

**A Mindset**

When do you say when?

There is a reason that employers offer vacation time. There is a reason why athletes train in cycles which include recovery time. Our bodies do not have infinite energy or sustaining power. When our bodies are overworked – or our minds are overworked – we either give them a break or they will force us to take one. Everyone has different thresholds which are dependent both on genetics as well as learned and conditioned behaviors. When our minds (mental or emotional components) have become overloaded, we suffer from a multitude of symptoms we usually call “stress”. When our bodies have been overworked, they break down. Our immune system weakens and we are more susceptible to illnesses. We also become more prone to injuries.

So, how do you know when it is time to take a break? There are both mental/emotional elements as well as physical components to consider.

Answer these questions on a scale of 1-5 with 1 being extremely good and 5 being very poor. Here are a set of questions to consider:

1. How well are you sleeping?
2. How good is your tolerance for problems, issues or confrontations that arise compared to normal?
3. How optimistic are you about things?
4. How well can you focus on things that need to get done in your life?
5. How well are you coping with disappointment, loss?
6. How vigorous and energetic do you feel?
7. How confident or doubtful are you about reaching your goals?
8. How achey or sore do you feel?
9. How tight are your muscles feeling?
10. How accident prone are you?
11. How well are you recovering from an injury?

You are looking for a change in your physical and mental condition. You need to discern your normal disposition with a change. If you feel disappointment about not getting a promotion at work, it is understandable. If you are normally intolerable of problems, issues or confrontation – it is not necessarily an issue of over-doing things. It may be your nature.

Answering these questions with candid insight will lead you to

**FYI**

The World Health Organization estimates that 90% of ALL illnesses and diseases are either caused by or exacerbated by stress.

A recent survey by the AMA estimated that 80% of all illnesses are caused by stress.

Stress depletes our immune system allowing us to get sick. It can also effect our equilibrium and coordination and lead to injuries and accidents.

With stress and work-life balance, it has never been more true - take care of yourself, no one else will.

answer the question – is it time to back-off? Some of the items are objective. The scale is subjective. But, that in and of itself is telling. Subjectivity means from your perspective. At what point do you need to consider time off? If you have a deviation of 2 points or more (i.e. from a score of 2 to a score of 4) in three to four categories you may need some time off.

What happens if you don't listen to your body (and mind)? Breakdown is inevitable. That breakdown can be emotionally or physically. When we don't listen to our bodies, it will scream louder for attention. Will power will only take you so far. And then not even will power can sustain you.

So, how much time off is enough?

Vacation is defined as a period of time devoted to pleasure, rest or relaxation. Work is physical or mental effort directed towards the production or accomplishment of something. Breaks need to be built into every facet of life. We know that attention spans last between 3-7 minutes before straying. The typical work day is eight hours. There are typically two “weekend” days per week not worked. Employers most often allow for at least two weeks vacation per year.

Everyone is unique. Everyone has unique needs. However, generally, people who do not adhere to these breaks and work through them consistently will often encounter both physical and mental stress which may lead to illness or physical or mental breakdowns.

An interesting national survey indicated that only 30% of “sick-time” was actually because the person was sick. Most often it was what we would call a “mental health” day. What does that tell you about the need for time off? As an employer or boss, you should be aware of this and be proactive.

The bottom line is that you need to pay attention to how you are feeling. For short periods of time you can push through. Over time, pushing through may mean a prolonged forced rest period.

If you need help with work-life balance, or learning coping techniques for stress, a life coach can help get you there. This is just one of the issues Mindset for Performance helps find solutions for.