

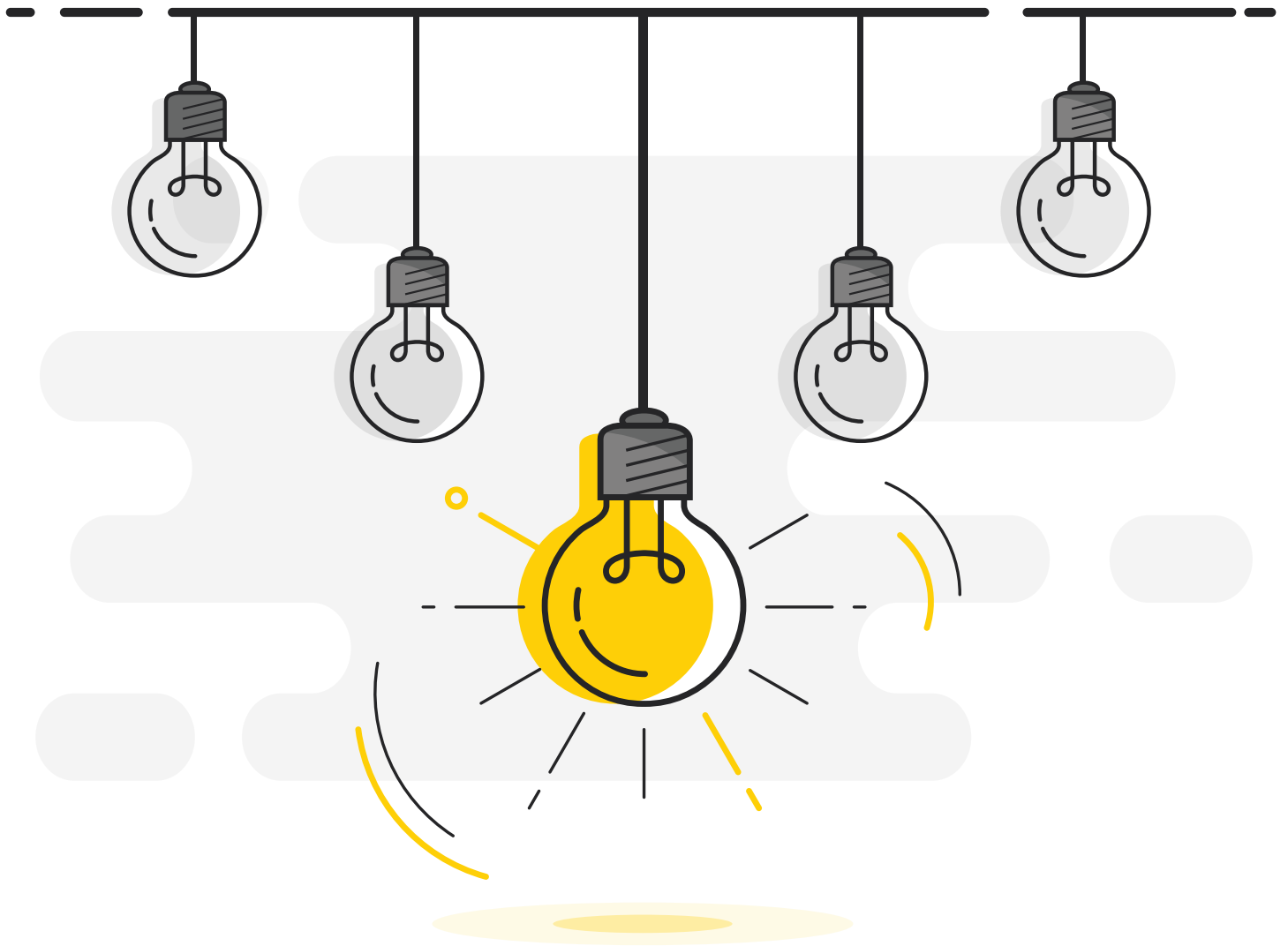


JESS STUART

AUTHOR • COACH • SPEAKER

Burnout to Brilliance.

Redefining peak performance.



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Introduction

Having worked in Human Resources for over a decade and having coached many high performers since, I've noticed recurring themes and challenges for businesses managing high performers.

We know that great people equals a great business. We also know that we want to retain our talent, develop them and help them grow within our industry. However, these intentions are often inhibited by the very systems that intend to support the growth of our people.

It's why we continue to strive for better wellness outcomes, workplace stress management and why burnout has become so prevalent, especially for our leaders.

A 2018 Gallup study found that of nearly 7500 fulltime employees internationally, 23 per cent feel burnt out at work very often or always, while another 44 per cent feel burnt out sometimes.

According to a 2020 study by the Mental Health Foundation a quarter of New Zealand adults are at risk of struggling with their mental health. And even pre pandemic Southern Cross showed a 23.5 per cent rise in stress across businesses in their 2019 study.

My work for the last decade has focused on helping individuals unlock their potential. Many of these individuals are high performers and are probably seen as talent by their employer, however they were failing to achieve the potential of their brilliance.

Brilliance can mean many things. In the dictionary it's defined as cheerful, happy, lively, optimistic, bright, clear, dazzling, light, positive, smart, intelligent, sharp, quick, talented, inspired, skilful, excellent. These are the things we aim for with peak performance and the things we experience when we're at our best.

It's the feeling we get when the sun lights up a room we're in, it's that light bulb moment when we have an amazing idea, it's the 5 star rating on our performance when we're at our best and it's the light that shines on others when we move through work and life being our brilliant self.

When we're brilliant we shine and so light is an intrinsic part of this concept of being brilliant. In fact it feels light to live this way and when we're closer to burnout we know it's a heavy load to bear, a darker place to be.

It's why I love the lightbulb metaphor here and for me it also represents energy, which is key to us sustaining our brilliance. When we're at our best we have more energy and like a light bulb we always shine brighter when we have more energy. We also know what happens when we leave the light on too long, it dulls and eventually goes out.

Brightness is also synonymous with intelligence and of course when we're being brilliant our intellect is at its sharpest and our brains are functioning at their full capability.

How do we move from the destruction of busyness and burnout to tap into our true potential and be brilliant? The roadmap for burning bright rather than burning out is what we'll unpack in this whitepaper.



Mind your busyness

Busyness is fashionable, we wear busy like a badge of honour. We attach our sense of self-worth to being busy. Busy means we're valued, needed and successful; as a result, we've deprioritised balance, rest and downtime. We've been taught not to see these things as productive or effective, when really this is our foundation. It's where it all starts, and without this, we end up burning out.

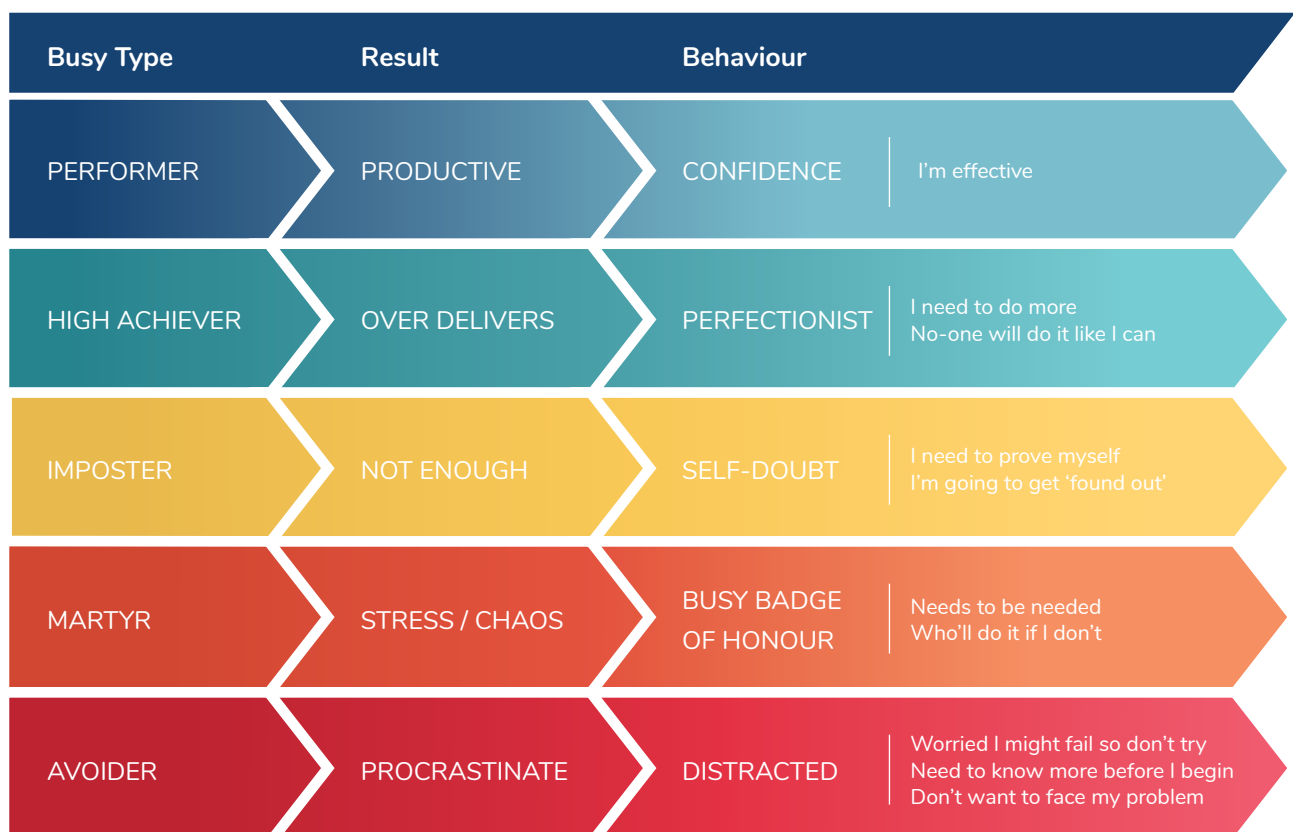
We're always saying we're busy, yet how productive are we?

Let's explore the different types of busy and the impacts. Whilst busyness has been made fashionable it presents in different ways and therefore has varying effects.

When we've got it right it's a busy that's achievable, aligned to our skillset and gives us a sense of purpose. It presents just enough challenge whilst still delivering a sense of accomplishment (i.e. not so much challenge we have to work 80 hour weeks to achieve it).

At its best it's a healthy rhythm that equates to performance but most often this is not the case.

Sometimes we're too busy overdelivering, trying to prove ourselves because we lack confidence and fear we're going to get found out – the insecure type of busy often associated with feeling like an imposter. We have a pressure to know all the answers which keeps us busy chasing after perfect outcomes, common in high achievers and perfectionists. Or we're just the kind of busy that thrives on chaos, being needed and wanting to do it all so we can complain about the stress we're under, a martyr of busy. The result is often under productive performance but at its worst becomes overwhelm, avoidance and procrastination. We can be so worried we'll fail we don't even try, or the pressure to know more stops us from making the smallest progress or making a start. Or we've got problems we'd rather avoid so busyness becomes a great distraction.





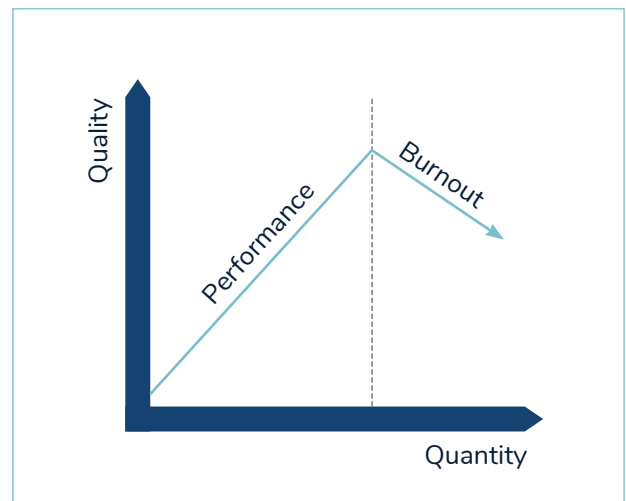
So once we know what drives our business the next question to ask is; are you busy or productive? The two are very different and we understand this by further exploring the difference between quantity and quality.

It's an interesting question because most of us have been conditioned to believe, the busier we are the more productive we'll be. We live in a world that prioritises quantity over quality – more is always better.

Since the industrial revolution we've measured performance in a way that suggests more is better, the harder we work the better employee we are and the more valuable we are. We are paid for every hour we work and not a penny more or less regardless of the quality of what we produce during those hours. It's an outdated model we used to run our factories during the industrial age. It's a model that rewards time spent not quality achieved and it's out of date by a long way.

I'd like us to flip the narrative on this and understand more is not necessarily better, especially where performance is concerned. We

can work hard but only to a point. Without the necessary balance and down time the hard work starts to become ineffective.



We hit a point at peak performance where further quantity starts to impact on the quality of what we produce. This is the time we're more likely to make mistakes, less likely to innovate and less tolerant with those we're working with. At this point more quantity starts to decrease our effectiveness until we eventually hit burnout.

Burnout

We use the term burnout to describe physical, mental and emotional exhaustion.

Research out of AUT suggests 11 per cent of New Zealand workers might be experiencing burnout: physical or mental problems due to stress or overwork. That's more than one in every ten New Zealanders.

The World Health Organisation predict burnout will be a global pandemic in less than a decade and The World Economic Forum estimates an annual burnout cost of GBP 225B to the global economy. We know there's an organisational cost of burnout too with increased turnover, absenteeism and of course the obvious impact on performance.

The most common indicators burnout is at play are; exhaustion, a feeling of lack of control, disengaging, trouble focusing, a sense of dread about work and frequent feelings of cynicism or irritability.

Burnout is not just about quantity but the quality of what we're doing not just how much of it we're doing. According to Psychology today; Burnout is not simply a result of working long hours or juggling too many tasks, though those both play a role.

The cynicism, depression, and lethargy that are characteristic of burnout most often occur when a person is not in control of how a job is carried out, or is asked to complete tasks that conflict with their sense of self.

In my experience, it's not poor performers who burnout, we don't burn out because we're not capable, in fact it's the opposite. The more capable we are the more likely we are to burnout, it's the drive of the high achiever that leads us down this path.

5 Stages of Burnout with symptoms

- 1 Loss of hope, withdrawal, detachment, illness, depression
- 2 Checked out, discontentment, loss of motivation, non commitment, exhausted
- 3 Frustrated, lack of results, resenting others, feelings of guilt, anxiety, not coping, struggle sleeping
- 4 Overwhelm, lack of focus, working long hours
- 5 Loss of energy, too busy to take breaks

High achievers are given more work because of their competence and track record which puts them at higher risk of overworking , having too much on their plate and ultimately burning out.

And of course we can't say no, for fear of not been seen as up to the job, for looking weak or like we're not coping. Our cultures and societal norms around this stuff keep us pushing until we hit a wall, saying yes until we collapse under the weight of all the commitments we've just made – then we feel like a failure.

It's your talented, high acheieving hard workers who are more at risk of burnout.

Sustainability

Sustainability is a popular word in business these days but how often do we apply it to ourselves? The prevalence of burnout and the way we approach our work would suggest we've not placed enough attention on ensuring we're a sustainable resource. After all, it is the most significant resource we have as individuals, our own energy, it's a predetermining factor in high performance and we know without it we get sick.

For me sustainability is our resilience, it's our energy to be our best and our ability to bounce back from the tough times. I believe building resilience is the best way to ensure we're sustainable, as well as forming good habits around work-life balance, how we use our time.

It's like a bank account we pay into over time, so we can withdraw funds when we need them, when the tough times hit. The way we pay into our resilience account is by prioritising our self-care.

Self-care is often viewed as a nice-to-have, something to do when we get a spare few minutes or when the to-do list is done. It's something we leave until we've got time and don't prioritise when we're busy. The irony is this is the time we probably need it most.

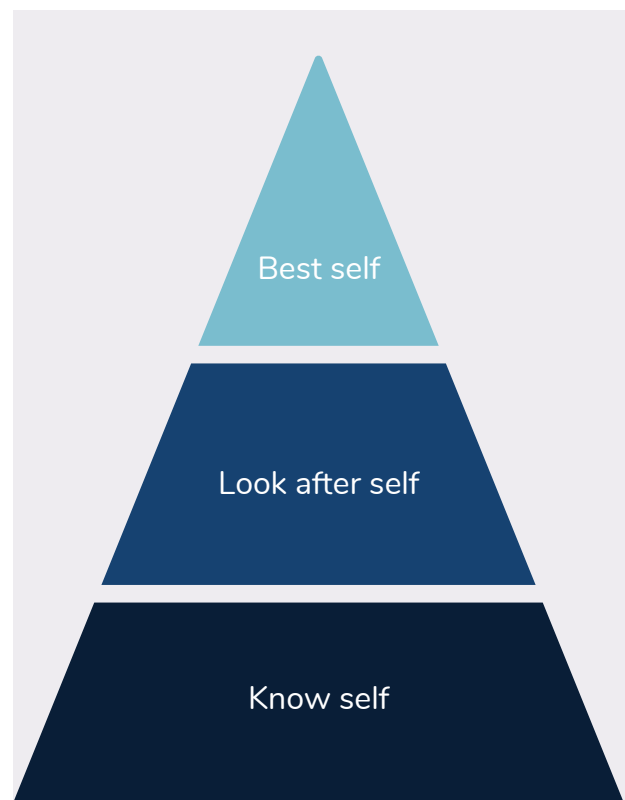
We worry it might be seen as selfish, lazy or unproductive to take some downtime. Yet it's critical in helping us build resilience and perform at our peak. If you take time out for yourself, it's not only you that benefits. Imagine what a better partner, parent and worker you'd be if you weren't stressed and tired, how much more you could give others and how much better your relationships would be. Taking time out for yourself is anything but selfish; everyone benefits from a better, more refreshed you.

It's a concept I refer to as slowing down to speed up which I know sounds counter intuitive but bear with me. If we slow down by taking small pauses in our day to recharge and press reset, we find we're

more effective when we return to our day. If we are clear-headed and well-rested, we function better; we get things done more quickly, navigate setbacks with ease and have more space to innovate. All of this together means by slowing down, we are in fact speeding up, by becoming more effective and sharper and functioning at our full potential.

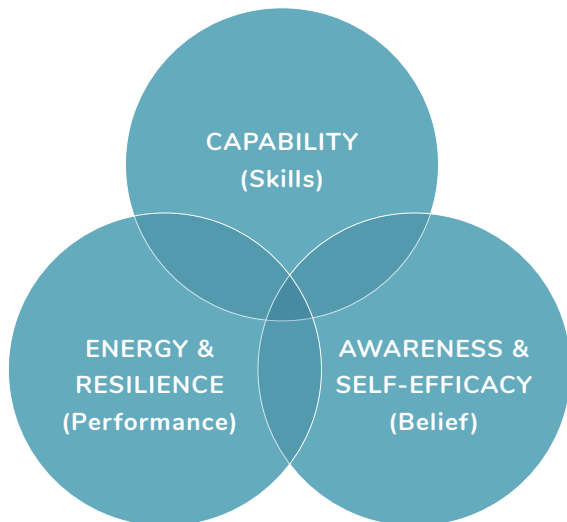
It sounds like it'll take longer but it's like stopping to put petrol in the car on a long journey. It takes a few minutes to pull over and stop but it means we can go further and if we didn't take those few minutes to fill up we'd break down on the way and not arrive at our destination.

- Make a plan
- Have you done an energy audit recently?
- Know we're all different so create your own script
- Understand your triggers
- Learn what refuels and drains your energy



What makes us brilliant

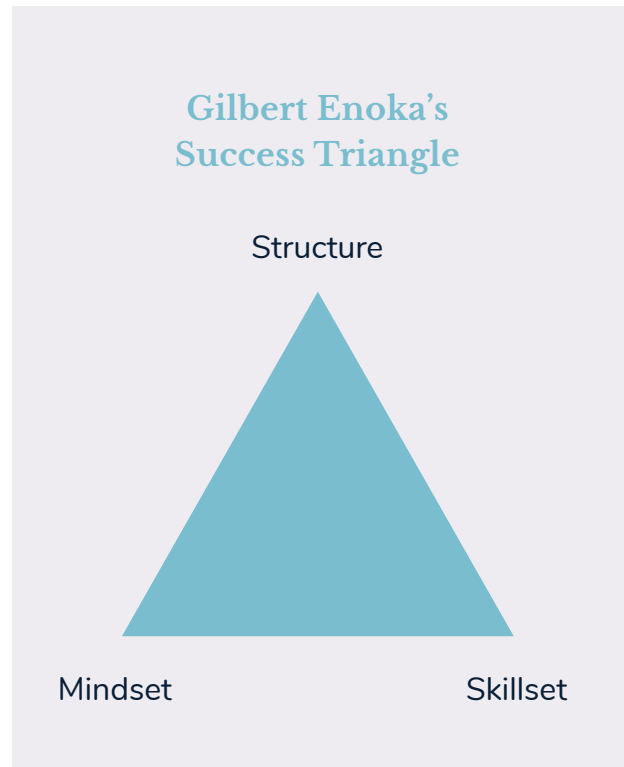
Assuming we've got the skills and capability in the first place achieving our potential is a combination of our awareness and belief in those skills (self-efficacy) combined with the energy to perform (resilience). Potential is the overlap in the middle and our sweet spot for brilliance.



When we talk about performance we of course are aiming for brilliance which we're all capable of.

When we build resilience, understand and belief in our potential we then just need the structure to execute it. Often the difference between those who succeed and those who do not is the habits they form.

It's something All Blacks Skill Coach, Gilbert Enoka talks about in his experience coaching rugby players. There's a combination of mindset and skills he says is crucial for success but the third, equally important point of the performance triangle he refers to is structure.



He's witnessed players who have skills and mindset still fail to make the team because of structure. If they can't adhere to the routine of training, early nights, the structure of their meal plans and habits that lead to their success they will not succeed.

It's one of the reasons habits are so important. But it's also easier said than done. Often it's not our lack of knowledge that's the problem but how we implement it, especially on a regular basis. Success requires structure and a succession of positive habits that appear regularly in our routine.

Good habits also help cultivate the right mindset (and some would say the reverse is also true, your mindset dictates your habits!) A mindset for performance is like a finely tuned instrument able to perform at its best.

Mindset

The mind is so powerful and plays such a critical role in how we show up and how we experience life. The difference between the glass-half-empty people we know and the glass-half-full is the lens they view life through, and that starts in the mind. Mastering our mind is crucial not just for health and happiness but for performance and self-efficacy too.

The brain has 86 billion neurons, all capable of firing different neural pathways. The ones that fire together generally wire together but so often we're not conscious of just what those are. The quality of the well worn pathways in our brains we're forming day after day and the thinking patterns that are driving us.

We are what we think. Our thoughts make our worlds. What we think becomes how we feel, which in turn becomes how we act.



The good news is the neuroplasticity of the brain means we can literally rewire those neural pathways and form new thought patterns. Making the mind a better place to be and producing better results.

Everything we do and feel starts in the mind and is influenced by how we think.

In 2019 Statistics New Zealand told us one in four adults experiences poor mental health, according to the World Health Organization's five-point scale. The WHO itself estimates approximately 450 million people worldwide have a mental health problem and by 2030 depression will be the second-highest cause of disease burden in middle-income countries.

The key to mastering our mind set and controlling the mind is we're able to train it to be less chaotic. We know an overwhelmed, busy brain is not a productive one.

A calm, clear, focused mind is one that can create and innovate. It has space to solve problems and make decisions easily, leading to better choices and an increased awareness. This of course is made harder by our culture of back to back meetings, open plan offices, working from home with family distractions and the influence of our smart phones and devices that compete for our attention and contribute to information overload in the brain.

A mind that is focused and in flow rather than distracted and busy is one that performs better. Like a car that's just been serviced or a musical instrument that's just been tuned. The multitasking myth we've been sold has led to a mindset of quantity over quality and cognitively this does us a disservice that impacts on our performance. Being busy does not mean we're productive, in fact a busy brain can not function at its peak.



Have you ever found yourself so completely immersed in a task hours flew by unnoticed? Or been so absorbed in what you were doing, the doing became the goal. It's often when we're feeling most energised and accomplished and likely to be the effortless state of performance, known as flow.

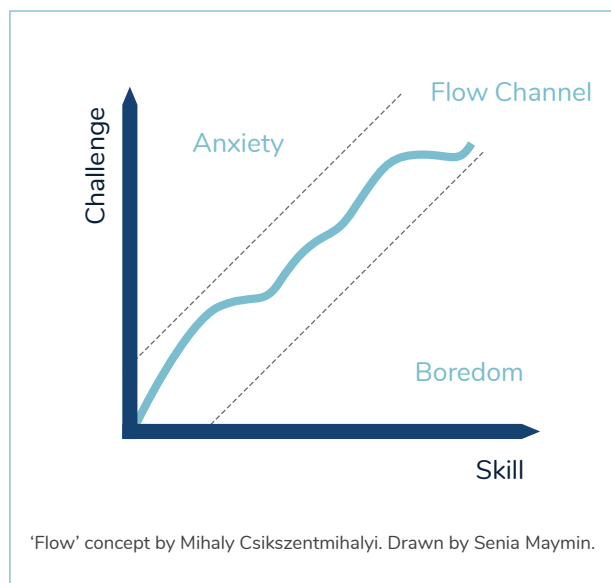
Flow is referred to as an optimal state of presence and consciousness, where we feel our best and perform at our best. As part of being our best and achieving brilliance I wanted to explore this concept of flow and how we get there more regularly.

When we're in flow it's likely we'll feel full of energy, our productivity will increase, we'll be more creative and innovative and we feel more confident and happier.

In a 10-year McKinsey study, top executives reported being five times more productive in flow. That would mean if we spent Monday in flow we could literally take the rest of the week off and still have got more done than most.

While most of us spend less than five percent of our work life in flow, if that number could be nudged up closer to 20 percent, according to the same McKinsey study, overall workplace productivity would almost double. That's a significant shift on the dial where performance is concerned.

Research by flow guru Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi tells us to create flow, an activity must stretch our potential enough to have an even balance between how challenging the activity feels for us, and our level of skill to complete the activity. It is known as the challenge to skill ratio.



Commonly described as being in the zone, totally absorbed in the task, oblivious to everything going on around us and merging at one with the activity. Flow is often attributed the athletes and artists but available to us all.



The barriers to peak performance

We know what creates peak performance but what about what prevents it? Author of *The Inner Game*, Timothy Gallwey refers to the barriers to performance as interference. Emotions that get in the way of us achieving our potential.

$$\text{Performance} = \text{Potential} - \text{Interference}$$

Gallwey's 3 emotional interferences are worry, guilt and fear. These are all barriers to us achieving our potential and therefore performing. Gallwey believes to maximise performance we need to minimise interference.

Whilst interference comes from our thoughts it can also be impacted by our surrounding environment, including the people and distractions in it.

Gallwey also advises an essential component to performance is giving our full attention to what we're doing (flow) and is an advocate for removing interference in the form of distractions.

Worry is a commonly experienced emotion with anxiety at work much talked about. I like using the circle of influence to control my worries when they occur and I love the quote by Mark Twain "There has been much tragedy in my life, at least half of it actually happened"

Worry is an emotion that robs us of the present and also robs us of our potential. If we spend all our time worrying about things that have happened or the what ifs that may happen we'll miss out on the potential we have in the here and now.

Anxiety is an emotion that can exacerbate burnout and also impact some of the good habits we need for peak performance like sleep, exercise and what we eat.

Guilt is more subtle and not talked about so much but sits there under the surface for most of us and is just as impactful. It's one of the emotions that drives unsustainable work-life balance. The guilt of saying no or not leaving early for an appointment for example.

Many of us can think of a time fear has stopped us at work, whether it be applying for a promotion or speaking out in a senior meeting. Where fear is concerned our minds play negative tricks on us to keep us safe, but this can also keep us unchallenged and unfulfilled. Our biggest fear is often our fear of failure.

I'm going to go out on a limb here and suggest to achieve peak performance we have to fail – and this is the opposite to what we get taught. Our society believes failure is the opposite to success and many of our organisational cultures operate the same way leaving us feeling there's no place for failure and therefore a resulting fear of it on this quest for peak performance. It's why giving ourselves permission to fail is so hard on our journey to brilliance, they seem like competing ends of the extreme and yet it's one of the most impactful strategies we can employ.

Once we understand our unique talents and the barriers that get in the way we are equipped with the knowledge to achieve our potential. From here cultivating a mindset of brilliance and the habits and structures that ensure we remain energised and sustainable unlock the key to peak performance.

Conclusion

Burnout is prevalent and our current climate means our people are struggling to be at their best. We need to equip our teams with the ability to thrive during these uncertain times and understand how to unlock their potential.

Quantity does not always mean quality and being busy does not mean we're productive, in fact the opposite is often true.

The reality is that workload is high, that won't change. We also live in a world where uncertainty and change is the norm and there's more pressure than ever placed on the mental health of our workforce.

My work is focused on teams achieving high performance in a way that's sustainable. To achieve their potential without burning out in the process.

If our people understand how to unlock their potential and become a sustainable resource productivity will increase and our performance does too.

If you'd like to support your team to be at their best, this programme will help reenergise and sustain your people to unleash their potential and go from burnout to brilliance.



Understand the difference between busy and productive



Work smarter not harder and master the habits of high performance



Understand the neuroscience behind thinking patterns and rewire the brain



Learn strategies to cultivate a more calm, clearer mind.



Keep calm amid the chaos and give yourself space to thrive, even in the tough times



Be your best without burning out in the process



Overcome overwhelm and build resilience



Improve productivity and effectiveness



Master the art of slowing down to speed up, understand the power of the mind and how to use it to stay focused, calm and effective. Know the difference between busy and productive and ensure you are a sustainable resource.



WORKING WITH



Available for workshops and coaching programmes in your organisation to transition your team from burnout to brilliance. Jess is a popular keynote speaker and available to speak at your next conference.

Jess is the author of five personal development books, an international keynote speaker and experienced facilitator. She is a well-known expert in Leadership, performance and mindset, with sell-out events and regular media appearances.

With 15 years in HR and a background in the corporate world working with leaders in personal development across many countries, industries, and businesses, I find I can speak their language.





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Achieve Your Potential

“

I help busy, high achievers go from burnout to brilliance to achieve their potential.

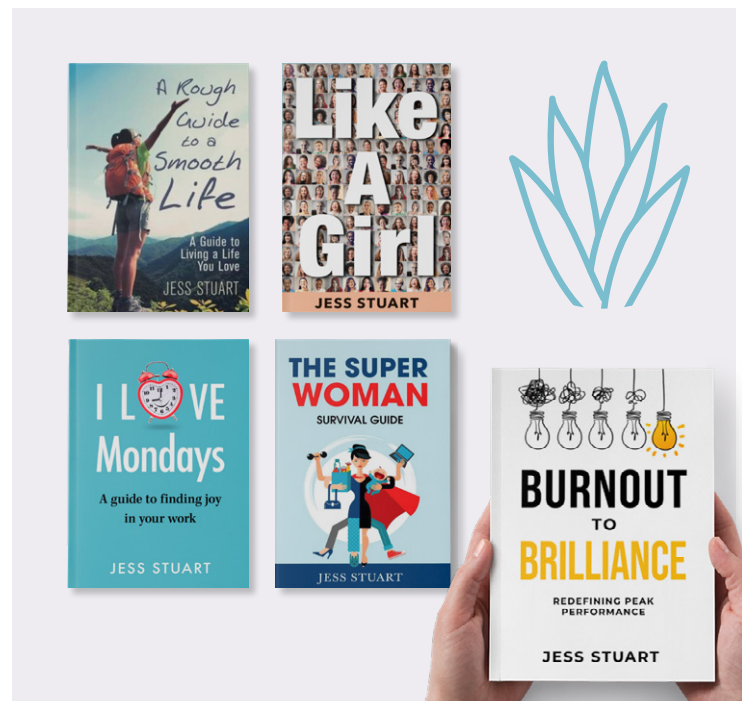
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Jess Stuart:

- An Imposter Syndrome expert who specialises in Women in Leadership.
- Background in Senior HR roles and a decade in the corporate world.
- Highly acclaimed, international event speaker.
- Featured on TV3, BBC, RNZ, Dominion Post, Stuff and in NZ Business Magazine.
- Individual and Corporate Coach.
- Author of five personal development books designed to help people unlock their potential and thrive at life. Giving practical advice and tips for building resilience, leveraging strengths whilst navigating fear, getting over self-doubt and mastering the art of balance.

Jess believes that tapping into your potential doesn't mean doing more or having to be different - it's uncovering what's already there and being enough as you are.



Hear what others have had to say about working with Jess Stuart

Far out the verbal feedback that has streamed in about your session is phenomenal.
– Waikato University,
Women in Leadership Symposium

Jess's work contributed to a number of women being promoted to new roles within in the National Security Workforce.

I saw immediate benefits from Jess' coaching. I noticed a big change in my confidence and stress levels, having explored various scenarios with Jess and receiving support and actionable strategies for these.

Jess is well researched and understands the world of women in leadership very well.

Jess creates aha moments when I listen to her.

Thanks so much Jess! I have lots of take-outs from this session. Lots of food for thought!

Absolutely amazing to work with.
So open, professional, reliable, and relatable. Very engaging with a great sense of humour. Able to relate to different audiences and adapt content when needed. You provided practical tips and strategies and reminded us to "look after you."

Thanks Jess, really helpful. Love how you simplify and bring tips to the forefront.
– NZ Merino team.

Jess helped me understand my skills and strengths and leverage these to become an effective, authentic, confident leader.

Jess brings a positive, friendly and professional attitude that's infectious and inspiring.

She has lived experience which is easy to connect to and her advice is always so practical.



JESS STUART
AUTHOR • COACH • SPEAKER

📞 027 704 3179
✉ jess@jessstuart.co.nz
🌐 jessstuart.co.nz