

Mental Fitness for Human Beings Who Became Board Members

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The Answer is Always in the Room

After more than 30 years of coaching individuals and teams I've decided that most people that come for coaching don't need it. It turns out that every client arrives with the answers, and the answers they have are usually very clever and very practical. Furthermore, when I ask 'what does your wife think?' Or 'Your friends say?' they add further brilliant suggestions and strategies. So why are they coming to me? I'm very expensive!

Clarity, Hope and Reassurance

I guess people like to hear information coming from an expert. But does this mean that we are learning not to trust our own instincts? Have we outsourced our gut instinct to someone else? Have we learned to doubt our own inner voice and wisdom?

For now let me state that I am convinced these days that most people don't need coaching, they need clarity. They don't need goals, they need hope and they don't need motivation they just need some reassurance. If tone starts at the top then your emotional intelligence as a board member will depend on your ability to offer clarity, hope and reassurance.

Mental Fitness

There are three great ways to measure someone's mental fitness – Self-Confidence, Self-Discipline and Resilience.

Self-Confidence

I'd like you to consider this area as nothing more than mood management. There's no such thing as a confident person but there are people who are good at getting themselves into a confident mood when they need to. Exactly the same applies to motivation, assertiveness, self-worth and self-esteem. Don't overrate these; they are simply moods. So, what have you learned to do to lift your mood? What works for you other than coffee or sugar?

Self-Discipline

Unfortunately the word 'discipline' can suck the life out of a conversation so think of this area as habit management. How are your habits lately? In particular the following four areas – move, eat, rest and tidy. Small micro changes in these areas can lead to massive results. The secret is to start really small. Where have you good discipline? Could you borrow it from there and use it somewhere else? Starting really small is much smarter than some massive life-changing effort.

Resilience

Other people describe this as the ability to bounce back or recover quickly from setback or disappointment. Very often though I think they are confusing resilience with a survival reflex. I define resilience as an ordinary, quiet, everyday commitment to brilliant basics. This is what everyone who makes a comeback does – they realign with their core basics and put all their energy and faith into these.

So what are the basics of good health for you? What are the basics of happiness for you? What are the basics of doing great work for you? If you neglect these you will have setbacks and disappointments.

By the way brilliant basics is also the hallmark of outstanding performance.

So How Fit Are You?

When you have the above three components working well you are great to be around because you are effortlessly assertive, honest and open. You can challenge people very directly without damaging the relationship. In fact they rise to the challenge because your tone is one of respect and utter belief in their abilities to deliver. You are now the presence of authentic leadership.

Hide N Seek

Having said all of the above you should be aware that it is human nature that people 'hide'. In other words they will put more energy into avoiding things than it takes to actually do the thing in the first place! They do this because they have convinced themselves they are not ready enough, confident enough, assertive enough. They are protecting themselves from appearing stupid or inadequate and they are probably over thinking everything. This is a good definition of poor mental fitness; they have a 'wait problem' because their thinking has become obese.

The following are great places to hide –

Busy Busy Busy – the undisputed number one avoidance strategy and best place to hide unless of course you are too busy to hide!

People Pleasing – hiding in manic likeability.

Role Playing – hiding behind the illusion that you are some sort of superhuman version of yourself.

Coaching – signing up for many coaching sessions even though you already have the answers.

Improvement – attending every improvement seminar, listening to every podcast, reading every motivational quote, it goes on and on. Whereas the fully authentic 'real you' does not need improving.

Getting Ready – overindulging in preparation.

Complicated process – over elaborate systems and procedures creates loads of places to hide.

The Mental Fitness 3-Week Programme

The following is an example of how I help a client create their own mental fitness programme which ensures that they have a practical and measurable way to get fitter mentally –

Habits – I ask the client to name 3 practical and very small changes they can make to each of the four areas of habit (move, eat, rest, tidy). This gives us 12 practical actions.

Basics – I ask the client to name 2 practical things they can do in answer to the three 'basic questions' listed above (basics of good health, happiness, great work). This gives us a further 6 things to put into the programme. There may be some small overlap of actions which is ok because we are only working for a 3 week period. Then, the client commits to doing 4 to 6 actions per week over the 3 week period.

This could be really useful for the 3 week period before you have an important board meeting. It will ensure that you are in great shape mentally when you need to be.

Closing thoughts –

Busy is the new lazy

Basic is the new advanced

Being real is the new leader

Being fully present is the real board member

Simplicity changes behavior better than motivation does.

Be warned - a commitment to brilliant basics in 2018 means that there'll be no place to hide. You're either doing them or you're not.

Your mental health and physical wellbeing in 2018 and beyond will depend on your ability to: do what you don't want to do, when you don't want to do it.

This will also include your courage to do the right thing, say the right thing, or ask the right question.

Keep in touch, if I don't respond immediately it's because I'm very busy!

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