The Business Leader's Fitness Gap

by Jean-Luc Boissonneault
Free Form Fitness

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How Jimmy Stone changed his life

Jimmy was a hard worker; in fact he worked hard his whole life. He was an entrepreneur who was always chasing a dream. He had been through ups and downs but was quite successful in what he did. Rumor had it that his work ethic was impeccable and he was always ahead of the curve in his industry. People knew him and respected him. If people were to describe Jimmy in one word, it would be “persistent”. Jimmy was always nice to people yet everyone knew that he did have a tough business side to him.

Eight years ago, Jimmy came to see me where I was working in a fitness club. He had heard of me through one of his business contacts while at a lunch meeting. His friend Andre had just started working with me and had lost a few pounds.

The day I met Jimmy I knew I would never forget him. He was tall and bald with a round belly. He greeted me like I had known him my whole life. Dressed in nice business suit, he shook my hand with a firm handshake and a big smile. I thought to myself that Jimmy was a jolly man.

We sat down in my office and went over the questionnaire. I said “What’s your goal Jimmy? Why are you here?”

Jimmy: “I’m here because I went to lunch with Simon and I saw that he lost a few pounds and he kept telling me good things about you.”

JLB: “So, you’re here to lose a few pounds?”

Jimmy: “Yep”

JLB: “So why do you want to lose a few pounds?”

Jimmy: “My suits are getting a little snug. I have a lot of money invested in my suits and I can’t afford to replace them or get them altered again.”

JLB: “Ok, so you want to lose weight because you don’t want to pay to get your suits altered, is that right?”

Jimmy: “Well that and I feel it’s unhealthy.”

JLB: “Ah ha, I thought there would be a better reason then a suit.”

Jimmy: “Oh yeah”

By this time I could see that Jimmy was starting to open up. He started to see that I was not interested about what was on the surface, like his suits having to be altered.

JLB: “Jimmy, if you were to keep on the path your heading, what would do you think will happen?”

Jimmy: “I’m not sure, really. I guess I would probably end up having a heart attack or something else”

JLB: “Doesn’t that scare you?”

Jimmy: “It does, that’s why I’m here, and I’m ready to work hard”

So Jimmy and I sat down for the next 30 minutes. He really opened up.

Jimmy had spent most of his life building his business. He had a 3 million dollar business in construction in the early nineties and he was dumping that money into properties and renting them out. When the recession hit him, trouble at home started. Jimmy’s focus was on his business and he admits that he didn’t pay much attention to what was going on at home at the time. He went through a divorce, his wife took half his assets and Jimmy felt depressed. From then on, Jimmy had to start climbing the mountain again. So he got back up and started over.

Imagine this. Jimmy’s whole life had been to push hard and for the first time in his life, he was sitting beside me, in my office, willing to start taking care of Jimmy. I was not letting him go. Jimmy at this point had high blood pressure, borderline cholesterol and was borderline diabetic. He was very active as a teenager but had hardly done anything in over ten years. He had no injuries but I did notice he had bad posture from years of inactivity combined with looking down at people from his height.

We got to the second part of the questionnaire.

JLB: “Let’s start with the most important part first. Tell me what you eat in a typical day.”

Jimmy: “Well it varies.”

JLB: “Ok, then tell me what you ate yesterday.”

Jimmy: “Well I got up and had coffee, is coffee ok?"

JLB: “I'll let you know everything after Jimmy, just give me your day first.”

Jimmy: “I only had a coffee yesterday because I didn’t have time. I had a meeting at 9 am and I had to prepare, then after the meeting I stopped at Tim Horton’s and got another coffee and a sandwich and a donut, oh yeah and an orange juice.”

JLB: “Ok, what next?”

Jimmy: “Then I had to rush to the other end of town to deal with a problem and there was a vending machine there. I was starving so I had a bag of chips but it was small. But then I didn’t eat until I got home."

JLB: “And what did you eat when you got home?"

Jimmy: “Well, we usually eat what my wife makes us. Usually it’s pretty healthy like vegetables, meat and either rice or potatoes. Sometimes we have pasta, and usually once a week we will have pizza.”

JLB: “And how’s the ice cream before bed?”

Jimmy: “How did you know that? You're right, I do usually have ice cream later in the evenings or sometimes I will make myself a bowl of cereal and eat that while I watch TV.”

JLB: “What about alcohol?”

Jimmy: “Well that’s a big one for me, you see. Because of the business I’m in, there are often functions that I need to attend and there is always wine and I can’t imagine not drinking, because they are boring enough as it is.” Jimmy laughed

JLB: “One more section and it’s an important one. On a scale of one to ten, how would you perceive your stress level compared to the average person?”

Jimmy: “Well the average person is pretty lazy but I would say I have a pretty stressful life between business and family. I would give myself a seven.”

JLB: “And how many hours sleep do you get before midnight?”

Jimmy: “I go to bed around 12 or sometimes 11 and I get up at 6 am.”

JLB: “Ok Jimmy that’s all for today. I’ll book you in for tomorrow and we can see what the next step to take is."

Jimmy: “Ok, perfect”

Jimmy said goodbye with a look of relief on his face, like he had said things he had wanted to say for a while. He just needed someone to listen to him. Not to talk about his business or the economy or the stock market, but about Jimmy and his life and how even though on the outside he seemed like the happiest guy alive, the reality was that he wasn’t happy and his life was taking a toll on his health.


“The time to relax is
when you don't
have time for it.”
Jim Goodwin

The Impact of Stress on the Business Professional

Now more than ever, business professionals are under a great deal of constant stress. Whether you are trying to maximize the bottom line, win new clients, or keep your staff motivated, stress is a part of your life – and its impact on your health is more than a few gray hairs or, in Jimmy's case, a few lost hairs.

Tension in the form of tense muscles and joints, as well as a mind that is irritable and unfocussed, can give way to acute stress. Some of the most common symptoms that signal that you are under too much stress include a rapid heartbeat; experiencing headaches and backaches; breathing that is too fast; a stiff neck and shoulders that feel tight; an upset stomach that may or may not be followed by nausea or diarrhea; sweatiness and palms that are sweaty.

Acute Stress

Acute or short-term stress is what you experience when a demand is placed upon you at work or when you are up against a deadline. If you have a sudden problem with a customer, your stress level can go up, depending upon the reason for the beckoning. How bad your stress level becomes is related to the intensity of the stressor, as well as how long it will remain with you, and how you choose to cope with it.

The body is generally well equipped to deal with acute stress when it happens from time to time. However, if it happens on a regular basis, then it can affect you on a physical, mental and social level. Your health can pay the price. As well, your work performance will be affected in an adverse manner, and your relationships with loved ones and friends can develop problems.

If acute stress has become a fixture in your life, then you may find that your behavior, mood and thinking patterns have changed for the worse. If you notice any of these problems is happening with frequency, then it is time to do something about it:

- You lose your temper often and get angry for no reason
- You have a very low tolerance for practically everything
- You feel irritable and frustrated frequently
- You are often confused and jumpy
- You are constantly tired and run down
- You have a difficult time concentrating on your work
- You envision negative scenarios and always think the worst
- You are constantly berating yourself for not doing better
- You worry constantly about things that have little significance
- You constantly doubt the decisions you make

Turn Stress Around

If stress has taken over your life, rest assured that you can take it back! What you need to do is to create for yourself a personal stress management program. These are the steps involved in managing your stress:

1. Find ways to relax your body and your mind. Learn meditation, yoga, daily relaxation skills or self -hypnosis.

2. Rid yourself of self-defeating beliefs and replace them with self-affirming attitudes that guarantee health and success.

3. Make sure you are getting your zzzz's at night. The hours before midnight are what count most, for millions of years we went to bed shortly after the sun went down and that is when your hormones repair themselves the most. If you constantly wake up during REM sleep, then you are not likely to have a restful night's sleep and you are pre-aging yourself in the meantime.

By managing your stress, you will find that you can perform better in your work, enjoy a healthier life, and even have better relations with the loved ones in your life.

The next day Jimmy was scheduled to arrive at 7 am. He arrived five minutes early and I could see he was anxious to get started. He went and changed into brand new gym wear and I could see that he was excited about starting, yet probably afraid that I would kick his butt.

JLB: "Jimmy, nice to see you."

Jimmy: "Jean-Luc, nice to see you, I'm ready for you today, what are we doing."

JLB: "Let's talk some more."

I know Jimmy is a go-getter. He doesn't want to talk, he wants to work hard and push weight around.

Jimmy: "Really? I'm ready to sweat."

JLB: "I know you are."

So we headed to my office

JLB: "Jimmy have a seat, I need to explain something to you."

Jimmy: "Sure."

JLB: “Jimmy, exercise is not the most important part right now. In fact, if we were to push too hard, you could have a heart attack right here.”

Jimmy: “Really?”

JLB: “Yes. You see we have adrenal glands which are constantly excreting hormones called adrenaline and cortisol. These hormones are important and we need them for energy but when they are abused, that’s when you run into problems.

Jimmy: “So I shouldn’t exercise?

JLB: “No, no. We will exercise, but it’s important that we don’t overdo it at first, that you don’t over stress yourself. We have to make sure that we choose the right type of exercise for your situation and that we protect your heart from damage from the increase in free radicals.

Jimmy: “Sounds complicated, what are free radicals?”

JLB: “Free radicals are damaging compounds created in the body. Exercise and the air we breath increases the amount of free radicals produced. An example of this is when you leave a cut up aple exposed on the counter for a short period of time, it turns brown. That is free radical damage. The higher your stress level is, the more free radicals you will have in your body and the faster you will age too. So at first we want to avoid hard

cardiovascular exercise because it increases free radicals because of the increase in breathing. Now I'm not saying we will not do any. We simply need to adjust your diet to have antioxidants to protect yourself against free radicals and make sure you start the right type of exercise. Antioxidants help trap free radicals and certain ones like co enzyme Q10 will help protect your heart against damage. Some experts on aging even say that the amount of antioxidants in your body is proportionate to how long you will live"

Jimmy: "So I need to protect myself before I start exercising hard?"

JLB: "Exactly. Too many people don't get this. They jump into a circuit training class or try to run a marathon and have a heart attack. This is serious stuff Jimmy and I have seen it happen many times."

Jimmy: "Ok, I see. That makes sense because I know a guy who did exactly that?"

JLB: "Ok Jimmy, let's go workout. But not your regular workout, we are simply going to start with stretching since you're always sitting at your desk or in your car, I'm sure you have a lot of tigh muscles."

Jimmy: "Now that you've scared me, I'm not sure I want to. Just kidding."

JLB: “Don’t worry Jimmy, you'll be fine. We're going to start by stretching that computer chair posture of yours.

Jimmy didn’t think that one was too funny. I tend to forget that my clients are business professionals and I sometimes joke a little too much. Anyway, so we started with stretching. And Jimmy felt so great after, he almost fell asleep at one point because he was so tired.

After we stretched out all those tight muscles, I handed Jimmy a bottle of water.

JLB: “Good job, Jimmy. That was day one.”

"A good stance and posture
reflect a proper state of mind"

Morihei Ueshiba

Preventing that computer chair posture

Most business people spend long hours at their desks staring at a computer screen. Coupled with the repetitive motions that are a part of most office jobs, your work can lead to any number of health concerns, such as eyestrain, back, neck and shoulder pain, and the worry over developing carpal tunnel syndrome. The posture of your computer chair and taking the time to stretch at work can go a long way in alleviating muscle tension that can lead to worse health problems down the line.

User Friendly and Ergonomic Options

If you have a workstation that is as user friendly as possible, this will cut down on many of the aches and pains you experience at the end of your work day. You can accomplish this by thinking in terms of ergonomics. Make sure that your computer chair, computer and desk are positioned in a way that keeps your good health in mind.

Do not slouch or hunch forward in your computer chair. The computer screen is not going anywhere! Instead, sit back in the proper position in your chair and allow the lumbar support to do its job in keeping your head and neck straight.

If your job keeps you at your computer for long periods of time, take stretch breaks or walk breaks as often as possible. It is recommended that you take a five minute break after every half

hour to hour of work done. Not only will this give your body a much needed break, but your mind as well.

While you are sitting at your desk, you can incorporate easy stretching exercise that stimulate your blood flow and relax your muscles.

- Your neck can become easily strained at work. To stretch your neck at your desk, you can slowly move your head from side to side, imagining as if you are attempting to touch your ear to your shoulder. While looking forward, attempt to touch your chin to your chest, and then rotate you head back until you are looking at the ceiling. Hold each position for approximately 20 seconds and make sure to keep the movements slow and fluid.

- Your shoulder and arm muscles need to be stretched, especially if you find yourself typing for many hours each day. To relax these muscles, slowly raise one of your arms towards the ceiling, and then begin rolling your shoulder in a circular direction. After three repetitions, switch to the opposite circular direction. You can repeat this for both arms, being careful to maintain slow and fluid motions. While seated, you can also stretch your arms by taking one arm and placing it directly across your chest. Using your other arm, gently, apply pressure to the arm on your chest and hold for 10 seconds. Switch arms, remembering to be gentle and fluid.

- Your wrists and hands are prime culprits for muscle fatigue. To stretch these over-worked muscles, you can gently bend your fingers back, one hand at a time. Hold each position for approximately 15 seconds per hand. Your wrists can be stretched by moving them in slow, fluid circles.

Comfortable Workstation

Your workstation must conform to you if it is to work to your advantage, and not the other way around. You need consistency in where the computer is placed, as well as where your hands and feet are to be positioned when working. Your computer chair is also a very significant aspect of making your workstation as appropriate for you as possible.

First, you need to decide upon the surface height of your desk. Will you be standing most of the time, sitting or doing a bit of both? The height of the workstation is contingent on the job you are doing as well as your own height.

The seat of your computer chair should be such that the work surface is as high as your elbows. You should be able to fit a person's fist behind the calf and extend it to the front of the edge of the chair. This prevents the legs from being pressed more than they should be, and it helps to prevent the feet from swelling. While sitting at your chair, you should be able to slip two fingers under both of your thighs without a problem. As far as the backrest of the chair is concerned, it should push the low back forward ever so slightly. If these requirements are not met, then a different type of chair is required.

The height of the computer screen plays a role in office comfort too. Sit down in your computer chair and close your eyes, allowing yourself to relax. Once you have, and then slowly open your eyes. The spot where your eyes automatically look to upon opening is where the center of the computer screen should be placed. If necessary, raise the computer screen using books or some type of stand.

By ensuring that your workstation is healthy for you, along with applying various desk stretches throughout the day, your body will thank you!

It was Tuesday, so I wouldn't see Jimmy until Thursday. I was hoping that he was taking his health seriously. I knew that he enjoyed a challenge, but I also knew from experience that the hardest challenge of all was coming up and that some people, even the most determined people, fail to stick to a nutrition plan. But I had faith in Jimmy. He was so nice you couldn’t help but want to help him.

Wednesday afternoon my secretary called me to say that Jimmy had cancelled for Thursday and that he needed to go out of town until the following week. He said he would call me when he got back.

I wish I would have known because I would have scheduled him in on Wednesday morning knowing that he was going to have to travel and eat junk again. The next session was crucial; in

fact, it was the most significant action he could take that would deliver results. Now, he had to wait until next Monday.


“Whatever creativity is, it is in part a solution to a problem”
Brian Aldiss
SBB CFF FFS

Traveling Tips to Help You Stay on Track (gym in a suitcase)

Business travel may be a criterion for your career, but it does not have to disrupt your healthy lifestyle! While many businesspeople forgo their exercise and diet routines on the road, this can set your progress back significantly. Living a healthy lifestyle means staying on track – even when you are on the road.

However, you do not need your gym around to stay healthy. With a few creative ideas, along with motivation, you can keep your healthy routine intact. In fact, you may find that when you can exercise and eat healthy on the road, you will be even more productive in your business meetings.

Plan Ahead for Your Meals

If possible, plan ahead and conduct research for healthy restaurants near your hotel or convention center. Typically, vegetarian restaurants offer healthy fare, as do a handful of ethnic options, such as Lebanese or Greek food.

In addition, you do not always need to dine at a restaurant for your meals while you are traveling. One of the easiest ways to eat healthy during your trip is by planning ahead for

your breakfast. You can pack bananas and apples, nuts and seeds, and a small pre mixed protein shake in your suitcase. With these items, you can enjoy a healthy breakfast in your hotel room for your entire stay – complete with protein, good fats, and even fruit!

Healthy Alternatives Are All Around You

Even though eating out at restaurants may be your only options while you are traveling, you do not need to fall victim to high trans fat entrees. Instead, look at the menu and opt for healthier items and substitutions. For example, if you are dining at a restaurant, choose the chicken breast or steak. Skimp on the Parmesan cheese and replace garlic bread with servings of steamed veggies.

Or, if you find yourself needing to choose fast food during your travels, you can still find healthy menu options. For example, instead of eating a quarter-pounder hamburger which is filled with trans fats, opt for their grilled chicken sandwich. Drink water instead of soda, and forgo the fries for a salad, preferably with a vinaigrette dressing. These smart choices during your travels will keep your cholesterol levels low, while helping you stay on track with a healthy lifestyle.

Your Suitcase is Your Gym

While some hotels have gyms, many do not have fitness options. To ensure that you can exercise even without a gym, you simply need to look to your hotel room. All hotel rooms

have a chair. With a chair and your own bodyweight, you essentially have created a gym in your room. With your bodyweight you can perform exercises such as lunges, squats, leg raises, pushups. The chair is your platform for conducting triceps exercise, and it also serves nicely as a balance for your stretches.

When you return to the hotel for the evening, or before you leave for your meetings, allocate 20 minutes for stretching, running or jumping in place, and your stretch training exercises. You will find that when you can exercise on the road, you will feel much more rejuvenated – giving you better results for your business meetings!

To prevent yourself from becoming exhausted or overwhelmed by frequent travel for your job, plan ahead to eat healthy and enjoy your gym in a suitcase. Your long-term health and lifestyle will thank you!

Monday Morning at 7 am, Jimmy arrived and he looked tired. His skin was very red and he had very dark bags under his eyes.

Jimmy: "Hey Jean-Luc, sorry about last week. I had to go to New York and meet a client. Don't worry I'm still excited about getting started."

I was glad to hear that because a lot of times getting in shape comes in spurts. People tend to place every other priority in front of their health. A business man has no problem driving across town for a potential client, yet the gym seems too far fo a drive for their own health. It's upside down, business professionals need to start focusing on their health as a number one priority so they can prosper in all other aspects of their lives.

JLB: "I thought you had quit on yourself."

Jimmy: "Come on Jean-Luc, I'm not that weak minded."

JLB: "That's exactly what I want to talk to you about, come into my office."

Jimmy: "What, about being weak minded?"

JLB: "Yes, Before we start with the nutrition, it's crucial that you understand how the mind plays into the whole game."

Jimmy: "Ok"

JLB: "First, you're in business right?"

Jimmy: "Yes."

JLB: “Could you have gotten where you are without setting goals?”

Jimmy: “Of course not.”

JLB: “Just like business, we need to set a goal, we need to make projections, and we need to track progress through different metrics in order to ensure we are achieving success."

We took body fat measurements, weight, inches, and because of Jimmy's health issues, I sent him to go get a full physical done so we could have different metrics to measure on his health.

Jimmy: “Now you’re talking my language; I see what you mean. Are you going to give me a diet?”

JLB: “Before I give you the diet, you will need to understand one important rule.”

Jimmy: “Sure, what is it?”

JLB: “I doesn’t matter what diet you are on.”

Jimmy: “Really? So all these diets are the same?”

JLB: “No, no. Let me finish. I’m saying it doesn’t matter what diet you’re on if you don’t have the right mindset”

Jimmy: “I see.”

JLB: “You see, you can’t look at this as a short term goal of losing weight and once you reach your goal that’s it. You need to look at this as a way of life. And I know that’s thrown around a lot but it is very important to your success.

You must realize that it will be hard but it’s extremely important. You must realize that some days you will cheat but you must get right back on track, you must realize that junk food does not equal pleasure and that food is simply a way of fueling your body.

You must also realize that at first your biggest challenge is to condition your mind to be strong and to fight temptation and peer pressure.

Jimmy: “That is a tough one because every time I go to outings, there is always bad food and drinks. What am I supposed to do then?”

JLB: “You will have to be prepared. Here let me talk about this one."

“The person we believe ourselves to be will always act in a manner consistent with our self-image.”

Brian Tracy

Social Outings and Your Belly Fat: How to Fight the Bulge

When it comes to social outings, often fattening foods seem to grace every table, not to mention drinks laden with calories. While these foods may have appeal to your eyes, they can all spell trouble for your belly. If you are an executive, then you understand the importance of not only being healthy on the inside, but also looking as good as you can on the outside. After all, appearances count for a great deal in the business world.

Before you reach for the fried chicken, take a quick look at yourself in a mirror. Looking at your reflection before you eat will help you remain focused on your goals and will help to remind you that a bulging belly is not what you want on your menu!

Sauces and Dips

Sauces and dips can often add unwanted calories to an otherwise healthy meal. Before congratulating yourself for choosing a green salad at your next social outing, pay attention to what you are adding to the greens for seasoning. Can you feel your belly fat growing as you pour the salad dressing and toss on the bacon bits?

Instead of choosing creamy or sugary sauces, buttery or salty alternatives, or high calorie salad dressings, reach for low calorie flavorings that taste great, such as balsamic, Italian and olive oil.

Appetizers: Be Forewarned!

Appetizers, such as chicken wings, mini quiches, sausage rolls and shrimp cocktails, are all high in calories and trans fat. It is not uncommon for an individual to take in a full meal's worth of calories thanks to just the appetizers! If you must, choose a small appetizer to whet your appetite, but choose something that will not pack on pounds. Shrimp is not high in calories, but shrimp sauce is. Use your business savvy to help you be more health savvy.

What a Healthy Plate Looks Like

When you eat a meal at a social gathering, be aware of what a healthy plate should contain. Approximately one half of your plate should contain vegetables and/or fruits. These foods are low in fat, high in fiber and allow you to feel fuller for a longer period of time. The other half of your plate should contain a type of meat and alternatives. However, it is easy to choose the wrong selections for this portion of your plate. Choose lean cuts of meat, fish or choose a vegetarian fare, such as vegetarian chili.

Opting for Healthy Desserts

If you choose to eat dessert, then opt for a piece of fruit as opposed to a piece of pie, cake or another sugary concoction. Fight temptation by moving away from the dessert table or dessert display as quickly as possible! Another option is to try yogurt mixed with some fruit and granola.

By actively monitoring what is on your plate during a business luncheon, you can also avoid adding more to your waist line – not to mention cholesterol levels!

Jimmy was looking at me like I was taking his life away. I could see that he wanted to do it, but I also noticed that he was not as confidant as when he first came in.

Jimmy: "So you're saying in order to be successful with my nutrition, I need to be prepared ahead of time for outings?"

JLB: "That's right and not just in social outings but also grocery shopping, cooking the food, packaging the food."

Jimmy: "That sounds time consuming."

JLB: "I'm not going to lie to you. You're looking at 3 hours of work a week. My wife and I like to do this together on Sunday afternoons. We prepare a massive salad filled with all sorts of vegetables, we cook all our meats, boil eggs all at once. We usually prepare another salad on Thursday night too."

Jimmy: "Makes sense, but I'm not sure I can do that.

JLB: "If you really can't, then I suggest you outsource it. There are plenty of places that will do it for you. It's not cheap but if you have the money, why not?"

Jimmy: "I think that's what I'll do. Now, what's next?"

JLB: "Everything starts with the food. It's a vicious cycle that you can get into if you don't have this under control. Let me explain; because you eat poorly, you gain weight and feel lethargic. The more you feel lethargic the more you crave bad food and look for coffee to wake you up. Remember, you asked me about coffee? In your case, coffee is not good because you're using it as a way to self-medicate yourself for energy."

"You drink coffee for breakfast and you skip meals only to find yourself binging on junk food at night so you feel tired enough to sleep. Because if you don't do this, you're up late and your mind doesn't sleep because you've have too much stress going on. You see the pattern?"

Jimmy: "Kind of, so what should I do?"

JLB: "As I said Jimmy, you need to have the right mindset and it all starts with your food."

“If you have health, you probably will be happy, and if you have health and happiness, you have all the wealth you need, even if it is not all you want”

Elbert Hubbard

It all begins with your food

If you're high-powered job has you running from one board meeting to another, or traveling to different cities on a regular basis, then it is important for you to stay sharp. You cannot perform at your best if you lack energy. If fatigue has become your constant companion and you have become accustomed to starting the work day with a jolt of caffeine as you drive to work, then take heed – you need to find ways to gain more energy in a healthy manner. The best energy comes from eating the right foods.

Break the Fast

The start of the business day is an excellent time to kick your energy levels into high gear. When you wake, you need to break the fast by eating foods that replenish your body's need for energy without producing too much insulin and having trouble digesting the food. This will allow you to be both mentally and physically alert throughout the day ahead. To get the highest output of energy right from the start of your day, prepare a healthy breakfast that includes one serving of protein (examples of this includes yogurt, eggs or a protein shake), two servings of fruit (berries are good choice) and 1 serving of fiber like all bran.

Drink Up

Your energy level and your water level are linked. If your body becomes dehydrated, this will zap you of energy and can cause to feel dizzy, lightheaded, confused, and it can impair your ability to focus on the tasks at hand. Never wait until you feel thirsty to drink water; keep yourself hydrated by consuming at least six to eight glasses a day. If you go to the gym before you head to work or if you walk during your lunch hour, then drink water before you begin to exercise and keep yourself well hydrated during and following your workout.

Give Your Iron Levels a Helping Hand

A lack of energy is sometimes the result of suffering from an iron deficiency. The good news is that iron can be found in a variety of foods. Some of these include red meats and organ meats, leafy green vegetables, beans, nuts, seeds and dried fruits. Next time you take a business client out for lunch, consider ordering steak and a salad!

Don’t Deprive Your Body of Fuel

The body needs food for energy, and therefore, you should not wait to eat until your body is screaming at you with hunger pangs! If you go without eating for long periods of time, this causes your blood sugar to dip very low, which can bring your energy down considerably. To prevent this, eat small amounts of food throughout your busy day. For example, you might choose to eat three meals throughout the day and have two snacks.

It is best for your health and energy levels if you choose complex carbohydrates to keep your blood sugar at a good place, and also this will ensure that you have plenty of energy and vitality. Good nutrition will provide much needed fuel for your brain, your muscles and joints, and many of your body's tissues. A basic example of this is meats, veggies, nuts and seeds, some fruit and a little bit of starch.

By monitoring your food intake and choosing healthy options, you can power your body and enjoy plenty of energy to excel in your business career.

Jimmy came in the next day with a lot of questions about the meal plan and the homework I had given him. That was great news because it meant that he had read it and was getting even more into it.

Jimmy: “hi Jean-Luc”

JLB: “Hey Jimmy, did you finish the homework”

Jimmy: “yes I did, what about green tea? Can I have that instead of coffee? I’m going to try to drop it.”

JLB: “Green tea is great. Remember when we were talking about antioxidants and how they protect you from damage?”

Jimmy: “Sure, from the free radicals right?”

JLB: “Exactly. Switching to green tea is a great idea and it will help you in our quest to getting you healthy and fit. Green tea has a compound called ECGC that has been shown to help protect against cancers, improve insulin resistance and will help you lose body fat.”

Jimmy: “Wow, now you've really sold me on the stuff. What’s insulin resistance?”

JLB: “I’m glad you asked. I really want you to understand this. It’s crucial in keeping fat off for life, preventing disease and slowing down your aging process. Let’s take a chocolate bar as an example. When you eat a chocolate bar, your blood sugar will rise fast because the sugar get’s digested quickly when it’s not combined with good old fibre like it would be in berries. Still with me?”

Jimmy: “So we need foods that digest slowly?”

JLB: “Yes. When blood sugar concentration rises, your pancreases secretes a hormone called insulin to help transport that sugar into the muscle to be used as fuel. When you eat bad foods often, your muscles become resistant to the insulin and to storing carbohydrates in the muscle. So where do you think the body stores them, Jimmy?”

Jimmy: “In my belly?”

JLB: “You got it, not in your belly but around your waist or wherever someone is more prone to holding their body fat. Did you ever see on TV people who weigh close to a thousand pounds?”

Jimmy: “Yes, I’ve seen it on Oprah.”

JLB: "It’s not because they are consistently eating 10,000 calories every day. The problem is that they are resistant to insulin and anything that they eat is being stored as fat.”

Jimmy: “Makes sense. So we need to reduce the amount of foods that get into the blood too quickly.”

JLB: “That is exactly right. You see the problem is that for millions of years our diets consisted of meats, vegetables, nuts, seeds and every once in a while we would find a bush and eat berries. Now people are eating cereal, “double double” coffee, pizza, doughnuts and ice cream.”

Jimmy: “I always figured it was simply how many calories I consumed, but what you’re saying is as long as it’s the right type of food, I’m ok?”

JLB: “I wish it was that simple. You can’t have 2 banana’s in one serving because that will have a similar effect as the chocolate bar. It’s just too much sugar at once. And the calories are very important also. If your body burns 2,000 calories a day and you're eating 2,100, then you will essentially gain weight. We have to make sure that you are slightly below your maintenance level to start losing.”

Jimmy: “And what would that be?”

JLB: “After looking at your body fat percentage and calculating what your lean body mass is we are going to multiply it by ten. We will then monitor your weight to see what direction it goes and adjust from there."

Jimmy: “Great, I’m excited to get started.”

JLB: “Jimmy, you will see a huge difference and this will add years to your life. Everything that is in your diet is actually causing more stress to your body. And lowering stress is key to getting healthier.”

Jimmy: “I’ve got enough stress, I don’t need any more.”

JLB: “Now to reduce stress, food is the first step and it will help you get a better night's sleep because quality sleep is extremely important. In fact, when I measure body fat like I did with you, I notice that people who sleep better, lose body fat quicker on their belly area than people who don’t."


“Don't fight with the pillow, but lay down your head and kick every worriment out of the bed”
Edmund Vance Cooke

Importance of Sleep for Business Professionals

If you are accustomed to working long hours, then getting enough sleep at night is essential for your health and well being. A lack of adequate sleep can slow you down physically and mentally, and it can affect your ability to focus and make decisions. As a busy professional, you need to be as alert as possible and very well rested for the high powered day ahead!

How Much Sleep do You Really Need?

According to surveys conducted by the National Sleep Foundation (NSF) spanning the years 1999 to 2004, an estimated 40 million Americans suffer from as many as 70 different types of sleep disorders. The surveys also found that 60 percent of American adults admit to experiencing one sleeping problem or another more than once a week.

While the requirement for sleep tends to vary from person to person, the average healthy adult needs seven to eight hours of sleep per night. While the body is asleep, it is given the opportunity to recharge its worn down batteries, recover from the day's events (like the grueling two hour board meeting with your toughest clients), and sufficiently recuperate.

What Happens When You are Low on Sleep?

Unfortunately, many business people are so busy working 12 hour days that they shortchange themselves on the amount of sleep they actually require. Being deprived of adequate sleep for three days has been shown to cause problems with cravings of sugar, lack of focus, usher in the onset of a variety of health problems, and contribute to arguments and upheaval in personal relationships.

A number of biological mechanisms in the body can be thrown off kilter when sleep is disrupted. This can lead to serious health concerns. Chronic insomnia is not a lack of sleep, but is poor sleep. If you suffer from insomnia on a regular basis, this can be a sign of an undiagnosed serious medical disorder. Approximately 50 percent of the time, chronic insomnia can be traced back to anxiety, depression, grief or an overabundance of stress. Insomnia can also arise due to other types of health concerns, such as arthritis, asthma, and other breathing disorders, kidney disease, heart disease and hyperthyroidism.

Signs of Excessive Sleepiness

The first signs that a person is not getting enough sleep are when they are irritable, moody, frustrated and disoriented. According to psychologist and expert on sleep, David F. Dinges, Ph.D. of the Division of Sleep and Chronobiology and Department of Psychiatry at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, if this person continues to not get enough sleep, he or she can then develop a slowness to speech patterns, impaired memory, and flattened emotional responses. The individual can also become apathetic. This person's productivity levels will decline steadily and their ability to multitask at their job will drop sharply.

Sleep Better

In order to improve your sleep, you should end each day with an activity that is pleasurable and relaxing. Leave your work in the office or at least stop a few hours before bed like I do so that when you leave the office, you can get away from it and unwind in a healthy manner.

Develop healthy habits. Eat nutritiously throughout the day and engage in one form of exercise or another on a regular basis. Allow your body to get into a sleep rhythm by going to bed and waking up at approximately the same time every day (this includes weekends, holidays and days off).

Do not eat a big meal before you retire for the night. In addition, make sure you limit your sugar, caffeine and alcohol intake before bedtime. If you are a smoker, here is yet another reason to quit: cigarettes are stimulating to the central nervous system and can make it hard to fall asleep.

It is best to sleep in total darkness and not have the bathroom light or a night light shining in your eyes. Use your bedroom as the room for rest and relaxation. Refrain from watching television in your bedroom before you nod off and do not bring your laptop or Blackberry to bed with you!

It was now Friday and Jimmy was going to face his first 3 days of dieting before I saw him again Monday afternoon.

Jimmy walked in the door

Jimmy: “Hey Jean-Luc, you'll never guess what happened. I cheated already, I can’t believe it.”

Jimmy was shaking his head like he was disappointed in himself

JLB: “Why did you do that?”

Jimmy: “I was at a lunch meeting, I was starving, I looked at the menu and there didn’t seem to be anything I could eat so I was discouraged and ate a hamburger platter with fries.”

JLB: “You didn’t! Jimmy, I thought you were ready for this? Why were you starving, did you skip breakfast?"

Jimmy: "Actually I did. I figured I could make up my meals later in the day because I wanted to get to work early. I guess that doesn't work, how do you do it?”

JLB: Every Sunday my wife and I spend 2 hours preparing our food for the week.

Monday mornings, I start my day with a convenient breakfast and head off to work with my lunch all pre made. I like to relax in the morning and not rush, so I check my email and read my regular blogs on health and fitness. I then go to work and workout with Tom, one of my trainers. He helps keep me accountable and makes me push harder then I would push myself. I finish off with a good protein shake with strawberries and blueberries. An hour later, I'll eat lunch which consists of a chicken salad with a mixture of nuts, seeds and vegetables with an olive oil and balsamic vinegar dressing just like what's on your nutrition plan. I can't stress enought the importance of eating 5 small meals? Do you see what happens?"

Jimmy: "You get to a point where you just don't care."

JLB: "That's right, so are you going to take this seriously now? Because I remember you telling me you wanted to live a healthy life, did you know that 1 in 4 Canadians will develop some form of heart disease and 1 in 3 will die from cancer. This is not a joke Jimmy"

Jimmy: "Oh I know, I will take this serious Jean-Luc, I now know the importance of it."

JLB: "Great. Let's start fresh but first lets go a little further into this restaurant stuff."

“Vegetables are a must on a diet and I’m not talking about carrot cake, zucchini bread, and pumpkin pie”

Another Lunchtime Meeting that Packs on the Fat: Watching Your Waistline

Simply because you have another lunch time meeting scheduled does not mean that you will be eating food that is bad for your heart, not to mention your waistline! If you are lunching with out of town clients and have a say over your restaurant options, choose wisely, keeping health in mind. Many restaurants offer healthier food options than they once did. Nutritional information can often be obtained from the restaurant directly or on their website.

Sandwiches

If you decide to order a sandwich for lunch, then forego the high fat meats in favor of lean meats, such as chicken, turkey, tuna or salmon. Order a wrap as opposed to white bread or a sub-roll. Instead of having regular mayonnaise or a sandwich spread that is high in calories, ask the waiter for hummus, horseradish, fat-free salad dressing or mustard. If you choose a grilled sandwich, such as grilled chicken, let your waitperson know that you do not want it toasted with butter or oil.

Side Dishes

Side dishes are a powerful culprit of calories and fat. Instead of ordering french fries with a sandwich, order vegetables. Choose a side salad or soup and make sure that the dressing for

the salad is not already poured on the salad when it arrives at your table! You might also decide to have a salad as your main dish and not have a sandwich at all.

Broth-based soups tend to be lower in calories than are creamy soups or seafood chowder. You might want to order soup and/or a salad instead of choosing a more fattening entrée. If you decide to order the entrée, ask the waitperson if it is possible to order a half portion instead of a whole portion.

Desserts

If your clients wish to have dessert and you feel inclined to oblige, then order a piece of fruit or a low calorie fruit dessert. Always order fresh fruit over processed fruit, as it is healthier for you and there is less sugar. Check the menu to see if a yogurt and fruit cup is offered. If the restaurant sells yogurt and fresh fruit but not together, find out if this is a combination that could be made for you.

Beverages

While it may be tempting to have an alcoholic beverage with your meal, especially if your clients choose to do so, fight the urge. Alcohol gives you a lot of empty calories. For example, a can of beer equals 150 calories while five ounces of wine equals 100 calories. To cut the calories of your drink in half, order a wine spritzer instead, as these are composed of an equal mixture of white wine and club soda.

Or better yet, to keep a clear head and to remain focused on the fact that this is a working lunch, order mineral water with a slice of lemon.

Having a lunch time meeting at a restaurant does not have to spell disaster for your digestive system, and it does not have to mean that the number on the scale will continue to rise. All it takes is a little knowledge of what to order and what not to order.

Jimmy and I started our workout. It was leg day so we were heading for the dumbbell section to start doing split squats. The split squat is a great exercise when someone has tight hip flexors like Jimmy had from sitting at his desk all day. It's also a great exercise to balance the legs when the inside of the legs are weaker then the outside. We started the first set simply with his body weight and went for eight repetitions. My goal was to get Jimmy through it without creating too much damage to the muscle to the point where he would be too sore.

JLB: "How was that Jimmy?"

Jimmy: "That was good. I'm sure I'm going to feel that tomorrow."

JLB: “Oh yeah, and a lot of times its two days later that it hits you. It’s called “delayed onset muscle soreness.”

Jimmy: “Should I start running also?”

JLB: “You're too big to run at this point Jimmy. With all that impact, you will only be creating damage to your joints. We need to start slow, lose weight and strengthen the legs first.”

Jimmy and I were off to our next exercise; abdominal crunches. He laid back and flexed his abdominals while I counted how fast he should go up, pause and go down. We were using a special device that has a 10 degree angle to it to get the maximum recruitment of all fibers.

Jimmy: “So this should get the belly off, right?”

JLB: “The first exercise we did was more affective at removing that belly fat than the abdominal exercise itself.”

Jimmy: “Really! Why’s that?”

JLB: “Because the bigger the movement and the more muscles involved, the better the hormone response and the calories you burn will be.”

Jimmy: “So all those abdominal machines advertised on the shopping channel don’t make you lose weight?”

JLB: “No. They may work the abdominals but they won't help you lose body fat.”

Jimmy: “I see. So we need to focus on doing big exercises that involve many muscles?”

JLB: “Yes.”

Jimmy and I went over to the matted area and started stretching. Jimmy and I got on our knees, placed our arms stretched out above our heads while bringing our heads to the mat.

JLB: “Breath Jimmy. Take a deep breath, hold 2 seconds, and exhale. This is where you don’t think of anything Jimmy. Try to relax."

We did this for 5 minutes slowly moving into other stretches.

"Those who think they have not time for bodily exercise will sooner or later have to find time for illness"

Edward Stanley

The perfect exercise routine for the business professional

Nobody these days has time to waste; we are all busy people on the go. So why spend hours in the gym if you don't have to? The truth is 30 minutes is all you really need, an hour is too long for most people whose goal is usually fat loss. Including proper warm-up and cool down methods, your workout should only last about 45 minutes with 5-10 minutes of warm-up and 5-10 minutes of cool down, including stretching.

Warm up

There should always be 3 parts to a warm up, a general warm up, a joint specific warm up and an exercise practice warm up. For example; today is bench press day. I would start with a walk on the treadmill, forward circles with my arms and 3 very light weight bench press sets with no more than thirty percent of my maximum weight. If you have diabetes, high blood pressure or high cholesterol, it's even more important to warm up. The older you get, the more important warming up becomes.

Exercise

The biggest mistakes people typically make when working out are that they are not following a set plan, they don't schedule their workouts and they keep doing the same things all the time without ever getting someone to teach them how to lift properly. All of these errors will result in

less than maximal results no matter what your goal may be. The point of lifting weights is that you are giving your body stimuli to grow and get stronger. In order to do that, you need to be progressively increasing the weight week by week. Focus your attention on using large movements that create the best responses, like squats, deadlifts, dips, pull-ups, shoulder press and rows.

Stretching

Stretching calms down the nervous system and helps reduce stress. It is crucial that you finish your workout with a form of relaxation, it's the balance of yin and yang. Most people seem to focus too much on getting in shape that they forget that you also need to relax and recover.

This whole workout should take no longer then forty five minutes.

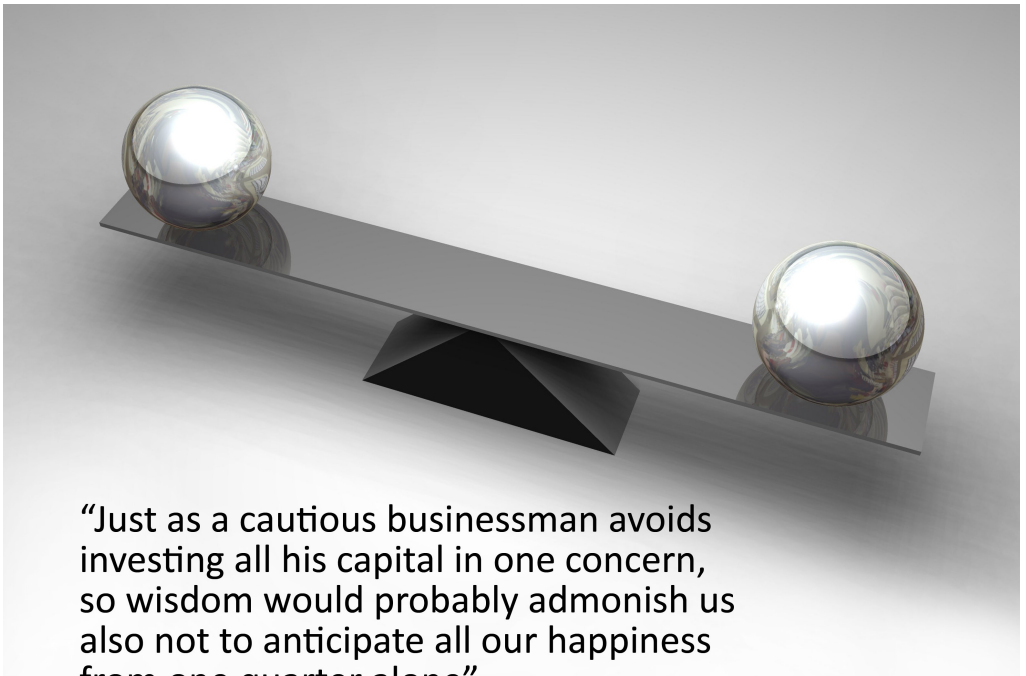
Jimmy and I worked out three days a week together. He was great, he had finally made the switch and everyone around him couldn't believe it. At our ten week mark, Jimmy had lost 35 pounds and had 11 lbs to go. We got off the scale and he had a huge smile on his face. He was really starting to look athletic and people all around him kept commenting on how healthy he looked.

Jimmy: “I can’t believe it’s only been 10 weeks and I’ve gotten this far. I didn’t think nutrition would have such an effect.”

JLB: “The main thing is that you did it, and you did it in a healthy way. By that I mean you maintained as much muscle mass as you could by getting stronger every week. You had a diet that had enough fat in it to keep your hormones healthy. Now, we still have at least another 4 weeks to go and it gets harder the closer you are to your goal. I want you to start observing how this has changed your life and I want you to write it down as a reminder that you will never let yourself go back to where you were.”

Jimmy: “I notice so many things lately. I’m actually disgusted when I look at my old pictures. I am not the same person anymore. Trust me, this is a lifestyle change.”

JLB: “Change happens in a second, all you have to do is decide whether you’re going to do it or not. As a businessman Jimmy, I know you have a strong mindset, with great consistency. The hard part about all this is to keep that motivation and that mindset that you have adopted. Make health a priority and everything in your life will be enhanced."



"Just as a cautious businessman avoids investing all his capital in one concern, so wisdom would probably admonish us also not to anticipate all our happiness from one quarter alone"

Sigmund Freud

Life Balance: How to Find Balance in Your Hectic Life

With the hectic schedules that business people lead, and all of the pressures they are under, it is not simple to find balance and harmony in life. The work-life balance can easily be upset when upheaval occurs at work or at home.

What is life balance? It is the feeling that you are able to appropriately fulfill all of the important roles of your life and nothing is being neglected. Balance is not really about time spent in each role, but instead the importance of each life role and how engaged we become in each one. Balance in life is about meaning and fulfillment and focusing our energy on what makes us the happiest.

The five components inherent in a happy and balanced life include:

1. Strong relationships
2. A purpose in life and priorities
3. Meaningful activities that we feel passionate about
4. Interesting activities that utilize our unique strengths
5. The consistency of our value system

How then do you find balance in life and keep it there? Read on for some helpful suggestions to bring balance, harmony and serenity back into your life!

Create a Personal Mantra

This is a word or phrase that helps to center you when you begin to feel stressed. Having your own mantra will bring a sense of calm and peace to your body and mind and will make it possible for you to regain control and to concentrate more fully.

Establish a Routine

Having a routine and various rituals throughout the day is a way to keep your life as balanced as possible, as it is something you can depend upon. A good work-life balance ratio would include time for you to live a healthy life – which entails at least 30 minutes of exercise 3x a week. With exercise, you enjoy higher levels of oxygen, blood flow, and endorphins. This is especially comforting on days when life is spinning in every direction!

Resist the Urge to Over Multi-Task

You are a business professional, and therefore, multi-tasking is your middle name. But sometimes balance and focus are lost when there are too many things happening at once. Whenever you can, concentrate on one task at a time.

Be Grateful and Show It

Be grateful for what you have in your life and find ways to show gratitude to others on a regular basis. Learn the art of saying thank you and truly meaning it.

Give Kindness the Time of Day

Being kind to others in any way you can helps to give your life a greater purpose. Reach out to others and witness what a small act of kindness can do for the recipient – and for the giver.

Accept the Realities of Life

Some things in life cannot be fought and must be accepted. Accept what you cannot change, and this will lead to a greater sense of peace. Replace negative feelings with positive ones, and this will help bring your life balance closer to what it should be.

Be Good to Yourself

It sounds very simple, but many people forget themselves in the hectic activity of their lives. You are no good to others when you are in a bad state yourself. Value yourself and nurture yourself. Allot at least 15 to 20 minutes a day to do something nice for yourself (and refuse to feel guilty about it)!

Exercising and eating healthy are important components to being “good to yourself.” When you take care of your body, you are rejuvenating yourself to perform at your very best.

Say No When it is Necessary

No one likes to be told “no,” but sometimes it is necessary. Be realistic about your time, resources and energy, and do not spread yourself too thin. If you know that you cannot do something, then learn how to say no in a respectful manner.

Three weeks later Jimmy got on the scale and he had hit his first goal. To this day, Jimmy is still exercising, eating right and enjoying every moment. Everyday people around him tellhim how great he looks and he is able to run around and play with his children.

I see people like Jimmy on a regular basis. People who work their whole life trying to build their empire and neglect the one thing that truly matters; their health. Without your health, nothing else is enjoyable.

About the author

Jean-Luc Boissonneault is the owner of Free Form Fitness personal training centre. A centre that helps business professionals and their families get in shape and be healthy. Having been a personal trainer for eight years, Jean-Luc has placed first in Canada and seventh in the world in natural bodybuilding. He has been featured in muscle magazine and has written hundreds of articles and done many seminars on different topics such as nutrition, exercise, stress and life balance. Because of his passion to help, Jean-Luc has attracted some of the most successful business people in Canada to his facility.

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Simply go to www.freeformfitness.ca/fitbusiness enter three emails plus your own and click on the share button. You will receive an email back with your workout.

Aknowledgement

It's not everyday you get someone that truly cares about making a difference in someone's life.
This busy entrepreneur has taken his valuable time to help me provide more punch to this book knowing that there would be nothing in it for him.
Thank you Brent Thompson from Peak Sales Recruiting

I would also like to say thanks to some of our clients that have helped spread the word about Free Form Fitness in the past few months to make it possible for me to free up the time to write this book.

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Thank You!