

# Your Health

Never sacrifice it.



by Robert  
Rosen and  
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IN THE CLASSIC O. HENRY STORY *The Gift of the Magi*, the wife has beautiful long hair, the husband a treasured pocket watch. She cuts and sells her hair to buy him a watch chain. He sells his watch to buy her a hair comb.

Many people make a similarly well-intentioned, but ultimately futile sacrifice. They mistakenly believe that by compromising their health, they can promote the health of the business. They routinely overextend themselves and disregard their own essential needs, all in the name of devotion to their jobs.

In his study, Dr. James Rippe at Tufts School of Medicine, found that 40 percent of *Fortune 500* executives are obese and 73 percent have a *sedentary lifestyle*, placing them at risk for diabetes, coronary disease and other life-threatening conditions. Many also have elevated cholesterol and high blood pressure. One-in-five employees worry about their boss's health.

## Human Assets

There's no business case for sacrificing your health. Even a company that views its people as *business assets* would want employees to take good care of themselves. Healthy people perform better and cost less. As the company's *most expensive human assets*, leaders should keep in peak condition. When they neglect their health, they vastly increase the odds that they can't perform at their best—or at all—at a critical time. That puts the business at risk. The best leaders view *taking care of themselves* as a *business priority*.

"Maintaining your physical health is vital," said Ed Brown, CEO of Patrón Spirits Company. "We push ourselves hard here. If we don't get enough sleep or we're not in shape, we'll get fatigued more easily and likely won't think as clearly. When you commit to keeping physically fit, it brings a rigor and a focus to everything you do. I drive race cars professionally on the side, which is

physically demanding. So I need to stay in shape. And when I'm in the race car, I have to concentrate completely on what I'm doing. It's about the only time I'm not thinking about something business related. It cleanses my mind and gives me a total break from the everyday stress of running a company. I believe it makes me a sharper CEO."

Bill Johnson, Chairman/CEO of H.J. Heinz Co., safeguards his health to give himself the *energy* and *stamina* to tackle big challenges, rebound from setbacks, and deliver great results. "I just turned 60. You don't know anybody younger at 60 than me," he said. "I mean, I can run with most guys who are in their 40s. I can also outwork most of them."

## Peak Performance Lifestyle

As you take on stressful responsibilities, you need to *develop habits* that prepare you to *deliver peak performance over time*. Here are some keys to staying healthy, while working a high-stress, demanding job:

- **Perspective.** "Put work into perspective," counsels Shelly Lazarus, Chairman of Oglivy & Mather. "When people are feeling harried, I ask, 'Is anybody going to die because of this decision?' It lightens people up and lends perspective. This is just business, so let's be smart about it. Most decisions aren't about life and death."

- **Moderation.** Common activities that are benign in moderation can sap your vitality if carried to excess. Avoid compulsive use of computers, mobile phones, and social-networking sites. If you use alcohol, be very conscious of how much you con-

sume, and why.

- **Alertness.** Pay attention to mild symptoms like heartburn, headaches, blurred vision or sluggishness.

- **Prevention.** Get regular health screenings and keep your vaccinations current. See the doctor promptly when you experience problems.

- **Energy.** Your energy isn't *inexhaustible*. It must be managed and replenished. Take responsibility for managing your exertion. Heed the signals your body sends. Maintain sufficient reserves to care for yourself as you respond to your work's ceaseless demands.

- **Exercise.** Exercise for 30 minutes at least three times a week. In consultation with your doctor, design an exercise regimen that's right for you. Then, lock it into your schedule. Consider it *essen-*

*tial maintenance* on a precious asset: your body. You can also build many forms of mild exercise into your daily activities. Stroll rather than cab to that meeting across town. Take the stairs. Get in the habit of doing mild isometric exercises and stretches while you're talking on the phone. Experiment with gentle movement practices such as Tai Chi and yoga to keep toned and flexible.

- **Diet.** Business dining is an important—and often unhealthy—part of many executives' days. Search for restaurants that offer the right atmosphere and menu items that are good for you. Try shifting some of your business conversations from the dining table to the golf course, tennis court or athletic club. Make sure healthy snacks are available in meeting rooms.

- **Weight.** Set a healthy weight goal with your doctor. If you need to drop more than five pounds, craft a realistic plan for making it happen, just as you would when pursuing any important goal. Use Smartphone apps like "Diet and Fitness Tracker" to monitor your progress. (Remember, "What gets measured gets done.") Identify healthy, personally meaningful self-rewards to celebrate important benchmarks on the way to your target weight.

- **Rest.** Insufficient or irregular sleep compromises mood, performance, and alertness, while cumulatively wearing down your body's defenses. Commit to giving your body the rest it needs.

- **Values.** Make maintaining your physical health as much a priority as fulfilling quotas and meeting deadlines. If you sacrifice your health, no one wins.

## Invest in Your Future

The *best reason* for caring for your health is that the body is a temple—a wondrous, irreplaceable gift. You need not sacrifice your health to fulfill your leadership obligations. It's your solemn duty as a person and as a leader of others to proactively safeguard your physical wellbeing.

**Watch for these danger signs:** *Out-of-control diet, trouble sleeping, sudden weight gain or loss, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, inflexibility or immobility, prolonged lethargy, frequent heartburn, chronic pain.* **Ask yourself:** What signals is my body sending? What consequences might I suffer if my health fails? Do I conscientiously safeguard the investment my business makes in me? PE

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**ACTION:** Be a healthy leader.