

## THE ROI OF SELF-CARE IN LEADERSHIP

During these unusually demanding times, effective leadership is particularly rare and valued. In this world, leaders face unique challenges to their well-being: high stress, demanding travel, and ever-increasing responsibilities with dwindling resources. The current culture of the high performance executive offers little support for self-care, and even rewards unhealthy behaviors, paying little heed to the long-term effects and bottom line costs for the leader. Yet the company's success depends on the performance capacity of its key executives. While many companies provide excellent wellness programs, CEOs and C-suite executives tend to make little use of wellness offerings beyond the annual physical.

This is the equivalent of sending a car into the Indy 500 after one visit to a diagnostic bay - no tune-ups, no pit stops - and often with one remarkable spare tire! I dare say a lot of executives are more careful with their cars than their minds and bodies. And I'm certain many feed their cars better fuel than they feed their brains.

Science has now proven that without proactive, effective self-care, this overly demanding lifestyle - combined with escalating stress - is debilitating to the insight, judgment, innovation and teamwork required for sustained performance and success in business and in life.

Effective self-care is a business decision.

In fact in a study by the Center for Creative Leadership, 88% of executives report work as being the primary stressor in their lives and 2/3 report the stress to be significantly higher than just 5 years ago. 70% of visits to health care providers are stress related. Stress alone is estimated to cost \$300 billion in corporate profits annually- and this research was done before the current recession! Further complicating this scenario, the "Type A" personality, often found at the top of the corporate ladder, characteristically denies the impact of stress. And since stress impairs the executive and self-awareness functions of the brain, they don't know they could actually be performing more effectively with improved self-care.

Chronic stress is 6 times more predictive of heart disease and cancer than other risk factors. 80% of heart disease and 50% of cancers are preventable with lifestyle changes! 70% of health care costs are stress related. Replacing a top executive, lost to burnout or health issues, can cost a company about the same as buying an Indy 500 car (where just the steering wheel can cost \$125,000!).

Cynthia Ackrill, M.D.



What's the good news? Working with leaders and in small groups and teams, we can start the shift in an organization to a culture that supports long term performance improvement. Effective intervention begins with developing proactive, individualized, achievable plans for key leaders. Science is giving us the information and tools to implement change. Leaders discover they can approach their wellness as they would a business challenge, with a vision and strategic plan to ensure success in measurable steps. One-on-one coaching then provides the motivation, resources, guidance, and accountability to support lasting change.

The ROI for wellness interventions has been shown to exceed 500%! The results? - Leaders with more energy, greater productivity, agreeable work/life balance, brighter mental clarity and insight, more career satisfaction, and improved ability to readily access flow and high performance states. These individuals meet their physical, mental, emotional and spiritual needs for fully engaged living. Standing in the power of their best selves, they inspire others to realize their potential, creating a new culture of innovation and well-being.

My mission at WellSpark is to promote effective leadership by supporting the physical, mental and spiritual well being required for sustained peak performance and living brilliantly.

Cynthia L. Ackrill, MD

