

Burnout

Burnout is a place of exhaustion, where we no longer feel we have anything to give. Burnout occurs when our lives have become guided by recipe; after all the stress and power struggle we have assumed a list of roles, rules and duties that make us acceptable and ‘normal.’ Here, we are not really giving ourselves, we are simply surviving and behaving in a way that we think will allow us to get by. We have become good corporate citizens, we don’t cause trouble and we don’t light any fires.

Because we are not truly engaged in our work there is no reward or enjoyment, it all feels so much of a drag, we are on the treadmill and probably counting the days (or years) until it’s all over, when we can retire and forget about it all.

This is an arid place. There is no inspiration, excitement or even true relationship with those around us. We have become automatons, treating ourselves like machines, and we have dissociated from our feelings, since we feel so bad.

Dissociation is where we decide (though this is not a conscious decision) to stop feeling since we don’t believe we can cope with all the bad feeling. We have already discussed how our feelings can be useful to help us learn about ourselves and the unhelpful belief systems we have developed.

The reason we become exhausted and burnt out is because, for all the good work we do, the reward goes to the role. Because the role is not real, in fact it is just a cardboard cut-out of ourselves, any acclaim does not reach us. So our burnout is due to the fact we are running entirely on our own resources and even when someone else compliments us and praises us we cannot accept it, so we brush it off and keep pushing forward. Eventually we run out of energy and collapse into the burnout and exhaustion.

Once we give up our roles and we become more real, more authentic, then we can receive the rewards from our efforts. We can allow others’ praise and appreciation and that refuels and restores us so we don’t become exhausted or burnt out. We discover we have the energy to accomplish all our tasks easily and still have some left over at the end of the day.

Exercise 8.7

Take 10 minutes with your coaching partner and identify areas of your life where you are experiencing the deadness associated with being burnt out. These will be areas where you have stopped enjoying or really experiencing life; you are going through the motions and hoping – without too much optimism – that things might change.

Fraud and Failure

This is perhaps the feeling most independent people associate with the least so when it hits it is difficult for them to handle. It seems one minute they are moving ahead in their lives and the next this feeling rises up and the thoughts that accompany the feeling usually are something like, “ If other people knew how I feel they would sack me from this job”, or similar variations of the same theme.

Every senior business person I have met at some point has spoken about this feeling and it is my belief that none of us escapes having to deal with it at some point in our careers.

The best way through feelings of fraud and failure is not to hide them, repress or deny them but to recognise the feelings, to stay with them, to speak to your nearest and dearest about them, even exaggerate them if you can. Go for a long walk just feeling the feelings. Recognise the **feeling** is true, and acknowledge that is the way you feel. But it is not the truth.

The truth is actually something completely different but in order to get past our independence to a place of success and relationship we need to work through all these hidden feelings and beliefs and bring ourselves to a place of congruency, a place where our feelings and our actions become aligned, a place where our heart and our mind go in the same direction.

Exercise 8.8

Have a joint discussion within the group for a few minutes regarding these feelings. It is often very difficult to speak of feelings of fraud and failure but if we hide them sooner or later they will get acted out in our world and possibly by us.

Level 2 –Dilemmas and Family Dynamics

Now we examine the second level of trap of the Dead Zone which can keep us trapped for years or even decades.

Dilemmas

“There is no dilemma compared with that of the deep-sea diver who hears the message from the ship above, “Come up at once. We are sinking.””

Robert Cooper

Module 8 – Stepping Past The Dead Zone

Learning to get past our dilemmas is a great tool for gaining success in our lives but first of all let's look at the dynamics of any dilemma.

Basically in a dilemma we face a place in our lives where we have two choices and they come in many different forms. "Do I stay in this business or do I leave?", "should I be with this person or this other person?", "should I invest in this company or this other company?", "should I follow this path or that path?", "is it A or B?".

There are thousands of different possible questions but the first step is to become aware of being caught in a trap. There is no answer to the two obvious options offered by any dilemma. When we are caught in a dilemma we often approach the problem intellectually, thinking about the pros and cons of each choice.

Most of us have so much pride in our ability to think our way to a solution we don't realise that there is no true or long lasting solution to a dilemma. It does not matter which direction you choose, you will still remain split for if you choose one over the other direction there will always be part of you that wonders what would have happened if you had gone in the other direction.

There is no answer to a dilemma! We need to recognise that dilemmas are a trap; they are designed to stop us moving forward in our lives. Once you identify this it is best to stop thinking about a solution and make your mantra, "I am willing to take the next step". Just become curious about what you are avoiding by catching yourself in this trap of a dilemma. Once you recognise the next step for you and you have the courage to take it then the dilemma will naturally fall away and the next step will become obvious to you. It might be A or B but equally it might be C, an option you had not even thought of.

Exercise 8.9

With your coaching partner spend a few minutes discussing any dilemmas in your life and the possible step you have not been taking.

Family Dynamics

To put the world right in order, we must first put the nation in order; to put the nation in order, we must first put the family in order; to put the family in order, we must first cultivate our personal life; we must first set our hearts right.

Confucius

Module 8 – Stepping Past The Dead Zone

We will not spend much time on this topic and many may feel it has no place in a business training programme. When we are independent we believe when we left home we also left behind all our childhood baggage, left our past and the patterns and started our own career and our own family.

However there is now enough knowledge and research about our psychology to show that this is not the case. We carry within us all our patterns, all the patterns that were set up in our childhood and that we reconstruct in our lives and inside our work places now. In the next module we will teach about transference and projection which all of us do much of the time.

As an overview of this process it does not take much study to realise that if you have a problem with your boss then you will find it is the same issue, maybe in a different context, which you have with your father. If your boss is a woman a problem might reflect your mother. Equally your relationship with your co-workers will also imitate your family dynamics.

I have worked with very senior and successful business men and women and when I look at the dynamics in the boardroom much of what I see is family dynamics, and when self defeating patterns surface or show themselves they are replays of family dynamics.

Again the first step is to become aware that this is what is going on. The second step is our willingness to take responsibility for it. Then we can start to change these dynamics.

Exercise 8.10

With your coaching partner discuss this principle and where you might have recreated your family dynamics in your work.

Level 3 – Competition

This next level of Dead Zone trap is a controversial issue in my experience, especially for business men and woman.

Competition blocks success and relationship.

Competition, which is a mini-power struggle, is the belief that winning over another in order to get your needs met is the same as success. Yet you can win continuously and still not learn what is necessary to succeed. Winning can bring complacency. Winning is not the goal, success is the goal.

Competition is actually a delay that hides fear of partnership and success. Competition seeks specialness, an egotistical desire that builds itself at the expense of others, destroying partnership, teamwork and success.

Module 8 – Stepping Past The Dead Zone

Our society is presently rooted in competition, which comes about as a result of our unbonded group structures. The extent to which a group is unbonded is the same extent to which the group is dysfunctional, and its members are caught in roles, which are, by their very nature, competitive.

Roles generate deadness and burnout because they stop you from feeling rewarded; roles dictate what you are “supposed to do” out of duty. They also vie competitively for attention, and fight to get your needs met. Even the sacrifice that roles are built upon is competitive, because even though you are willing to lose now by playing a role and not receiving anything, you do so in order to secretly win later. Deadness is another effect of competition. When you withdraw from another so that he or she cannot win over you, the result is that the relationship stultifies and generates no excitement or stimulation.

The weakness and independence of competition can be transformed into the strength of interdependence and cooperation. The cohesiveness that has been lost can be restored in your present relationships and work teams through your willingness to integrate and enter partnership.

Business and society, which are based on competition, desperately need a new goal based on partnership and success. Competition breeds dissociation and a system of losers and winners in which the winners end up paying the bills. In relationships, the basic building block of family and society, competition destroys partnership. Only equality allows partners to co-create and build success and community.

Beyond Competition to Success

Because our competition stems from our childhood and is such an accepted way to behave, it can be a challenge to become aware of it in ourselves, though often to observers it is embarrassingly obvious! Competition is much more subtle than power struggle but if we see it in our world then we are being shown a level of it in ourselves. This principle will be discussed in greater detail in the next module.

The essential antidote to competition is to widen our definition of success to include all of those in our world and to commit to success for this wider group.

The best business deals do not create winners and losers; if one party to a contract loses they are unlikely to come back for more. So, while they may feel they have won in the short term, the winner will feel like they are losing when the contract isn't renewed.

Internal competition is a traditional management tool, particularly in large corporations where different departments or divisions may be driven by the measurable performance of their own group. This sub-optimisation can often be less successful overall for the corporation though individuals and teams within it may look successful.

Exercise 8.11



All competition is based on scarcity. Take 10 minutes with your coaching partner to share an area in your life where you recognise that you are competing. Again refer back to your answer to Question 18, Benchmarks, Module 1.

What is it, in truth, that you are competing for? What does winning the competition represent emotionally for you? Recognise that you have been competing for this for most of your life. Make a choice to give up the competition and understand that what you have been fighting for is what you can acknowledge and give to yourself.

Bonding or Competition

The extent of the difficulty in our lives is typically the extent to which we lost bonding in our early family life. The extent to which we feel bonded is the extent to which we have success with ease. Through bonding comes connection and the feeling of inclusion, and our minds are freed from the clutter of our past and so more of our focus goes towards the building of our lives.

As we lose bonding we also lose our sense of ourselves and this sets up patterns of dependence, sacrifice and independence. All roles are made from a combination of these three responses.

If Not Competition, Then What?

Often the reaction to the concept of giving up competition is to believe that we must give up, become totally passive and let people walk all over us. Nothing could be further from the truth. Beyond competition there is mutuality, co-operation and totally giving of yourself so that you become your best self. In a game of tennis you would not see your opponent as someone to defeat but as someone with whom you can bring out your best.

There is no doubt that it takes courage to change our behaviour, to take this level of responsibility for both ourselves and the people around us. The alternative is to remain stuck with the recurring patterns in our lives.

Competition is a Necessary Stage

It is important to recognise that competition is not a bad thing, neither is it a good thing. It is a stage of development and there are better ways, ways where there does not have to be a loser. Obviously, from the viewpoint of someone well entrenched in the belief that competition is not only good but also essential, it is hard to see that there is an alternative.

Competition is the furthest we can get while being independent and in this place we choose winning over success, being right instead of learning, telling instead of listening and we become dinosaurs. Sooner or later we will be losers or at least, if not the losers, we will have to pay for those who have lost.

The opposite of competition is giving our support. It is important to recognise both winners and losers are competing.

Exercise 8.12

Take 5 minutes with your coaching partner to share who you are presently competing with. Would you rather support them?

If so, how are you now going to support this person/team/company?



Competition and Blindness

Let's take a short look at one of the downsides of competition. When we are competing we are competing to be the best and many times we achieve that position. So what is wrong with that?

The problem with working for this position is that all our energy and focus goes on being the best, and then when you become the best who do you listen to? Typically no one, you are the best, who does the best listen to? Well, obviously no one.

When you don't listen you lose sight of the unfolding process, what the trends are, the undercurrents of the business process. So when something goes wrong you never see it coming. You may spend a lot of time and money predicting the possible future changes but you still will not see it coming.

For example, consider the devastating 9/11 attack on New York in 2001. It would be hard to calculate the amount of money the USA spends on security against such attacks; they even had a recording playing in one of the CIA buildings of a conversation between Osama Bin Laden and his mother. The message to people in that building was, 'we know what he is doing; we are on top of this situation'. They had no idea. With all their defences, with all their resources, and with all their being the best they never saw it coming.

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This dynamic is common in our world that has so valued competition, so valued winning over relationships, listening and mutuality. It is a big price to pay to win a few rounds because sooner or later we will miss that freight train and then we will land up back on the dependent side of the triangle, caught in all our deeper feelings and emotions and blaming the world, our company, or our family for our situation.

Exercise 8.13

As a group discussion explore this dynamic about competition. Maybe even reflect on some levels of competition that have started to show up in the group.

Level 4 – Fear of the Next Step

There is a way of looking at problems that makes our fear of the next step more obvious. Naturally if we asked a group of business people if they had this dynamic almost 100% would reply that this was not true in their case, in fact they were up for any and all steps.

However if that were true then we would not have any problems in our lives or in our companies. Targets would easily be met and there would be this feeling that we were in a boat on a river that carried us easily and peacefully towards our goals. This is just a long way to say that the extent of our problems is the extent of our fear of the next step. The moment we had the courage to move forward, to learn something and to give something our problem or problems will fall away. It often appears as if we can't move forward because of our problems, but typically it is we ourselves that are using and maybe creating our problems because of our fear of taking the next step.

Exercise 8.13

Every problem at its heart reflects a grievance. A grievance is a place where you believe someone did not give to you in some way. To end the problem we must also end the grievance.

Write down one of your problems.

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At the heart of this problem there is a grievance against someone; it is as if this problem is proof someone once did not do it right by you. If you were to know what the grievance is and who it is against it is possibly

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Now reviewing this issue would you still want to make the same choices as you did at the time the grievance first started? If not then what new choices would you now like to make? They would be

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Also if you were to know what you have come to contribute to this situation that would free everyone involved it would be something like

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Imagine that happening now.

Congruency and Doubt

Now we have covered all the main traps of the Dead Zone and hopefully you feel freed of much of the constraints and patterning that keeps us locked in the conflicts, seriousness and heaviness of life. However in the bottom right corner of the triangle there is still one more trap we need to navigate before we enter true leadership and stages beyond that.

The issue we need to deal with is our doubt, which is that small, or not so small voice in your head that doubts your decisions, that doubts your abilities, that doubts your choices. Is this the right business for me? Is this the right relationship for me? And all this doubt, much of which we project on others by doubting **their** abilities, is actually a place of self-doubt and doubt of our own abilities.

The answer is not to give in to the doubt but to recognise it for what it is, a voice out of our past that has held us back many times. This time don't let it stop you. Don't fight it don't try to ignore it; recognise it and you might even share your thoughts with close ones but don't let it stop you.

Now that we have reached the position of moving past our independence or at least understanding its dynamics, there is a place within where our heart and mind come together. Typically, independent people are in conflict and that conflict often appears externally. But it is a reflection of an internal conflict which is the conflict between our hearts and our minds. Most independent people ignore the voice of their hearts and that is why so many independent people are lost, they have no meaningful direction in their lives.

Most of us side with our mind and try to bury our heart, often believing it has little value to us but in truth our hearts set our direction for us. Our hearts tell us what we care about, what is important for us, and when we become congruent our minds will then follow our heart's lead and show us how to achieve our deepest desires.