

#1 Bring Your Best to Your Work and Life

Thread 1: The Leadership Edge in Building Community

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Message

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The Leadership Edge in Building Community

by Linda Prout, MS, Nutritionist,
Author of [Live in the Balance](#)

Visit Linda's website... [Lifeshift](#)

In The Drucker Foundation's book, [Leader of the Future](#), over 30 leaders of well-known organizations were called upon to write about qualoundities of leaders of the future. One of the recurring themes is that effective leaders will build community spirit. To be effective at inspiring others and building community in an organization or family, one needs mental clarity, energy and emotional stability. Fatigue, cloudy thinking as well as anger or excessive irritability undermine feelings of connectedness. Effective leadership requires a sense of internal balance. Research in brain chemistry reveals that food can enhance or erode our sense of balance, our energy levels and mood.

Here are a couple stories that may sound familiar to you...

As a therapist, Leslie knew she was more irritable and prone to outbursts of temper than was "normal." Her visits to me focused on improving her digestion, yet after about a month on an eating plan designed to soothe her inflamed intestines, Leslie found her moods also changed. She lost her harsh edge and found herself more relaxed and cheerful around her

clients and children.

Anna, a 52-year-old university social studies professor, came to me to lose weight. After reducing refined junk foods, increasing vegetables and protein, plus adding exercise, Anna lost her excess weight. She also claimed her energy and mental clarity made a quantum leap. "I'm quicker to answer my students' questions. I am remembering tiny details of conversations, lectures and articles plus, I can read with a clarity and retention I haven't had since my 20's," Anna told me one day. With newfound mental prowess and confidence at a size 12, Anna left her tenured position at a state university to take a teaching job in smaller college where she is able to participate more in the student activities she loves along with in volunteering in the community. "These were things I always want to do but lacked the energy and will to roll up my sleeves and participate," Anna told me.

Two states of mind interfere with effective leadership and our ability to connect with those around us. One is the feeling of anger or irritability. People don't like to do business with angry, irritable people. They don't like to live with them or work with them. Unfortunately, high stress jobs often push us to outbursts of anger and bring out irritability. Certain foods can soothe anger, while others can exacerbate it.

A second obstacle to leadership is a dearth of energy along with the depression and mental fog that sometimes come with it. Here again, food can boost energy levels, mood, morale, and even restore memory and the ability to learn.

Anna and Leslie discovered a renewed sense of spirit, energy and connectedness by choosing to eat more freshly made whole foods including hot soups, stir fries and other vegetable-rich meals, and less convenience, packaged items. Both began taking more time for meals, often joining associates, friends or family members. At first, they resisted the idea of taking the extra time. But both discovered that by joining others at mealtime, it helped speed their progress toward better health plus helped them build critical bonds with those in their personal and business communities.

Soothing Anger Through Food Choices

Many women become irritable just before menstruation when progesterone levels peak. Premenstrual syndrome may also include depression or emotional swings. Men and non-menstruating women can also see emotional swings, often from stress compounded by poor diet. Emotional extremes reflect liver health. The liver helps break down and eliminate toxins and excess hormones. High levels of hormones or toxins overburdening the liver can leave us biochemically prone to attitude and mood problems. Treating the liver through diet and herbs often eliminates emotional symptoms of anger and depression brought on by stress or PMS. Foods particularly helpful in soothing the liver and reducing a tendency toward anger include soy products, green leafy vegetables and sour fruits. Soy products, including tofu, tempeh, Miso soup or soy milk are not only soothing for one who is irritated, they provide essential oils that help regulate blood sugar and thus energy levels. They also help normalize hormone levels, reducing cancer risk. Bitter green vegetables, including broccoli, romaine lettuce and dandelion greens, are particularly soothing for a liver imbalance. In addition, lemon juice, grapefruit and vinegar can also help clear the liver of toxins.

Certain foods, especially alcohol, aggravate the liver and thus exacerbate anger and depression. Alcohol, like hormones, is processed through the liver. Having more than one drink at a time places a burden on the liver and its ability to clear toxins.

"Bad" fats are also processed by the liver. Fried foods such as French fries, fried chicken, chips, donuts, egg rolls and other foods cooked in hot oils contribute to liver problems and corresponding symptoms of anger or moodiness. Rancid oils and partially hydrogenated vegetable oils particularly tax the liver. Hydrogenated vegetable oils, including shortenings, most margarine and many commercially baked foods, are now thought to be worse than saturated fat (butter and lard) for the body. That's right, you're better off smearing butter on your toast than margarine. Hydrogenated fats or oils are found in everything from salad dressings, peanut butter and mayonnaise to crackers and cookies. Harvard school of Public Health researcher Dr. Walter Willet estimates 30,000 premature deaths each year are attributed to these hydrogenated fats, including margarine. Eliminating hydrogenated vegetable oils from your diet may not only improve your mood, it may save you from early heart disease.

Foods Beneficial for Reducing Anger and Restoring Calm:

- Tofu, tempeh, Miso soup, soy milk and other sources of soy.
- Bitter foods: dandelion greens, arugula, broccoli, watercress, rye, romaine lettuce.
- Sour foods: lemon juice, grapefruit.
- All lightly cooked vegetables especially bean sprouts, celery, lettuce, cucumber, radish.

Good herbs for cleansing the liver:

- chamomile tea
- dandelion root and leaf
- milk thistle
- turmeric

Foods that aggravate anger, impatience and irritability:

- excess red meat
- greasy and fried foods
- alcohol
- margarine and other hydrogenated fats

Eroding Community With Sugar

Refined sugar-rich treats such as cookies and candy, are another additive that can undermine leaders and community. Sugar can exacerbate an angry disposition, plus rob you of energy and interfere with short-term memory. Research at Texas A & M

University show when sweets are cut from the diet, moods such as depression improve and energy levels go up. Studies also show a sugary snack, such as soft drinks, cookies, cake or candy, causes adrenaline levels to rise and blood sugar levels to plummet. With blood sugar levels low, one's energy, recall and ability to think rationally drops. The rise in adrenaline leaves a feeling of aggression: a formula for mistakes, foul moods and even crime.

Annemarie Colbin, in her book Food and Healing, points out that cultures with more refined sugars in their diets are more individualistic than socially oriented. She says eating excess refined white sugar leads us to feel "excessively individualistic," to the point of "alienation and criminality." My clients often tell me they need to nap or just be alone when they've eating too much sugar. They report new energy to take on projects and play a more active role in their community and families' lives when they get the sugar out of their diet. Eliminating sugar can also help ease PMS, including irritability, depression and mood swings. To calm your mood and increase the energy necessary to lead and build community, reduce your intake of alcohol and refined sugars. Replace "Frosted Mini-Wheats®", jam, Pop Tarts®, sweet rolls, donuts and other sugary foods at breakfast with protein-rich eggs, lox

on toast, lean chicken sausage or oatmeal with skim milk and nuts. To ward off afternoon sugar cravings, have a large lunch rich with fish, chicken, beans or tofu and vegetables. Choose fruits for dessert or snacks.

Foods To Boost Energy and Calm Your Leadership Spirit

- Cooked leafy greens: broccoli, spinach, kale, chard, collards, mustard greens, asparagus
- Fish
- Chicken
- Eggs
- Beans
- Soy Products

A diet rich in vegetables, beans, tofu, fish, poultry and lean meats with moderate amounts of whole grains, is generally the ideal diet for lifting energy as well as calming the spirit and reducing anger and agitation. Savoring such meals with friends, associates and family members not only builds health, it builds bonds that build community.

Thread 2: The PERFORMANCE LUNCH

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Message

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The PERFORMANCE LUNCH!

by Linda Prout, MS, Nutritionist,
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Learn more... [Lifeshift](#)

If you're like most people, your mental and physical performance drops after lunch. Your energy wanes. Your concentration dips. Mistakes and miscommunication become more likely. There is a strong link between what you eat for lunch or your mid-day meal and afternoon mood and fatigue. This can impact your performance---and ultimately the results you achieve.

If you take look around the world, there are examples of how our cultures approach lunch or the midday meal differently. People in many nations and cultures surrender to the post-meal "coma-like" state it often brings. They take a nap. In Italy, they indulge in pasta at mid-day only to succumb to an afternoon respite. The rice, beans and tortillas eaten in Latin

American countries appears to induce siestas. In the US, we're big on deli sandwiches, "low fat" pastas, and French fries that leave you feeling sluggish and ready for a nap. In contrast, the Japanese generally have fish at lunch. Interestingly, naps are uncommon in Japan.

If you observe the workplace or any leadership front, its easy to find great leaders that appear to be able to push through this physiologic low. You've known them-the ones that seem immune to the "after lunch" slump, staying energized and productive in the afternoons.

Being a leader of your work team, your organization or company, your family, your soccer team, or your Girl Scout troop, requires the same clarity of mind, patience and energy in the afternoon as it does in the morning. The exciting news is that the right lunch can keep you alert, better focused and energized right through the afternoon.

Protein foods, like chicken, fish, shellfish, beef and eggs, stimulate brain chemicals called catecholamines that rev you up. They give you drive, energy and mental clarity. Excess starch, on the other hand, including pasta, bread, rice and potatoes, stimulate sedative-like brain chemicals. Eating a pasta-rich meal, a large sandwich roll or a rice and bean-stuffed burrito, can leave you in a "food coma", a dazed and sleepy state. Not only will you lack the drive and energy to lead, but you probably won't be able to follow either. Save the pasta, potatoes and bread for the evening meal.

The following goals and meal suggestions are designed to stimulate catecholamines, the get-up-and-go brain chemicals needed for leadership.

Goals and Suggestions for a Performance Lunch

Goals for a Performance Lunch:

Make lunch 50% of your day's food intake

Focus on a protein source (i.e., seafood, chicken, lean meat, tofu, soy, beans, peas, lentils)

Include vegetables, especially cooked greens (spinach, broccoli, chard, asparagus)

Limit bread, pasta, rice, or other starch to a small serving

Avoid excess fat (cheese, butter, margarine, fried foods, creamy sauces and dressings, sour cream)

Avoid sugar, fruit juice, sodas and alcohol

Meal Suggestions for Eating Lunch Out or at the Company Cafeteria:

Type

Food

Deli:

Soups (Manhattan chowder, fish-vegetable chicken-rice, vegetable-beef, split pea, bean plus additional cooked vegetable and/or sliced lunch meat)

Chicken slices, grilled vegetables, small roll or slice whole grain bread

Roast chicken, sautéed spinach or broccoli, dolmas

Chicken salad, vegetable salad

Sliced turkey or chicken, three-bean salad, marinated artichoke hearts

Open-faced chicken sandwich and vegetable soup

Asian:

Stir-fry chicken-broccoli in oyster sauce

Hunan fish with bok choy

Spicy green beans with prawns

Garlic stir-fried spinach and tofu

Sushi, Japanese spinach salad, miso soup

Seafood-vegetable soup

Teriyaki salmon or chicken, cooked greens

California:

Grilled chicken, sautéed spinach, small serving rice

Chinese chicken salad

Salad Nicoise

Steamed mussels or clams, sautéed broccoli

Poached or grilled salmon or other fish, steamed or sautéed greens

Flank steak or London broil, steamed broccoli, squash and carrots, small salad

Mexican:

Chicken or fish soft tacos, mixed vegetables

Shrimp or chicken fajitas with black beans

Grilled fish with salsa, mixed sautéed vegetables, whole beans

Black bean soup, sautéed mixed vegetables, soft corn tortilla

Meal Suggestions for On The Run or Brown Bag Lunch

Jack-in the-Box Teriyaki Chicken Bowl

Sliced chicken or turkey, artichoke hearts, three-bean salad, carrots

Smoked salmon or trout, whole rye crackers, carrots, cucumbers

Smoked turkey, slice bread or crackers, asparagus, sunflower seeds

Leftover barbecued chicken, broccoli with rice vinegar and soy sauce

Hot roast chicken from grocery store, artichoke hearts, dolmas

Leftover stir-fry vegetables with chicken, small serving rice

Leftover sautéed vegetables, flank steak

Hard-boiled egg, vegetable-rice salad, pumpkin or sunflower seeds

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Thread 3: Boosting Energy, Reducing Anxiety

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Message

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Boosting Energy, Reducing Anxiety

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Visit Linda's website... [Lifeshift](#)

Time. There never seems to be enough for any of us. I hear it from my clients daily. "I have no time to eat right... to exercise... to finish my work... to spend time with my family... or to relax," they tell me. As a leader of your organization, your team, your work unit or your family, your time must be effectively spent.

Rising above the barriers of time happens when...

we can think clearly
we have patience with others
we make meaningful progress toward achieving our goals
we make effective decisions.

Strengthening these attributes of leadership can save tremendous amounts of busy work. They can also leave immeasurable rewards. One well-made strategic decision can lift your business or project to a new level while cutting through hours of "efforting."

One of the most powerful tools for long term effective leadership is a fit and balanced body. Fitness and balance give you mental clarity and energy. They provide relief from anxiety. Below are some tips that

can work for you in helping you become truly fit for leadership. A little practice and you'll learn how a small investment in yourself can boost energy and balance that will bring greater returns in your work and life, along with increasing ability to enjoy them.

Ten Tips for Boosting Energy and Relieving Anxiety

1. Exercise aerobically daily. Walk, jog, swim, bike, hike, or dance. Exercise boosts self-esteem, recall and reaction time, all important skills for effective leadership.
2. Eat your greens. Choose 1/2 cup to 1 cup lightly cooked asparagus, broccoli, kale, collard greens, mustard greens, spinach, chard, bok choy, Chinese broccoli, beet greens... Leafy greens provide nutrients such as magnesium and folic acid which keep hormones, brain chemicals, and moods, balanced and energy levels high.
3. Reduce refined sugar and caffeine. Studies show both are linked with tension, depression and fatigue. How effectively can you lead when you're tense and fatigued? Refined sugars are found in soft drinks, fruit juice, candy, cookies, ice cream, frozen yogurt, fruit flavored yogurts, puddings, fat-free baked goods, muffins, scones, pancakes, syrups, most breakfast cereals and pastries.
4. Replace "bad" fats (margarine, partially hydrogenated vegetable oils, fried food, chips, greasy foods, French fries, egg rolls) with good fats (i.e., foods like, deep-water fish, seeds, oats, cold-pressed oils). "Bad" fats interfere with our liver's ability to clear toxins, cholesterol and excess hormones from the body. In Chinese

medicine, when the liver is imbalanced, anger and impatience can result.

5. Avoid excess bread, bagels, pasta, spaghetti, crackers and other refined grain products. They can lead to fatigue and a feeling of heaviness. A plate full of spaghetti is great for the last leg of a marathon but not for the quick decision-making abilities of a leader.

6. Include protein twice a day: Choose from fresh fish, shellfish, eggs, poultry, lean beef, lamb or pork, tofu, tempeh, beans, lentils or other legumes. Protein foods stimulate alertness.

7. For afternoon energy, eat a low-carbohydrate (less bread and pasta), high-protein lunch with a generous serving of cooked vegetables. Avoid pasta, thick sandwich rolls, burritos and pizza. These can make you tired in the afternoon.

8. Include a broad spectrum multiple vitamin and mineral supplement with at least 10 milligrams of B vitamins, 500-1000 mg of vitamin C, 400 - 500 mg. magnesium, 200 micrograms chromium. These nutrients in these amounts boost immunity, stabilize blood sugar and moods and maintain optimum brain chemical production for alertness and mental balance. Supplements that may be helpful for fatigue and anxiety are Siberian ginseng, kava kava and niacinamide. Supplements that may be helpful for memory and mental function: phosphatidyl serine or choline, acetyl-L-carnitine, ginkgo biloba. Be sure to check with your doctor to choose which vitamins, minerals, and supplements are best for you.

9. Cultivate a 15 to 30 minute "awareness practice" daily. Choose from meditation, yoga, a quiet walk in nature, biofeedback, deep breathing or other "non-productive" activity. Time out can restore your creativity and energy.

10. Discover the activities, work and people that best enable you to feel joy.

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