



This Is Your Life Podcast

Episode 2: “10 Practical Ways to Boost your Energy Level”

Michael Hyatt

Hello and welcome to this episode of *This Is Your Life*. My name is Michael Hyatt, and this is the podcast dedicated to intentional leadership. My goal is to help you live with more passion, work with greater focus, and lead with extraordinary influence.

Today I want to talk about something that’s very near and dear to my heart. That is, 10 practical ways to boost your energy level. I’m going to share with you some of the strategies I’ve learned through the years. Toward the end of the program, I’m going to answer some questions from my listeners about energy.

One question I get asked a lot is, “Mike, how do you get it all done?” Some of my friends say I’m the most productive person they know. I don’t know if they need to get out more or what. I sometimes don’t *feel* like I’m that productive. But I am very energetic, and I think that’s the key. I don’t think it’s about productivity. I don’t think it’s about time management. Though those items really have a place in all of this, I think it really comes down to managing your energy level.

It’s really not about time management. I mean if you have the energy, you’ll find the time. People say all the time, “I don’t have time to work on my marriage.” Or, “I don’t have time to take on those extra assignments at work.” Or, “I don’t have time to develop my writing,” or something else they want to pursue. Baloney. It’s really not about time. The reason they don’t do that is they don’t have the energy. If they had the energy, they would find the time.

I started learning this when I became an executive at Thomas Nelson. Because it seemed like every year and a half to two years, I would get a promotion that would require more from me. It was more stress, more pressure. It was easy for my energy to slip away. There were many nights that I came home from the office and I slumped into a chair exhausted. I was just out of gas. You may be like that as well, when you come home at the end of the day.

When I became the CEO of Thomas Nelson, it got worse. Because then my life consisted almost 100 percent of meetings. I would go from one meeting to the next to the next. Really, from the time I got to the office in the morning until the time I left at night, it was nonstop meetings. That is tough for me,

frankly, as an introvert because I don't get energized by other people; I get energized from being alone. So I had to work through that.

Add to that, the economic downturn, the shift in the publishing industry of which I was a part, going from analog to digital, 600 employees, the requirements and the pressure from investors and bankers. All of that was energy depleting.

Well then when I stepped away from active management as the CEO of Thomas Nelson last April (I'm still the chairman, but I'm out of active management), I realized how much stress had been on me. A friend of mine said, "You don't know how heavy the rock is until you set it down and you go, *Wow, I was carrying that?*" Well, that's how I felt.

But then I got into a new level of stress by kind of starting my own business. I'm writing full time now. I'm speaking. I have to create out of nothing in many cases. I wrote a book this last year. I've launched this podcast. I feel like I've taken my blog to the next level. But it has required a lot of energy. So I have had to be very intentional about managing my energy.

That's the thing that I want to say to you today. You have to be very intentional about it. Whatever your energy level is today, it doesn't have to be at that level. You can become more energetic. And you *will* become more energetic if you follow these 10 strategies.

Now I want to say that it's not *one* of these strategies. You may be doing five, six, seven of these strategies, but it's all 10 of them. If you don't have the energy that you feel you need, I would ask you to go back and look at these 10 when we're done, and say, "What's missing? Where can I improve?"

I would say also that it's not just your physical body that you need to pay attention to or your mind or your spirit. But it's all three of those in combination, one with another, that makes it work. I'm going to talk about them in that order. First, the body. Then the mind. Then the spirit. Again, all are important, but there is a certain order to these.

1. Get plenty of rest. Most people I know are not getting enough sleep. It's that simple. Experts say that the average adult needs seven to eight hours a night to be fully rested. You may be a freak of nature and you can get by on less. But most of us can't get by on less for any length of time. Eventually, something suffers. Something blows out.

Lack of sleep is hard on your autoimmune system. You're not as resistant to diseases and not as resistant to even things like the common cold. Thankfully (knock on wood), I haven't been sick in years. But it's because I manage my rest. I manage my sleep. I get seven hours of sleep at night. Occasionally, in certain seasons, I may try to get by on less, but I *have* to catch up. I start getting grumpy when I don't get enough sleep.

I'll tell you one of the worst things that happens (it may happen to you, too) is when I'm tired, I can't focus. It seems like it takes me twice as long to do the task whether it's writing or reading or creating or just even in meetings. I'm there (you know, the lights are on), but nobody is at home. That's what happens when you get tired. So you *have* to get plenty of rest.

I would encourage you to think about the last week. How much sleep have you *really* been getting? When was the last time you had a *great* night's sleep? Where you awoke in the morning, and you went, "Ah, I'm refreshed. I feel like I have the energy I need." Now maybe not initially because you have to wake up. But when was the last time you started the day with a full tank?

You have to get plenty of rest.

2. Exercise daily. Man, I think this is one of *the* most important things you can do to turn the tide and start feeling more energetic. I'm not a counselor. I'm certainly not a psychotherapist. But I tell you, if I were counseling people who came in to me who were discouraged or down (I know there are people who are clinically depressed, and what I'm about to say won't fix that), but I would start everybody on an exercise regimen because it fixes a lot of stuff.

There aren't too many problems that you have in your life that regular exercise won't improve. Because when you're exercising, you're more energetic, and you have the energy to handle the problems that come your way.

Now, why is this so? Because again, it's counterintuitive. You think, *Ugh, I don't have enough energy to go for a walk or to go for a run or to head to the gym. I'm just too tired. I'm gonna skip it. Or, I'm gonna start next week. Or, I'm gonna start after I have a vacation and get some rest.* This is the counterintuitive part. Exercise leads to energy. The more you exercise, the more energetic you are.

I never feel more energetic than immediately *after* I have done strenuous exercise. It's not rocket science. It's not that difficult to understand. This happens because when you exercise vigorously, you breathe deeply, and the oxygen is really good for you. When you oxygenate your blood, it gets carried out to every part of your body. It makes your body tingle. It releases endorphins, all of the kinds of hormones that give you more energy.

But you have to do this, like a lot of things in life, by faith. You have to do it. You have to exercise, trusting that it's going to give you more energy. I would encourage you if you're not doing this now... Again, think back over the last seven days. How many times have you really exercised? Give this a 7- or a 14-day challenge. Get out there every day and do some exercise, even if it's just a short walk. Do something, but get in motion.

Motion leads to momentum. Exercise daily.

3. Drink eight glasses of water a day or about a gallon of water a day. This is a great energy replenisher too. Most of us aren't drinking enough water. We may drink a lot of caffeine. We may drink a lot of sodas. But we're not drinking a lot of water. Water is kind of like the secret sauce. It's like the secret weapon that high-energy people employ to have the energy they have.

Think of this. What is it, 70 percent of the earth's surface is covered with water? You're about 90-95 percent water. You need water to function in a healthy way, and most of us aren't getting enough water.

If you can just start to replace some of the other liquids you're drinking with water, it will make a *huge* difference. Sometimes you may go out for a meal and you feel famished. Oftentimes, that's not because you're hungry; it's because you're dehydrated. I recommend that you drink a glass of water an hour before a meal. You'll be amazed at how that curbs your appetite.

I just keep water nearby. In fact, I have a glass in my hand right now. I like to squeeze some lemon into it. Then I also use a powdered product (this isn't a pitch because I get nothing off this; I'm just telling you what I do) that Tony Robbins sells called Inner Balance - Pure Energy Greens with MSM. I don't even know what MSM is.

This is a supplement that I put into my water. I've used it for years, and I've found that it also adds additional energy because I'm getting those greens that we miss so often in our diets today. I just keep sipping on that water all day long. It keeps me hydrated and keeps my energy level up.

Another thing that drinking water does is it keeps your metabolism going so that you're flushing the waste out of your system. That's another reason you and I sometimes feel lack of energy. It's because we have too much waste running through our system. Water will help that, will keep our system flushed.

4. Eat high-energy foods. Food is kind of like a chemical or a drug. It has an effect, honest. Have you ever noticed this? If you go out for lunch, and you have a heavy meal, maybe some pasta or some kind of fried food. You come back to the office. You try to get something done. What happens? You get really sleepy.

That's because you're eating what are called *high-glycemic carbs*. These are the carbs that quickly turn to sugar in your body. Because they burn quickly, they turn to sugar. They give you an initial spike. Then you hit a trough as the sugar is burned up, and you're actually in worse shape than when you ate it.

So you have to focus on low-glycemic carbs or the *fat-burning* carbs, not the *fast-burning* carbs. The fast-burning carbs you want to avoid are things like white potatoes, white rice, white flour, especially white bread. Again, this is the energy that isn't burned, but it gets stored as fat.

You can find out where any food you're considering fits in the glycemic scale by going to a glycemic index. I have a link in the show notes for this so you can get back to it. But you need to focus on eating the slow-burning carbs. Things like sweet potatoes, brown rice, and wheat bread. Anything that's dark is really good in terms of carbs.

I would also recommend that you eat more frequent, smaller meals. I eat five or six times a day. This keeps your metabolism up. It keeps your blood sugar more level. I mean, diabetics know this. And again, it just keeps your energy more on an even keel.

5. Take a good multivitamin. Personally, I don't think you need to take a handful of vitamins and supplements every day, but a good multivitamin is essential. If you're going to eat a lot of processed food (hopefully after the last point you won't), it's especially important. Even if you're eating well, a good multivitamin is good to make sure you've covered the basics because we're just not getting the nutrition we need from the food we eat.

Now again, this isn't a plug. I don't get anything off of this. But I use a product called Vitamin Code Men's Multivitamin. It covers the basics. It's a good multivitamin. It's a good multi-mineral. I take two capsules twice a day. Two in the morning. Two in the evening. And I find that that meets my needs. So you might want to make sure you have the basics, the foundation covered, with a good multivitamin.

Okay. So now let's shift from the *body* to the *mind*.

6. Feed your brain. You've heard the saying "garbage in, garbage out." It's obviously true when it comes to computers and technology. But it's true for your brain as well. If you want more energy, you have to stimulate your brain by constantly feeding it new and stimulating content. I don't know of a better way to do this than to read...than *to read*. Reading is like food for your brain. A lot of people say, "I don't have time to read." I say that's hogwash. You have 24 hours in your day just like I do.

What this really means is reading isn't a priority for you, and it needs to be. If you're in a leadership role, it's especially important. Readers lead and leaders read. Leadership begins with thought leadership. The people who lead well are the people who have the great ideas, who take the initiative, who end up influencing other people. If you don't think you have time to read, you might want to read a post on my blog, a guest post by a guy named Robert Bruce, it's called "Five Ways to Make More Time to Read." I've included a link in the show notes for this.

Another thing I would encourage you to do is kill two birds with one stone. I actually don't read that many books. I get most of my book content through audio books. I listen on my iPhone as I'm running or as I'm on the elliptical machine or as I'm exercising, sometimes even in the car when I'm on a commute. There's a website called Audible.com that's kind of like Amazon but for audio books. It has just about every audio book you can imagine, and it's hugely helpful.

Don't be like a friend of mine. I would say this guy is probably the lowest energy person I know. When we would travel together, we would go on a long flight. And I *love* being 30,000 feet in the air. I love the creativity I get. I love the work I get accomplished. I'm so productive. I would be working away on my computer, reading a book, doing something, glance over at him, and I'm not kidding you, he would be staring into space.

He wasn't sleeping. He wasn't working. He was just staring into space. He wasn't feeding his mind. He wasn't creating. This guy was low energy everywhere. As he walked through the halls of the company, he was just low energy. He just looked...I mean if I could pick one word to describe him, I would say...sleepy. He didn't have any energy, and he didn't seem to be interested in doing anything to get more. When I was around him, I would start feeling a loss of energy. It was just energy depleting to be around him.

Don't be that guy. Feed your brain.

7. Maintain a positive attitude. Oh, this is so important! Your attitude is more important than you think. Proverbs 23:7 says, "For as a man thinks in his heart, so is he." We are our thoughts. We become what we think about. Negative thoughts *deplete* your energy. Positive thoughts *replenish* your energy. And you know what? You can *choose* what you think about. You can *choose* your attitude. The thoughts that run through your brain are not just something that you have to live with and just say, "Oh, I'm sorry."

It may take some work. I mean you may have to get some counseling. I don't know what your issues are. But I'm just saying open up the possibility that the thoughts that are running through your head right now, whatever they are, can be chosen. Your attitude can be chosen. You can't always choose what happens to you. I get that. For a lot of people, they've had a lot of bad stuff happen to them. But why is it that some people, who have bad stuff happen to them, don't have unhappy lives? They choose happiness as an attitude.

I recently wrote a post that was called, "The Secret to Happiness as You Get Older." In it, I featured a video in which Tony Robbins interviewed Alice Herz-Sommer, a 108-year-old Holocaust survivor who lives by herself in London and still practices the piano eight hours a day. She is smiling all through this interview. She is *incredibly* joyful. She says the secret to happiness is gratitude. She says more important than that, it is not complaining. The antidote to complaining is gratitude.

If you're finding yourself being grumpy and complaining a lot, that will deplete your energy. But you can change your attitude by choosing gratitude.

8. Watch your mouth. That's right. Watch your mouth. Obviously, your thoughts are going to influence your words and your actions. But sometimes, man, it feels like my mouth has a mind of its own. It just kind of runs out of habit. Have you ever been here where somebody says to you, "Hey, how you

doing?" and without thinking you say, "Well, I'm surviving." Or, "Well, just trying to hang in there." Or, "I'm just waiting for the weekend." Or, "Thank God it's Friday."

This is why I, by faith, when somebody asks me that question, I say, "Great!" Or I say, "Outstanding!" You may think, *Well, I can't say that because that's not how I feel.* I'm telling you, your words will actually shape your attitude. They will certainly shape your perception about reality. But if you don't think you're doing great or you're not doing outstanding, you need to go back to the gratitude exercise.

I have a blog post on this called, "Practicing the Attitude of Gratitude." There's a link in the show notes about it. It's really important, and most of us don't think we are doing great because we've lost our gratitude. We've forgotten what it means to be thankful. But I promise you, you *are* doing great. If you're listening to this podcast, guess what? You're alive. You have two ears to listen with. You have the time to listen to this podcast. There are probably a lot of positive things happening in your life if you'll just notice them and begin to speak them out loud.

Another blog post I wrote that I think is critically important under this topic of watching your mouth is one called, "How a Shift in Your Vocabulary Can Instantly Change Your Attitude." Now this is subtle, but don't miss it.

Recently, I had to go to San Jose to speak. It was after I had been attending a long conference. I was really tired. A friend of mine called me on the phone, and he said, "Hey, whatcha doing?" I said, "Well, I have to go up to San Jose and speak for two days." Now listen to that. It's subtle. I said, "I *have* to," like it was an obligation, like it was something I was being forced to do.

I got off that phone call, and I thought, "You know what? I don't *have* to go to San Jose to speak. I *get* to go to San Jose and speak. How many people out there would die to be speaking at this conference that I'm about to speak at? How many people would love to be living their dream and speaking for a living?" I mean, it totally...just that one word from *have* to *get*...changed my perception.

I would encourage you. How do you use language to represent the tasks you do every day? I mean, do you get up in the morning and say, "Well, I *have* to go to work again." Or do you say, "I *get* to go to work." I have friends right now who have been out of work. Some of them for two years. Some of them *more* than two years. One guy in particular more than two years, almost four years he has been out of work. Do you know how much he would love to get up in the morning and say, "I get to go to work"? "Finally, I have a job. I can pay my bills. I can have the dignity that comes from working. I *get* to go to work."

If you have a job, and you can be thankful, then say it. "I *get* to go to work." Or at the end of the day, "I *get* to spend time with my family. I *get* to spend time with my wife or my husband." Or, "I *get* to go to church today." Whatever it is. You can find the silver lining and focus on the positive. See the glass as half full, and it will energize you. It will change everything.

9. **Avoid energy-depleting people.** This is really important too. Now this may not sound very benevolent. It may not sound very spiritual. But let's be honest. Some relationships are toxic. You know the type. Some people are so negative that they're like energy vampires. When you're around them, they just suck the life out of you. They suck the energy out of you. They are always complaining.

The other night, I was at a party, and I was talking to a friend of mine. He was complaining about one thing after another. It was like a litany of all the bad things that were happening in his life. As he was talking, I could feel my physiology begin to change. My shoulders were slumping. I felt myself frowning just trying to be empathetic with him. I started getting discouraged just listening to him. Finally, I had had enough and I just said, "You know, thanks. I'm going to go sit down and eat now and talk to somebody else." I felt, frankly, like I was being a little rude. But it was killing my energy.

Now there's a place for that. I'm not discounting the role of ministry. If you're in a helping profession, sometimes you don't have a choice over this. But I'm telling you, it's really important (especially if you're in a helping profession) to *intentionally* surround yourself with friends who will build your energy and not take away from it.

10. **Connect with God.** Maybe I should have started with this, but I think I've left the best for last. I would also say that oftentimes people use this as a crutch. They say, "Well, I *am* spending time with God," but they're not doing the other stuff. They're not exercising. They're not eating well. They're not getting adequate rest. They are surrounding themselves with a lot of negative people. And they wonder why they don't have any energy.

What I'm saying is that God has made it in such a way that certainly we don't function like we should without him (I'll talk more about that in a second), but he has also put all of these other means into our life so we can have the energy we need. He expects us to be smart. He expects us to operate with wisdom.

Here's the bottom line here: God is the ultimate energy source. Trying to navigate life without God is like trying to ride a motorcycle without starting the engine. You can do it, but it only works downhill. And unfortunately, a lot of life is uphill.

Now, practically speaking for me, what that means is that I start each morning by reading the Bible. I did it this morning. I don't just read chronologically from Genesis all the way through Revelation. Instead I use a Bible reading plan. I use a Bible published by Thomas Nelson, *The New King James Daily Bible*. I'll have a link in the show notes to it if you want to read it. Tyndale also manufactures *The One Year Bible*.

It allows me to read four separate passages from four different places in the Bible. I don't get in those spots where I'm reading a long extended passage of Leviticus and not get anything out of it. Maybe I should. Maybe I'm not spiritual enough. But I like reading a portion from the Old Testament, a Psalm, a

Proverb, and then a portion from the New Testament. That really works well for me and makes sure that I get something.

Then I also try to pray. I pray at the beginning of each day (actually when I'm still lying in bed before I get up). I pray at the end of the day with Gail as we are lying in bed together. We pray for everything under the sun. Then I pray throughout the day. But I intentionally try to connect with God. I'm not going to have the energy, and I'm not going to have the life I need, unless I connect with God.

Let me just say this in conclusion. Your energy doesn't have to remain where it is today. You have more control than you think, but you *have* to take the initiative. You *have* to be deliberate in managing it.

What is the one action you can take today to boost your energy level?

Well, to comment on this episode, you can visit MichaelHyatt.com, and there are comments under the show notes. Leave me a comment. Tell me what you're going to do today. There is a real power in writing it down. There's even more power in expressing it to others, and you can do that in the comments.

Let me get now to just a few listener questions.

Rick wrote to me and said, "Michael, thanks for your helpful and informative blog. I'm in the early stages of a church plant, and I've been struggling with my leadership direction. Your blog has been an invaluable source of help, and it's probably the only blog I read all the posts on as they come through my RSS reader. Here's my question: How do you find your peak work hours?"

Well the simple answer to that, Rick, is you experiment. You have to work in concert with the design God has created. Maybe you're a morning person. Maybe you're an evening person. Maybe, and I haven't met too many of these, you're an afternoon person. But wherever you're the most energetic, that's what I would use for the most important task I have to do.

For example, my peak work hours are before lunch. The hours in the morning for me are worth twice as much as the hours in the afternoon. I get twice as much done. In fact, the hours before 8:00 a.m. are the most important. That's why I allocate those hours to my most important tasks. I have a post on this where I have written called, "Slay Your Dragons Before Breakfast So They Don't Eat Your Lunch!" That's where I expressed that concept.

John wrote and said, "I love your blog and your new podcast. I alternate between *P90X* and *Insanity*." I'm assuming *Insanity* because he has it capitalized as an exercise program. He said, "I also play tennis, hike, and skateboard. I get seven to eight hours of sleep per night. I try to eat healthy, but I probably don't get enough protein or veggies. Still, I'm pretty healthy. So why does it seem like a lot of people who don't exercise or even think about eating right still have more energy than I do? Thanks, John."

It's not just one thing. Sometimes the tipping point for you may be something different than what it is for me. You said you eat *pretty* healthy, but you're not getting enough protein or veggies. I'll bet you're getting enough protein. You may not be getting enough veggies. You have to eat clean. That's just one thing. Eat clean foods, uncomplicated foods. Not heavy foods, like gravies and fried foods. But clean, simple food...steamed, grilled. Something that's simple.

Again, it's not just that one thing. It's *all* the things. I would go back through the list I've given you and ask what is missing for you. Where else can you take control? Where else can you begin to exert some initiative so that you have all of these things operating in balance?

I got another email from Caleb who said, "Hi Michael. One question I would love to hear your thoughts on in regard to boosting energy is how you deal with disengaging when your workday is through. I have a young family, and I find that even though I don't physically bring my work home with me, I mentally do. This drains my energy a lot. I love my job so I love thinking about it, but it ends up being counterproductive in the long run. Thanks, Caleb."

Caleb, I totally get that. I struggled with this all my life because I love my work too. I always have. I have a hard time turning it off. Gail said to me just this week... I was in the middle of a project, and she looked at me across the dinner table, and she said, "Mike, you have to turn it off. Be here. Be present. Be with me." She was 100 percent right. Not because she was being selfish, but because she was concerned about my welfare and knowing that for me being always on is not the healthiest place to be.

Well, here's what I've done when I've done it the best, when I'm not backsliding. It's been when I have had a commute, and I intentionally begin to refocus on the evening. I begin to think about the outcomes I want to create. What do you want for your family when you get home? How do you want your kids to remember you as they grow older? How do you want your wife to remember you? Or how do you want your husband to remember you?

It's really all about (again, kind of the theme of this podcast) being intentional. Choose your reality. Choose the kind of life that you're trying to create and just make the decision. Not just that I'm going to disengage, which is a negative. Like, "Don't think about white elephants," but instead focus on what it is you want to accomplish. What is the outcome I'm after? Turn that creativity that you obviously have into creating an outcome in your family and in your own personal life that's meaningful to you.

Well, that's it for this episode of *This Is Your Life*. If you have enjoyed this podcast, let me ask you to subscribe to it at MichaelHyatt.com/ThisIsYourLife. It's all one word. This way you won't miss a single episode. You can also find more resources on my blog at MichaelHyatt.com. If you want to catch one of my live presentations, check out my speaking page at MichaelHyatt.com/speaking.

Until next time, remember: Your life is a gift. Now go make it count!