

RENEWING YOUR MENTAL ENERGY

Week #3 of a 4-Week Series, "The Power of Full Engagement"

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So how many people have ever had a hard or challenging time trying to change a bad habit? Anybody? Like, you ever work really, really hard at it, and yet you still slip back to the old pattern? Or you ever started out fast and furious and all "gung ho" about improving yourself and improving your life, and the next thing you know you fizzled fast and your gung ho was gone? Anybody ever had that kind of experience? **[Congregation laughs]**

I'll tell you honestly, one of the hardest things in life is changing our behavior. Achieving long-term, sustainable change in the way we behave and the way we think is much easier said than done. And so whether it's trying to change our diet -- trying to eat more salad and less carbs ... Or whether it's working out more ... Or having more balance and looking at our iPhone less ... Or having a regular meditation practice ... Or no longer dating that same guy or woman ... And then it's déjà vu all over again. Because we are creatures of habit! And when we get conditioned in certain ways of thinking, acting, believing, behaving, it's so deeply engrained it's just not easy to change and create new habits, new patterns and behaviors.

And if it wasn't already hard enough, there are six things we do that make it even harder for that change to be lasting and sustainable. And the first one is when our desire for change is fear-based. Like, when we come from a place of fear, of getting hurt, or a fear of looking bad or not looking bad ... Like, when there's a negative energy, it might get us started, but it's not a great lasting motivation. They always say success motivation is much better than fear-based motivation.

The second one is "all or nothing" thinking. Thinking I've got to have it all, or I just won't have anything. I mean, the fact is: we're all works in progress. We always don't necessarily get everything. Somebody once said, "I may not be all I can be, but I sure am more than I used to be." **[Congregation laughs]** And so it isn't "all or nothing" thinking.

And the next one is that we try to do too much all at once and get ourselves overwhelmed. You know, it's trying to eat the elephant in one big bite; it just does not work! It can be a daunting task when we overwhelm ourselves trying to change everything all at once.

Another one is we neglect important information and tools that are available to us. And so, whether it's your diet or it's your meditation practice or whatever it is you want to change -- be a better leader -- there's information we should know and study and find mentors and know things from a smart, well-researched, thought-out place. Sometimes we just want to wing it and fly by the seat of our pants and say we're going to get better at something, when there's a lot of good information that actually can help us strategize.

The next one is we tend to be impatient. Because we want it, and we want it now! Change takes time. It is a process. And a part of that process is failure. So when failure happens, it's not over ... but we sometimes want to give up.

And then the last one is we're not as committed as we think. *"Oh, I really want that! But not if I have to do that much work!"* **[Congregation laughs]** I mean, that thing ... the fact is: we can change our lives. It's not always easy, but if we want our lives to get better, we need to learn how to change.

We are in the third of our four-week series entitled, "The Power of Full Engagement." And we're looking at what it really takes to live a more effective life. What it takes to have a higher performance and a greater level of happiness, health and success. And the answer is to be fully engaged in life, and to fully engage and utilize wisely our most precious resource, which is our energy. Where we're putting and investing our energy: our mental energy; our physical energy; our emotional; and our spiritual energy.

And if you want to live more engaged lives -- if you want to live better lives -- we need to make some changes in where we invest our energy. We need to make some shifts in how we see things, how we do things, how we show up.

Three of the things that are vital if we really want lasting change to happen. The first one is: you've got to know the why. What's the reason and the purpose for your change? How is it going to improve your life, benefit your life, help you live a happier and more fulfilling experience? And it's got to be compelling to you. It's got to mean something to you.

The second thing for change is: you've got to be honest about where you are. Sometimes we are not honest with ourselves, even about the unhealthy diet choices we make. We're not always honest about how much alcohol we consume every week. Not always honest about how much effort we're really putting into our relationship. We're not always honest about how good our self-care is. Our lives are the culmination of our choices. And we have to come to a place where we realize that, where we are today is the culmination of all our choices.

And so it's important to be honest with yourself and be honest with where you are. Like, have you ever looked at a particular area of your life and wondered how it turned out that way? Or how you ended up in that situation? Have you ever looked at your life -- and like David Byrne -- you asked yourself, "*How did I get here?*"

And so, I'm in a situation right now where my physical being is really, really tight. And I'm thinking, "*Wow! How come I can't stand up straight and move and do things?*" And it was like, "*Well, because I didn't stretch for two years?*" I mean, you know what I'm saying? It's like we think, "*How did I get here? How did all this happen?*" Well, it's because of our own choices. And we've got to realize: this is where I am.

And then the third one is that you need to take new actions. You need to take new steps, make new choices, and invest your energy in new and different ways. Somebody once said, "*If you always do what you've always done, you always get what you've always gotten!*" **[Congregation laughs]**

And do you know the new actions of change really come in the form of these: habits, rituals, routines and small, incremental steps. You know they used to think philosophically that exercise: the best thing to do was stress yourself for as long as you can. Like run 10 miles or 20 miles. You know what they say the best way is now, these days? Interval training. Stress; rest. Stress; rest. It's the smaller consistent behaviors they're showing that are having the greatest impact.

Aristotle once said, "*We are what we do repeatedly.*" The Dalai Lama said, "*There isn't anything that isn't made easier through constant familiarity and training.*" Through training, we can change and transform our lives. Change is possible, but we've got to use it wisely and within the natural rhythms of life. To be more effective in life -- to be more effective in change -- we need to use our energies wiser, and be aware of the in greater ways.

You know, we can convince ourselves easily that it takes effort -- effort's the thing! You know, It's about the DOing! But it's also about the BEing. It's also about the resting. You know, a healthy and successful life is about how we renew, how we replenish, how we restore. Because that's what gives us the energy to go and do and create and attract.

The line we've been using in Scripture is from the 23rd Psalm. And let's hear it again. "*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul.*" An aspect of not wanting -- an aspect of being provided for and having a wonderful life -- is to renew, to replenish, to restore. It is a balancing of those energies that actually creates energy and sustains and increases and improves our energetic life.

Last week we looked at the importance of physical energy. Because when you think about it, your physical energy is the machine that drives everything. Your physical energy affects your mental energy, your emotional energy. It is where the life force is. And it's so important, because we don't always take

care of our bodies. It tells us in Scripture your body is the temple of the Living God. We don't always treat it like a temple. But it is! Because it is the foundation of the energy for all the things we do, create and experience ... For all the things we think and feel. So we need to take care of our body temples: to exercise; to eat well; to sleep; to drink water; and to control how we breathe.

And then the other thing was our emotional energy. You know, we can feel emotionally exhausted if we don't find ways to balance those. Because life is an emotional experience! There are a lot of sad and painful, but joyful and exhilarating ... There's a whole range of emotion. And we get spent if we don't just take care of ourselves. Like, get the emotional support we need, and nurturing. Whether it's a therapist or friend, or family members. But we also need to feel our feelings. And we also need to be vulnerable, and to share ourselves with others.

So today we're going to look at our mental energy. And I don't think I need to spend much time convincing you how the power of our thoughts and the power of our minds affect our lives. Just the titles of famous books: *Think and Grow Rich*; *The Power of Positive Thinking*; *Change Your Mind*; *Change Your Life*. We all know that our thoughts have a huge influence on the quality and experience of our lives. Whatever energy we put out into the world -- positive or negative -- tends to attract more like itself.

Studies show that salespeople who are more positive and optimistic sell 37% more; they are 37% more successful. Because negative energy can come across as down or pessimistic or not fun to be around. You know, it can lead to depression; it keeps attracting more of itself.

And I'll tell you, negativity sucks up a lot of our energy. Did you know that the brain is 2% of the weight of the body, but it takes up 25% of the amount of oxygen needed. Thinking is so powerful that it needs a lot of energy. And how you invest your thinking is how you invest your energy and your life force. Would you say you're more positive? Would you say you sometimes get negative? Because we need to be aware to invest our energy.

And the Apostle Paul put it beautifully, because he knew everybody's not always positive. Human beings have a propensity for sometimes being quite negative; whiners and complainers we can all be! But here's Paul; here's what he said: *"Do not conform to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by ..."* what? *"... the renewing of your mind."*

Because part of having these wonderful brains is that they can do great things, but sometimes our brain can be our worst enemy. We can obsess and overthink and having our minds go on and on, and not be able to shut it off. We have to learn how to use this great gift and this great tool and utilize it in the flow of energy.

So the two authors of this book say the two most important abilities of mental energy is to do two things. Number one is to be able to focus and concentrate on the things that you want to do. You ever been distracted or had a short attention span? Or not be able to concentrate? It is hard to be effective when you're doing that. So mental energy: we need to use it in a way to teach ourselves how to focus. How to concentrate on the things at hand, and not just have our minds wandering and distracted all the time.

And the second thing that we need to teach our mind and use our energy for is how to be more optimistic about life. How to be more optimistic that, "Hey! This life can get better!" Might not be working as well now, but it can get better. So optimism, hope and a belief that greater things are available to us.

Those are two powerful uses of mental energy. To focus on the things that you want to do, and to have a level of optimism that things will get better.

You ever been a little tired, and you didn't handle a conversation or a situation as graciously as you could have? Anybody? Apparently, me and three other people; thank you! [Congregation laughs] Have you ever been so cranky and stuff, you look back and think, *"God, I could have handled that much*

better! I could have said that much nicer." Because when we run out of physical energy and stuff, we tend to not react from our highest and best place.

That's why it's important to not let ourselves get as run down. Take the time for the replenishing. Because we can show up in greater and more effective ways. Be transformed by, again, the renewing of your mind! It is the constant process and truth about life.

And so, I read a book years ago. It was called *How to Think Like Da Vinci*. It actually analyzed all the key components to what it takes to be a genius: the actual qualities. They ranked them -- some of the greatest thinkers in the world -- and he was ranked the highest. Leonardi Da Vinci. The greatest genius of all time. In the book, Michael Gelb asks thousands of people this question: Where are you when your best ideas happen?

Think about that! When your best ideas happen to you, where are you? When they come to you, where are you? Here are the most common answers: in the shower; in bed, resting; walking in nature; jogging; meditating; daydreaming; sitting on a beach. Almost never -- the answer was almost never -- at work. [Congregation laughs]

When your mind is stressed and thinking, thinking, thinking, thinking all the time, the answers tend to come in the moments of rest. The moments of renewal. The moments of quietness.

I have a class and it's called "How to Use the Power of Your Mind." And do you know what the number one method is for using the power of your mind? It is to quiet your mind on a regular basis. The more you quiet your mind, the more the power of the mind can actually express and share. Do you know that Leonardi Da Vinci took regular breaks? Einstein took regular naps? Churchill talked about naps and quieting your mind? Because they knew, when you replenish it, it will do great things for you. This overwork and push, push, push yourself actually hurts and is detrimental to the effective use of our thinking and our minds and our imagination.

So the number one thing you can do for your mind is moments of meditation; quiet; taking regular naps. It's powerful! The single greatest thing.

The next greatest thing -- since we can't always take naps and meditate -- is to change your focus of what you're thinking in that moment on a regular basis. So if you're doing some work, taking a break and playing Sudoku. Or taking your break and playing Words with Friends. Doing yoga. Going for a walk in the park. Lifting weights. Talking to a friend. I mean, anything! Learning to speak Spanish or French. Doing math problems. I mean, anything that just changes the focus and the pattern of what you're doing.

And what they say is: if you do really physical work, the best thing for you to do is do some mental stuff. And if you're always doing mental stuff, do something physical. Changing the focus and use of your energy actually replenishes those other parts. And so you could knit; you could sew; you could plan your dream vacation. You could count backwards by three, starting at a hundred. You could do any little thing ... Write with your non-dominant hand. All these things are really, really good for renewing our mind.

Here's the interesting thing about the brain, besides the 2%-25% thing. It is a muscle. And like any muscle, without use it will atrophy. Like any muscle, with use it will increase its capacity. A scientist said that, no matter what your age, you can improve your brain by using it. By exercising it.

They've done studies that show people who are 64 years old who still work; 64 years -- retired but active; and 64 or more that aren't active. That over a four-year period, the lower the level of activity, the lower their score on their IQ. It has an impact!

Sometimes we think stress is the enemy; it's not. It's actually vital for growth. Physical, mental, emotional, spiritual growth requires some stress. And we think that rest is weak and lazy. Uh-uh. It's equally as vital in that process and cycle. Work and stress: the energy flowing. Because the truth is: if we don't use our muscles, we get weaker. The truth is: if you don't have intellectual challenge that your mental acuity will go down. If we aren't engaged in our emotions and our feelings, and in relationship,

our emotional resilience will go down. If we aren't meditating and connecting and going deeper, our spiritual connection and energy will go down. So it's important to challenge ourselves, actually.

Two interesting Scriptures. First one is when Jesus said, *"In this world there will be trials and tribulations, but be of good cheer."* There will be trials, but be of good cheer, because you've got it in you to overcome. But then Paul goes even further. Jesus says, *"Be of good cheer"* with the trials and tribulations. Paul went further and he said, *"Count it all joy, brethren, when you face trials of any kind. Because the testing of your faith will create perseverance, and let perseverance finish its work in you so that you know you are whole, complete and lacking in nothing."* Count it joy! Because if you want to get better in things in your life, you have to learn -- in a healthy way -- how to have moments of stress and moments of rest. Moments of stress and moments of rest. It is just a vital and important thing.

Okay, so here are the three things we're going to do to recharge our mental energy this week.

The first one is to **PRACTICE POSITIVITY**. Ever since I was a boy, the first time I ever heard the parable, the Loaves and Fishes became my favorite. I still hear it today, I get excited! It makes me smile! And one of the things I like it for: it is probably one of the best examples of staying positive in a not-so-positive situation. So there's Jesus; he's about to give a talk. I'm sure he wants to just rock the crowd! And there's 4,000 people and not enough food. Not enough food, yet he stays calm. He doesn't complain. He doesn't whine. In fact, he asks how much food there is; he blesses it; he acknowledges; he shares it, uses it. He put out this positive energy, and positive things happened.

In a not-so-positive situation, what level of positivity do you express? I think it is a powerful thing! Positivity doesn't always change every single thing, but it sure makes you feel better; handles the situation better, and brings out the very best of it.

It's just the Law of Attraction. What kind of energy are you putting out there? And I'll tell you, thoughts and words, to me, are just powerful energies that we could utilize to practice positivity. And so sometimes just saying things in a tough situation -- like, *"Everything's going to work out for the best."* Just even floating that idea out. Or, *"This is an opportunity and a challenge that will teach me some lessons."* *"This is going to help me get stronger or wiser, or be a better leader."* Or whatever it is! *"God means this for good! And even though I can't see the answer right now, I know there will be a good answer."* *"God is greater than this."* *"God has a plan for my life."*

Just speaking any kind of positive good words around a tough situation is one of the best things we can do, and one of the best investments of our energy. Remember: being optimistic in how we see things.

And also just speaking affirmations. It's great in terms of building mental energy. Actually, let's just repeat after me.

"I am peaceful, positive and prosperous." Together: **[with congregation]** *"I am peaceful, positive and prosperous."*

"I am happy, healthy and whole." Together: **[with congregation]** *"I am happy, healthy and whole."*

"I am generous, grateful and good-looking." **[Congregation laughs]** Together: **[with congregation]** *"I am generous, grateful and good-looking."*

"Each and every day, in each and every way, my life is getting better and better and better." Together: **[with congregation]** *"Each and every day, in each and every way, my life is getting better and better and better."* One more time! **[With congregation]:** *"Each and every day, in each and every way, my life is getting better and better and better."*

Don't you feel your mental energy up just a little bit? It's a powerful thing, and we have that ability of where we invest -- and how we invest -- our energy.

You know the thing Jesus did that I thought was just fabulous in the Loaves and Fishes thing? Was gratitude. In that situation, the last thing we, as human beings, do is think about gratitude. We just think

about how much ... there wasn't enough! But he went right there. He looked around at everything, and acknowledged how good it was. How good it was to have that bread.

I mean, expressing gratitude and thanks in any situation is one of the best investments of mental energy. And so just look at your life, and think of a problem you've got. Even in the midst of whatever that problem is in your life, just give thanks that you're alive. Give thanks that you have a house and a car and a home, and have some level of security. Give thanks that you have friends. Give thanks that you have gifts and talents and abilities. Give thanks for this church and these wonderful spiritual messages. Give thanks you live in Phoenix. Give thanks that the Suns have the best record in the NBA!

[Congregation laughs] Give thanks the Cardinals will do better next year! **[Congregation laughs]**

Practicing positivity in these two simple ways. Use the power of your words, particularly when things are negative, to at least know that it's going to work out. To know that there will be answers. And just give thanks! Practice gratitude.

And then the next one is to **LEARN SOMETHING NEW**. An assistant professor at Harvard Medical School says this: *"Every time you learn something new, you build new connections, neural connections, in the brain cells."* Challenging your brain creates new neural pathways that makes your brain stronger. And here's the interesting thing: the more you intellectually challenge yourself, it actually protects the brain against decline and the effects of aging. That, the more we utilize and engage our brain ... So just taking a computer class or taking a pottery class or reciting the alphabet backwards ... whatever it is. Bird watching ... Whatever is new to you. What's something new you've never done that you'd be willing to try, you'd be willing to learn; that you'd be willing to take a class about. It's an important thing.

You know, the highest quality for Leonardi Da Vinci and anyone being a genius ... The number one quality was curiosity. A mind that was willing to *"go where no man had gone before."* And just being able to ask, *"Why not? What about this? What if I did that? What if I tried this?"* is a hugely powerful thing for the brain and for our lives.

So if you could invent something, what would you invent? If you had to teach a class, what would you teach about? If you were daring and weren't afraid, what would you do? Would you go sky diving? Ride a motorcycle? I mean, what is it that you would do? Would you learn to scuba dive? What would be five countries or places you've never been to that you would visit if you could? If you went back to college and had to get a degree, what would you get a degree in?

These things might sound silly, but they're powerful. Because the more we expand our minds and brains to different possibilities, the more we expand our lives to different feelings and experiences and ideas. It's powerful, powerful stuff!

Sometimes we eat the same food, drive the same way to work, have the same routine. And there's nothing wrong with routine ... but sometimes it can actually be quite limiting. We go to the same grocery store, same restaurant. I go down the same aisles in the same grocery store. I mean, it's amazing! We eat the same food. I mean, it's stunning how much of the same. We speak the same words.

Do you know the actual vocabulary of an individual is about 10,000 to 20,000 words. The English language has 576,000 words. That's less than 3% of the words that are out there that we use. We think there's nothing to learn; there's a whole bunch that we could learn! There's a whole bunch we can experience! The question is: are we willing to learn and try something new? Learn and try something new ...

The final one is to **SEE A HIGHER VISION**. In the Book of Genesis, Chapter 13, God speaks to Abraham and says ... *It says, "The Lord said to Abraham after Lot had parted from him," -- and here's my favorite line -- "Look from where you are: to the north and to the south; to the east and to the west; and as far as you can see. I will give you that land for you and your offspring."*

And so the question for us: so from where you're standing right now in your life, how far can you see? How far can you see for your financial life? How far can you see for your relationship? How far can you

see for your career? How far can you see for your health? How far can you see? How much possibilities and good do you believe is possible for your life? What is your vision for your life?

"Where there is no vision, the people perish." And I believe the opposite is: where there is a vision, people prosper. Because where there is a vision, we are calling forth to the Universe the unlimited abundance of God to be shaped in to whatever way we would like it to be!

Everybody knows Jay Leno. Besides The Tonight Show, he's a car guy. When he was in high school, he had a job as a mechanic. And a guy -- a wealthy guy -- who had a fleet of 10 classic cars brought them in. And at lunch, when the mechanics were having lunch, one guy said, *"God! Wouldn't you love to be the private mechanic of that rich guy who owned those classic cars?"* And Leno said, *"No! I'd liked to be the rich guy that owned those classic cars!"* **[Congregation laughs]**

And the point is: what's the higher vision for you? And I'm not saying Leno's vision was better than the other guy's, because everything ain't about more. But sometimes there are areas that we will not explore of possibility in our own lives. And sometimes just putting it out there can do amazing things.

Best example I ever heard ... How many people ever heard of John Goddard? John Goddard: this bad boy, 15 years old -- this was in 1924; 15 years old in his parents' kitchen -- wrote down 127 things of his vision of the things he wanted to do. He called it "My Life List." Here are just a few of them. And he died in 2013, having accomplished more than a hundred of these 127. These are among the ones that he wrote and completed:

Photograph Victoria Falls in Rhodesia. Photograph Yosemite Falls and Niagara Falls.

Explore underwater the coral reefs of Florida; the Great Barrier Reef in Australia; the Red Sea; the Fijian Islands; the Bahamas.

Visit the North Pole; the South Pole; the Great Wall of China; the Panama Canal; the Suez Canal; Easter Island; the Galapagos Islands; Vatican City; the Taj Mahal; the Eiffel Tower; the Leaning Tower; the Tower of London.

Swim in Lake Victoria; Lake Superior; swim in Lake Tanganyika.

Become an Eagle Scout. Dive in a submarine. Land on and off from an aircraft carrier. Fly in a blimp, balloon and glider. Ride an elephant, camel, ostrich and bronco. Skin dive 40 feet and hold breath for two-and-a-half minutes. Play the flute and the violin. Type 50 words a minute. Make a parachute jump. Learn to water ski and snow ski.

Go on a church mission. Learn fencing. Learn Jujitsu. Teach a college course. Watch a cremation ceremony in Bali. This kid's 15; I've never even heard of half of these things, let alone doing this thing. It's absolutely incredible!

Build own telescope. Write a book. Publish an article in the National Geographic. High jump five feet. Broad jump 15 feet. Visit the birthplace of my grandfather in Denmark and my other grandfather in England. Read the entire Encyclopedia Britannica and the Bible cover to cover. Milk a poison snake.

[Laughs along with congregation]

Learn to play polo. Circumnavigate the globe. Visit a music studio. And watch a fire-walking ceremony. Notice he was smart enough to say "watch" it and not actually "do" it! **[Congregation laughs]**

And here's the thing about that. A 15-year-old kid writes down what seems is the craziest list in the world, and yet accomplishes the majority of them. Because it wasn't a simple thing; he was opening up a space -- a vision and possibility -- to the Universe, and he was willing to open it. And things came forth that blessed him.

What is your life list? What is your highest vision? And how far can you see from where you stand now? Your mind and your thoughts -- and our minds and our thoughts -- are so much more powerful than we realize! The question: are we using it as wisely, as consistently and as effectively as we can?

Life is energy! And the key is to be fully engaged in our lives by using our energy. And so, if we want to transform our lives, the most important thing we can do is to take time to renew the energy of our minds.

God bless you!

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