

Dr. Jim Loehr, co-founder of the Human Performance Institute and author of “The Power of Full Engagement”, has dedicated his professional life to improving the performance of elite athletes and executives. When Loehr started working with elite athletes, he couldn’t understand the performance gap between his low-ranked athletes and his high-ranked athletes. Both athletes had incredible talent and work ethic.

Then, one day, he noticed his high-performing tennis players doing something strange. Between points the high-performing players seemed to zone out. In the middle of a match, they appeared to be completely relaxed and in a Zen-like state.

Days later he had his tennis players wear heart rate monitors and observed their heart rates during a tennis match. During the match the high-ranking, high-performing tennis players frequently engaged in short rituals of recovery and relaxed their heart rates by as much as 20 beats per minute between points. The low-ranking, low-performing tennis players had no rituals of recovery and maintained an elevated heart rate throughout the match. In the last half of these tennis matches, these low-ranked tennis players made errors that ultimately cost them the match.

Loehr found that high-performing athletes can consistently perform at a high level because they’ve developed the habit of going through rapid cycles of intense focus and relaxation.

“The richest, happiest and most productive lives are characterized by the ability to fully engage in the challenge at hand, but also to disengage periodically and seek renewal.” – Jim Loehr & Tony Schwartz

“Sadly, the need for recovery is often viewed as evidence of weakness rather than as an integral aspect of sustained performance. The result is that we give almost no attention to renewing and expanding our energy reserves, individually or organizationally.” – Jim Loehr & Tony Schwartz

“We must learn to establish stopping points in our days, inviolable times when we step off the track, cease processing information and shift our attention from achievement to restoration. Moore-Ede calls this a ‘time cocoon.’” – Jim Loehr & Tony Schwartz

The key is to build a set of rapid recovery rituals into your day to restore your energy sources. You can execute the rituals in two scenarios:

1. After 90 minutes of continuous focus on a task.
2. Any time you start to feel slightly irritable.

The four energy sources you need to restore are physical energy, emotional energy, mental energy, and spiritual energy. To help you build your rapid recovery rituals, here is a list of rapid recovery rituals I practice every day to spark your thinking.



To quickly restore my physical energy, I walk up a flight of stairs, go for a jog around the block, or do a set of push-ups. I do these exercises just long enough to intensify my breathing, but not enough to break a sweat and require a change of clothes. By doing these brief exercises, I oxygenate my cells and rejuvenate my brain. Then I drink cold glass of water. Drinking water has a profound impact on your physical energy because your brain and heart are made of almost 75% water.



To quickly restore my emotional energy, I text someone I enjoy spending time with to make plans for that evening (ex: going out for dinner with my wife). Planning events with others creates a sense of anticipation and excitement I can carry into my work session. Another emotional boost is to give praise to others around me. **“Gallup found that the key drivers of productivity for employees include whether they feel cared for by a supervisor or someone at work; whether they have received recognition or praise during the past seven days; and whether someone at work regularly encourages their development.” – Jim Loehr & Tony Schwartz**



To quickly restore my mental energy, I go for a walk, listen to music, let go of what I was working on, and let my mind wander. By letting my mind wander, I let ideas related to my work incubate in my sub-conscious. When I return to work 10-15 minutes later, I have a burst of creative energy. **“The highest form of creativity depends on a rhythmic movement between engagement and disengagement, thinking and letting go, activity and rest. Both sides of the equation are necessary, but neither is sufficient by itself.” – Jim Loehr & Tony Schwartz**



To quickly restore my spiritual energy, I take out a piece of paper and write down answers to the questions: ‘How I want to be remembered?’ and ‘Who I want to help?’. Spiritual energy comes from thinking of things bigger than yourself. The greatest spiritual energy gains come from tapping into a sense of purpose. To tap into a sense of purpose: **“We needed to stop asking about the meaning of life, and instead to think of ourselves as those who were being questioned by life—hourly and daily. Our answer must consist not in talk and meditation, but in right action and in right conduct.” – Jim Loehr & Tony Schwartz**

Take a few minutes to write out your own rapid recovery rituals. Include physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual recovery components.

“Physical capacity is defined by quantity of energy. Emotional capacity is defined by quality of energy. Mental capacity is defined by focus of energy. Spiritual capacity is defined by force of energy.” – Jim Loehr & Tony Schwartz