



3 CRITICAL AREAS OF PERSONAL WELL-BEING DURING BUSY SEASON

Busy season is coming, and most of us aren't excited about it. The long hours and stressful deadlines take a toll on every aspect of your life. However, there's a principle that I believe can help you as we approach January: preparation. By preparing, take the time to contemplate how past busy seasons have unfolded at your current job and past positions. Take that experience and let it inspire you to make decisions now related to your well-being before the season even begins. In life, when you make a decision in your mind about how you'll deal with a certain situation, you'll have greater willpower to stick to that decision when you're actually in the situation.

The following are three areas that are important to maintain balance in order to stay healthy and successful during the grueling months of busy season. They revolve around your ability to pay attention to your emotional, physical, and spiritual needs. If you're able to maintain some balance between these three areas, I can promise you your busy season will not deplete you or those around you.

Emotional

Long hours at a job where you likely get up when it's dark and come home when it's dark can be discouraging. Going into this time of year, think about ways to keep that time you spend at work as enjoyable as possible. To me, humor is the greatest antidote to workplace stress and can go a long way in helping you and your team enjoy the time you need to spend time together. However, this doesn't mean you let go of the emotional responsibilities you have with your home life; disconnecting from these relationships simply because you aren't going to physically be at home as much is not wise. Find ways to maintain those relationships, no matter how small each day.

Call your significant other to just say "hello," text them throughout the day to let them know you're thinking about them, call to say goodnight to your children and have them take five minutes to tell you about their day. You'll find that keeping these lines of communication open, despite how busy you are, will not only lift their spirits, but yours as well.

The Journal of Accountancy published a newsletter during busy season last year, which spotlighted a number of accounting couples and how they were able to maintain their relationships despite being busy. One couple, both CPAs at their own practice, spoke to this idea by saying, "...'The most challenging aspect is working a lot of hours January through June with three active kids.' Even at the height of busy season, the couple makes time to go to lunch once a week. 'My best advice is to laugh a lot, do things together that you both enjoy, and go on dates regularly.'"

It may seem difficult - nearly impossible - to find time to do anything outside of work like, a date with your significant other. However, you can find the time and build it into your schedule. No matter the length of that time, whether it's a 30-minute lunch break, or a rare free evening during the weekend, make the choice to spend it with those you love.

Make the decision now: during busy season you're going in with a positive attitude and some humor for your colleagues; you're going to find multiple small pockets of time throughout the day to check in with those who matter most to you. Doing so will leave you emotionally balanced, not depleted, by the time you make it out on the other side of busy season.

Physical

The commitment to exercise is a struggle for many even without the time constraints of busy season. However, it is EVEN MORE crucial that you get yourself moving during these months. Between the frequent take-out food (that you don't even walk to, but comes to you) and the hours spent behind the desk...it's easy to see why some CPAs revisit their "freshman fifteen."

The Journal of Accountancy posted an article years ago that gave a laundry list of different diet and exercise tips for CPAs to consider based on the experience of an auditor from KPMG. This is a great article to read through and get ideas on how you can make decisions now about handling food and exercise expectations. Again, like taking the time to communicate with your family, you will need to pause your work and step away for a few moments; ultimately it is for the benefit of yourself, your company and your clients.

Get up, walk around, do a couple loops every hour or couple of hours - keep the blood pumping. My good friend, Dr. Kevin Tipton, who is a professor of Sport, Health and Exercise Science at the University of Stirling in Scotland, was recently featured on my *Improv Is No Joke* podcast stressing the importance of physical activity and nutrition for professionals. He stressed the combination of activity and good

nutrition increases productivity and your overall satisfaction in life - which is a win-win for everyone! Many CPAs argue, "I simply don't have time!" Kevin has a response for you: High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT). You don't need to have a huge length of time to complete a good workout - at home or while traveling. You can accomplish a lot with a quick HIIT session. Get more tips on HIIT and nutrition by listening to my session with Tipton.

When eating, choose more protein-packed items on the menu, maybe make the decision to only eat a portion in one sitting and save the rest for later. Make it a challenge or game for your team to track your activity (within reason) to help encourage everyone to keep moving and to support each other when someone takes a break.

Another significant area is your food consumption. Perhaps talk to the individuals in charge of snacks for the team and encourage (amongst the occasional treat) healthy options like, fruit, yogurt or easy protein snacks. Come prepared from home if you don't have the luxury of having snacks provided; take the time now to see how this will change your family's grocery lists and shopping in the future. Plan now - it'll make it that much easier when you find yourself in the trenches!

If you want to be successful, Tami Gaitten, Founder & CEO of Gaitten Wellness, LLC says the key is make small, gradual changes. She said in a recent podcast we did together, "It doesn't have to be an overall, big diet change. It's just starting to make little upgrades." Little things add up like a snowball effect. "Once you start doing one little thing you are motivated, then you start to feel a little better, then you suddenly have a little bit more energy, then that motivation and energy coincide to push you forward."

You don't need to train for a weight-lifting competition or marathon during busy season, but you do need to keep yourself healthy. Doing so will ensure you and your team are doing the best work you can for your client - resulting in greater success for everyone.

Spiritual

No matter your religious affiliation, or even if you aren't religious at all, taking the time to spiritually connect, whether it's through prayer, meditation, a few quiet moments of reflection, etc., can help an individual stay calm and maintain greater control over stress, frustration, and uncertainty.

Take time to reflect at the beginning and end of each day - give yourself a pep talk before you get started, or as you're heading into work. As you head home review what went well and think about ways you can improve the next day, just a bit. Again, no matter your faith...use it, hold on to it, let it inspire you to be kinder to yourself and those around you. Help yourself be aware of your interactions and ultimately feel good about how the day has gone so you can sleep well each night!

Like any other season: spring, summer, fall or winter, you can anticipate busy season. Prepare for it. You know it's coming, so make some preliminary decisions now on how you're going to successfully navigate busy season all while maintaining your health and sanity! It can be done - just, prepare and take care of your emotional, physical and spiritual needs.

1 <http://www.journalofaccountancy.com/newsletters/2016/feb/cpa-couples-relationship-advice.html>

2 <http://www.journalofaccountancy.com/issues/2003/sep/toyourhealth.html>

3 <http://petermargaritis.com/ep-10-professor-in-sport-health-exercise-sciences-at-the-university-of-stirling-scotland/>

4 <http://petermargaritis.com/ep-14-tami-gaitten-founder-ceo-of-gaitten-wellness-llc/>