

STOP

MAKING EXCUSES AND

START

LIVING WITH ENERGY

ALYSSA ABBEY

With illustrations by
Terry Christien Cartoonology,
www.cartoonology.com



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be inspired!
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Introduction

If you're *really* ready to bust those excuses out of your life and reclaim full-on energy, then fasten your seatbelt and get ready for a challenging ride.

We've all made excuses – that's human. And I don't want to condemn people for that. Far from it. My aim in this book is to enable you to be honest enough with yourself to get on the vitality path you want for your life, and to stay there.

I'll give you the information you need to make creative choices for your new habits. Based on 18 years' experience in energy management, I'll tell you the relevant stuff about exercise, nutrition, sleep, relaxation, relationships, positive thinking, purpose and values – all those things that relate to your energy levels – without a load of irrelevant theory, jargon or psychobabble. I know you're a busy person, so this book is succinct and to the point.

Most books on health and vitality assume that once you have a piece of information about how to improve wellbeing, you'll act on it. But we know that's not the reality. Knowing what we 'should' do does not necessarily lead to permanent, or even temporary good habits.

The shift from 'I should' . . . to 'I do' is a process, a journey. Each chapter of this book is another step in that journey, but that doesn't

mean you have to work through it from start to finish. You can just do the chapters that seem relevant if it works for you.

This book is really a workbook full of questions ***you*** must engage in to create your own life of vitality and energy. If there's no engagement, there's no commitment. If there's no commitment, you'll just go back to all those tired excuses.

If you're prepared to make the commitment, then you can have fantastic levels of energy virtually every day of your life.

Ready?

PART I

Living with energy

“ *The first principle of success is desire – knowing what you want. Desire is the planting of your seed.* ”

ROBERT COLLIER (1885–1950), AUTHOR OF BESTSELLING
THE SECRET OF THE AGES

“ *All the things I really like to do are either illegal, immoral, or fattening.* ”

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT (1887–1943), AUTHOR, CRITIC AND
COMMENTATOR FOR THE *NEW YORKER* MAGAZINE

What do you really want?

You probably bought this book because you recognised from the title that you're someone who has a catalogue of what seem to be watertight excuses about why you fail to take care of yourself properly. Let's face it, we tend to be overcommitted to work (inside or outside the home), and under-committed to our own health, our families and friends, and the pursuit of happiness. It's easy to lose sight of what we really want out of life because there are *so* many demands on our time, we rarely pause to think about it. We get up each day, jump onto the treadmill we call life (currently cruising at about 90 miles per hour), and just try to hang on all day without flying off the back. We forget that there are only 24 hours in each day, and we *cannot do it all!* We have to make choices about how to spend our precious time and energy. Reading this, you might protest that you don't *really* have a choice about how you spend your time (children or relatives to care for, mortgage to be paid, deadlines at work, laundry piling up, weeds growing), but you *are* making these choices every day of your life, whether you like it or not.

The proactive life

There is a world of difference between living life in a way that you consciously choose, and simply reacting to the tasks, chores and events that come your way. That's why this first chapter is entitled: 'What do you want?' Because unless you know what you really want out of life, you won't be able to live with maximum energy. And you might spend the rest of your days with the mantra 'There's never enough time!', feeling

“It is remarkable how many smart, highly motivated, and apparently responsible people rarely pause to contemplate their own behavior.”

STRATFORD SHERMAN AND ALYSSA FREAS, FROM THE WILD WEST OF EXECUTIVE COACHING, HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW

like a Cinderella, never able to finish all those chores before you get to the fun stuff.

Let me clarify that when I talk about living the life you really want, I *do* mean taking the consequences into account. So before you point out that if you were doing what you really wanted, you'd be in the Caribbean drinking tequila and sunning yourself, let me share a story with you.

For years, my father-in-law from my first marriage made fun of my running and healthy eating. He himself had high blood pressure, a high cholesterol level and did not exercise regularly. He liked a high-fat diet, and socialising in restaurants and pubs was an important part of his life. That's what he *wanted to do*. Then he had a series of strokes and sadly ended his days aged 79 in a nursing home. Just a few months before he died, he took my hand, looked at me very intently, and though he could barely speak, said 'keep running'. I understood completely what he was saying. I felt for him so totally in that moment, and I wonder if he wished he'd lived his life differently – proactively pursuing better health.

Now, how you live your life is a personal choice, and many people insist that they would rather burn out and die young than live a 'boring' healthy longer life. That's fine, of course, if you drop dead of a heart attack and go quickly. But my father-in-law is a typical case of someone

who had to spend the last five years of his life in nursing homes, unable to walk, and eventually, to speak, feed or dress himself. He died very young in my view, leaving a beautiful widow who missed him terribly.

This may seem a bit of a heavy story for an opening chapter, but my aim in this book is to help you shift your mindset about how you create energy and vitality – permanently. That won't happen by glossing over reality. Throughout the book I will provoke and challenge you constantly to examine your life, your habits and the stories you tell that limit your potential.

“Most people are so busy knocking themselves out trying to do everything they think they should do, they never get around to what they want to do.”


ANONYMOUS

Create it!

I'm urging you now to think deeply about, articulate and visualise what you want out of life, because that is the first critical step toward getting rid of your excuses and enjoying more energy. You don't have to have perfect answers right now, just open your mind and answer the questions below, or download a clean copy from www.stop-making-excuses.com. I promise you it's worth the effort to create some strong images that will create a 'pull' toward the choices that will energise you and make you happy.



Why did you buy this book?


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What would you like to have the energy for that you currently don't?

Examples: to run for a bus with ease, do some evening reading without falling asleep after the first page, take up an instrument, learn another language, play more games with your family, think creatively, or have more patience.


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List three things currently in your life that bring you sustained happiness:

If you don't think you have three, don't worry. You will by the end of this book!


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What other things would you like to have in your life that will make you happy?

Go on, be daring!

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What sorts of feelings would you like to experience on a regular basis?

Examples: family love, romantic love, being respected, career fulfilment, sense of achievement, excited anticipation, contentment.



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How fit and healthy would you like to be when you're 70? What will you look like? What activities will you do?

If you're already over 70, how about when you're 90?



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That's it! You've just started creating your new energised life. This book will enable you to make everything you've written a reality – but **you** have to do it, because no one else will do it for you. Read on for the tools and knowledge you need . . . starting with the next fundamental question in

“*Whatever you want to do, do it now.
There are only so many tomorrows.*”

Chapter 2: What do you value?

UNKNOWN

“*If you don't have solid beliefs, you cannot build a stable life. Beliefs are like the foundation of a building, and they are the foundation to build your life upon.*”

ALFRED A. MONTAPERT, AUTHOR OF *SUPREME PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE: THE LAWS OF MAN*

“*Those are my principles. If you don't like them I have others.*”

GROUCHO MARX

Connecting to what you value

One of the things that typically happens when the pressure is on, is that life becomes a treadmill that never stops. We get so busy and wrapped up in a 'to-do' list that we rarely take the time to step back and think about what is important, and *why* we're doing all this.

That's why this chapter is an exploration of what you value in life. This may seem a little odd as a way to get you to lace up your running shoes, but I believe it is vitally important that you understand what drives you, and open your eyes to the ways in which you might be living out of line with what you truly value. Along with Chapter 1, this chapter will act as a foundation for building your vitality and energy.

A basic principle of human psychology is that we go toward what we focus on – so it follows that if you want something, you must focus on it. My experience has shown that when people focus on what they *value*, and align their lives with those values, they feel happier, calmer and more fulfilled. Ultimately, they are more energised because they are not wasting so much energy on stuff which is unimportant to them.

A tremendous source of stress is living out of line with your values. It feels uncomfortable, and the niggling discomfort grows over time until you are completely out of balance and ill (in body, mind or spirit). This is because the things we value are always floating in our subconscious mind and influencing us whether we acknowledge them or not. When we do pay attention to what they are, we can shape them and live by them.

So what are values exactly?

Values are the things we would not want to live without – the things we hold dear. They can be virtues such as honesty and integrity, generosity or courage. They can be aspects of personality like a sense of humour or enthusiasm. Or they can be irreplaceable things like family, friends, health or inner peace.

On the following pages is a worksheet that will help you to examine and articulate your values, as well as a list of commonly held values. This list is not intended to be prescriptive, but purely to help your thinking about what is really important to you. If you do no other exercise in this book, I would suggest you do this one. Many of my clients have told me that this was the best thing they ever did for self-understanding. Others have come back to me to say that it was an incredibly useful source of guidance when faced with difficult decisions or challenging times.

I suggest that you take at least 30 minutes to sit quietly alone, in a comfortable, peaceful place, in order to think through these questions. There are no easy answers, no right answers. This is about you and what is really important in your (one and only) life. When you complete them, you might wish to copy your list of values into your diary, filofax, palm pilot or blackberry, and make a point of referring to them once a month or even every week! When you do, ask yourself, 'Am I

living my values?’ If you live what you value, you will be living with energy!


SHAPING YOUR VALUES

Virtues – Personality traits – Loved ones – Irreplaceable things

To formulate ideas about what your values are, work through the following questions, and then list your top 5–10 values. Answer here or download a clean copy from www.stop-making-excuses.com.

What qualities do you exhibit when you are at your best?


Examples: caring, vivacious, energetic, enthusiastic, relaxed, patient, loving, entertaining, giving, fun, professional, efficient, empathic, intelligent, creative.



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What special gifts do you bring to the world?



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What is your definition of success?



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When you come to the end of your life, what will be the three most important lessons you learned?

- 1.
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- 2.
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- 3.
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What do you value most in life? List your values, and then at least two ways that you will live those values.

For example, if you list Love as a value, how will you express it? Perhaps by making sure you tell your partner or child every day how much you love them, or by setting aside one evening per week to do something special with them.

- 1
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- 2
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