to be productive.) With that said, energy is most closely tied to productivity, because one doesn’t easily co-exist without the other. If you have energy, you at least have the *ability* to be productive.

So...what IS energy?

ENERGY IS CAPACITY. Physics teaches us that energy is the capacity of a physical system to do work – to carry on the activities that it was designed to accomplish. The human body is a physical system, and we all must work, whether in an office or home. Every physical system possesses a certain amount of energy; its presence – or absence – allows us to predict how much work the system has the capacity to do. Your capacity to work is your potential ability to work or perform. So for purposes of this book:

*Energy gives you the ability to work. Your **energy level** measures your capacity to put forth productive effort. As your energy levels increase, so does the potential of accomplishing your short- and long-term goals and activities.*

This capacity could be very high or very low – and of course having the capacity doesn't necessarily mean you will *do* anything. But if you have energy, you at least possess the raw materials to accomplish what you want or need to accomplish; or, as Rudyard Kipling put it, "Enough work to do, and strength enough to do the work." It's when your energy is highest that you're most aroused and capable of sustaining your activity. Think of yourself as a factory. Do you have the energy to operate at 100 percent of capacity? Only 80 percent? What if you were able to acquire more raw materials? Would your "factory" be able to produce more?

Your capacity, energy, and productivity aren't cast in stone; they can and do change. In fact, your capacity to be productive rises and falls throughout the day, and often by the hour or even by the minute, depending upon changes in your energy level. The presence or absence of energy will definitely have an impact on what you're capable of achieving. That's why this book will often talk about energy and productivity together. But it's important to remember that they're two separate things – that energy is the source of productivity. As you increase your energy level, you'll be able to accomplish more at work or home.

Your sources of energy

When you begin to explore the causes of your lack of energy, it may be helpful to think of a bank account. Some of our activities or actions are like deposits that give us more energy; but others are like withdrawals that drain our energy. I call the deposits Energy Boosters and the drains Energy Bandits. You would like more deposits in your bank account than withdrawals; in fact, you'd like your balance to be as high as possible.

What gives you energy and what saps your energy? Let's start by brainstorming a master list, in no particular order, and with no particular focus. I'll provide some examples from my own life:

Energy Deposits: BOOSTERS
Kisses from my children
A long, hot bath at the end of the day
Sunshine
Walking my dog
Yoga
Talking with my best friend
Sudoku puzzles
Peppermint tea
Spas! Visiting any spa!
Massage

Energy Drains: BANDITS
Arguing with my children
No "me" activities
Cloudy, dreary weather
Working late into the evening
No food in the refrigerator
Being overwhelmed or disorganized
My dog has an accident on the floor
A dirty house
Feeling lonely
Too much travel
Not spending enough time with my husband

It's time for you to brainstorm your boosters and bandits. At this point, don't worry about assigning values to these factors. Simply let your mind explore every aspect of your life, from the everyday to the exceptional. What gives you energy and what saps your energy? Feel free to continue this list on a piece of paper or create a master document in a word processing or spreadsheet program.

Energy Deposits: BOOSTERS

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Energy Drains: BANDITS

Energy in/energy out

Since you haven't weighted these factors and are often comparing minor to major things, this list can't really tell you whether your bank account has a balance – or is overdrawn. But it can get you thinking about the values you'll assign to these factors later on. Remember: Your ultimate goal is to have more deposits than drains overall. Do you feel like you have more energy coming in or going out in your life? Since you purchased this book, I'm guessing that your energy account is depleted – and you're in the red.

How is this affecting your productivity? Have you had the capacity to get things done lately? Is your performance suffering? Are you working to your highest ability? Consider how it would look if you were fully energized and your energy account were full. Would it take you less time to complete tasks? Would you accomplish more? Would you feel like starting new projects? Once your energy account is in the black, you will have a higher capacity to be productive.

Organization of the book

Many of the energy books I've read make it too complicated for a person to learn how to boost their energy levels by distinguishing the type of energy: physical, mental, intellectual, spiritual, etc. I don't separate energy in this sense, since it's all so closely related. For example, if I'm sleepy (physical), I won't be able to concentrate (intellectual), and I probably shouldn't be getting into heated conversations with my spouse (emotional). If you've ever dragged home exhausted from a marathon work day, only to be instantly revived by your pet's wagging tail, a hug from your child, or a kiss from your spouse, you know being energized goes far beyond what you had for lunch. Instead, I take a broader approach to energy and focus on the *source* of low energy in three main sections:

1. **Physiology** – How your *body* affects your energy – the impact of your health, nutrition, and self-care on how well you feel.

2. **Practices** – How your *behavior* affects your energy – your daily habits surrounding your schedule, choices, and actions.
3. **Periphery** – How your *background* affects your energy – the impact of your environment and external factors, both in and out of your control.

Each section has seven chapters, for a total of twenty-one chapters, each describing one energy factor. Each factor has bandits and boosters. Your mission (should you choose to accept it) is to minimize the Bandits and maximize the Boosters for each factor. For every Bandit, I've give you more than one Booster to consider.

The quiz

You'll start by taking the Energy Quotient (EQ) Assessment immediately following this introduction, which outlines the 21 energy factors you'll be addressing. You'll rate the extent to which each factor exists in your life. If a factor plays a major role in your life, it's probably an energy booster, and you'll score higher. If the factor is absent, however, its absence becomes an actual drain on your energy – a bandit – which will lower your score. You'll assess all 21 factors on a scale of one to five, resulting in a cumulative score based on 105 points. A higher score means a higher energy level. You will quickly see which factors are bandits, robbing you of your energy, and which are boosters. Then your task will be clear: to emphasize energy boosters and, wherever possible, to turn bandits into boosters.

The program

You can approach the book in one of three ways:

1. **Take a “read what you need” approach.** Use the quiz to identify areas where you need an energy boost and simply turn straight to those sections for concrete suggestions for myriad ways to up your energy in the areas it's being drained.
2. **Take a weekly approach.** Each week, focus on one of the three main areas of energy drain: Physiology, Practices, and Periphery. You'll commit to reading a section of the book over the period of a week. You'll make a variety of changes that work for you and commit to working on them until they become habits. Challenge yourself to raise your EQ by a particular number of points, for example 10-50%. You can mix and match tips from all of the chapters in that area to get to the right number of points that week. For example, let's say you rated yourself pretty high in the physiology chapters, but your nutrition and sleep scores were low. It would be your job to pick out the boosters that will help you get your physiology score up to your goal by working on nutrition and sleep boosters for as long as you need. Then you'll tackle the next section, reading for a week, and then taking as long as you

need to make the tips that worked become habits. You don't even have to read for three weeks straight. Start a weeklong program as soon as you feel you have the ideas from the previous section under control.

3. **Take a daily approach.** This approach is the most involved. You'll read one chapter each day for 21 days, focusing on a single energy factor. That's it. One. Then you'll add one strategy each day for 21 days. Each day, you'll read the next chapter, which gives a detailed description of a new energy factor and possible tools for change. You will incorporate one new energy behavior or take one action each day, either reducing a Bandit in your life or adding a Booster. This single step will increase the balance in your Energy Account. You may make minimal changes on days where you've already incorporated the advice into your life. Some days, however, will require you to reflect on how you might make a more dramatic change in your habits.

You might even want to create a daily chart, writing out your thoughts on your Bandits, Boosters, Goals, Action Step, and an Anchor to help you remember your strategy. A sample chart follows, to give you an idea of what a completed one could look like.

BANDITS: My energy drains in this area	
BOOSTERS: My energy deposits in this area	
My energy goal in this area (reduce the bandit or increase the booster)	
My energy action step for today	
My energy anchor for today (draw a picture)	

Whatever method you choose, you will become more energetic through changes that individually seem simple but cumulatively make a big difference. By using the Boosters in this book, you'll overhaul your energy in a way that fits your lifestyle and preferences, a surefire formula to be at your productive best. Stick with it, and over time, this really *could* cure your energy problems. No time of year is better than another. The ideal time to start is right now.