

Enhance your

The top seven energy zappers and how to eliminate them, by Caroline Shola Arewa.

Winter is a time of stillness and hibernation. Energy contracts as we wrap up to stay warm and cosy. Plants germinate in the darkness underground. Birds fly to warmer climates and animals hibernate. It is the season of cold and dark before the coming of spring.

During this period, energy can get very heavy and depleted. We can feel tired and under pressure, wanting to extend our duvet time. There is a natural slowing down and tendency towards procrastination. Although this is in keeping with the seasonal changes, we don't want our energy levels to get so low that we become ill.

One of the major health issues affecting people today is lack of energy. Instead of suffering low energy levels we want enough energy and vitality to live life to the max. We don't want our energy to be totally zapped, leaving us feeling exhausted and stressed out all the time. Why should we, when being full of energy is our birthright? Enjoying an abundance of vibrant energy is desirable throughout the year.

Energy is the fuel we are designed to function on. We need regularly topped-up, good-quality energy for optimum health and wellbeing. Successfully managing your energy levels is the key to experiencing a high quality of life. Yet at times we can lose significant amounts of energy and remain oblivious of how it happened.

Energy has been the focus of my work for over 25 years. I help people develop greater awareness of how they use and abuse energy. Energy is the fundamental building block of life. We are energy beings and it impacts every part of our experience. Increased energy awareness can improve health, wellbeing, relationships, career and even the environment around us.

Greater awareness of energy also allows you to live more consciously and make better choices. After all, life is just a series of choices. The choices you make today determine your future. There are powerful things you can do to eliminate energy zappers and really enhance your energy.

So let me share with you my top seven energy zappers and how to eliminate them.

1 Lack of exercise

Exercise is crucial for creating and maintaining optimum energy levels. When we fail to get enough exercise the body can become lethargic and overweight. Metabolic changes occur and before we know it a vicious cycle is entered of low energy levels, followed by poor motivation and no desire to exercise. In order to raise energy levels again this cycle needs to be broken. And it is not as difficult as it seems.

We use a multitude of excuses to keep the cycle going. Time gets blamed a lot. Even though time is our constant friend. We all have exactly the same amount of time every day: 1,440 minutes. So let's be honest: *we* have got time. Another myth is that exercise will drain energy. No! You will *gain* energy through exercising. Exercise activates your body's circulation and immune system and releases feel-good chemicals. Okay, maybe not immediately! But remember how good it feels when you're finished! So why not break the cycle and schedule a 15-30 minute exercise routine into your day? Yoga, jogging, weights – whatever works for you, even if it's simply leaving the elevator and taking the stairs. Commit to raising your energy through exercise.

2 Poor diet, poor eating habits

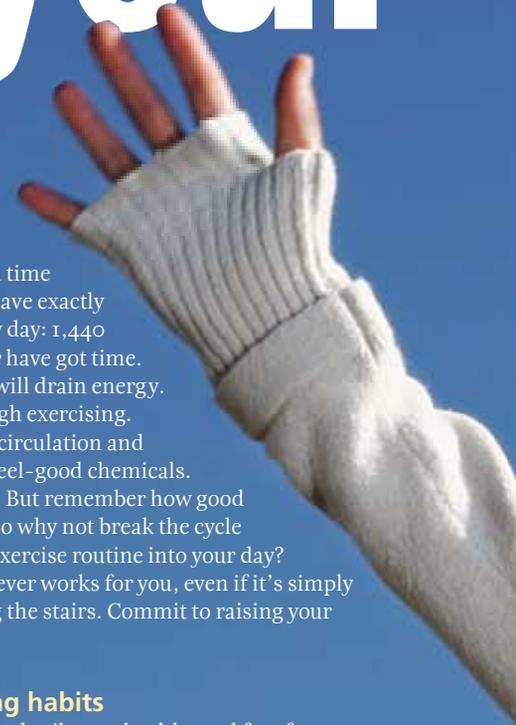
A high-energy diet keeps the body vibrant, healthy and free from disease. It figures that a poor diet will do the opposite, cause fatigue and ill health. We all know "*we are what we eat*", yet in energy terms we can still make poor eating choices. It's not just what we eat, but when we eat, where, how and how much we eat.

A rainbow diet of varied plant-based foods eaten in their raw and live state, as nature intended, is by far the best way to eat. What differs for each one of us is the when, where, how and how much. For example, I don't eat breakfast. I choose mornings to fast and continue the process of elimination. Mid morning I have a green juice. Many people cannot manage the day without breakfast. You must know not only what the experts say, but also what your body says.

How many people are guilty of eating on the run? This is not great for digestion. If I eat on the go, I never feel really satisfied and can overeat as a result. That's where how comes in. It's good to stop and take time to eat. Enjoy the ritual of honouring your body and savouring your food. How much is also very individual but in parts of the world where food is abundant, many people overeat. We need surprisingly small amounts of food to maintain health. Digestion uses a lot of energy. We all know over-eating is draining. Develop conscious eating habits and you will radiate high energy.

3 Over indulging in stimulants

Contra to popular opinion stimulants often drain rather than elevate energy levels. When used regularly, dependence can easily occur. Most stimulants trigger the sympathetic nervous system. This causes the body to secrete a neurotransmitter called epinephrine, the "fight-or-flight" hormone related to stress. Neuro-chemical



energy!



reactions can flood the bloodstream with chemical wastes that drain energy and lead to stress-related illnesses. There is a real danger of getting addicted to the body's own pharmacy.

The usual suspects are tea, coffee, alcohol, refined sugar, cigarettes and hard drugs. Plus the more natural stimulants that are also best used in moderation, such as raw chocolate, or cacao. Remember, these are also stimulants. Your body is very finely tuned and always seeks equilibrium. Stabilize the body's inner chemistry without the use of stimulants and allow energy levels to naturally rise.

4 Insufficient rest and relaxation time

Overwork is a major energy zapper. The culture of working long hours, staring at computers in synthetically-lit offices or working from home without clear boundaries causes tiredness, poor concentration and eventually leads to exhaustion. We live in a fast, "I need it yesterday" world. There is always more we can do. So we have to decide when enough is enough!

Your body is able to self regulate, but only if you use your system efficiently. We've heard about the sympathetic nervous system (SNS), which acts much like an accelerator. Working alongside the SNS is the parasympathetic nervous system (PSNS). This acts like a brake, secreting neurotransmitters that trigger the relaxation response. It stands to reason that we cannot live life with the accelerator on all the time.

Relaxation tools such as breathing exercises, meditation and mindfulness techniques balance energy. I advocate two-minute vacations. Time to stop, breathe, relax and simply be! Why not take one right now. For the next two minutes close your eyes, be still and focus on your breath. You will be surprised at how refreshing it can be. Use this simple tool several times a day to rest your system, trigger the relaxation response, and create an immediate change in your energy levels.

5 Negative thinking, negative self-talk

Appreciate the power of your mind. It works for you 24/7, every day of your life. You talk to yourself more than anyone else speaks to you. What are you thinking and saying? Is your self-talk positive and encouraging? Or do you find yourself using terms like, "It's just not me, I can't, Its too late, I'm too fat, I'm broke, I could never, Life is hard", etc etc! Negative thinking and judgemental self-talk zap energy in a big way.

Your mind believes everything you say. *Whether you say you can or you say you can't you are always right.* So why use unconstructive, negative self-talk? If the way you talk to yourself is anything other than positive and encouraging, you are wasting time and precious energy. Change the script, sing a different tune, fake it till you make it, whatever it takes. But make sure the way you speak to yourself is the way you would speak to a treasured friend.

6 Toxic relationships

Note that I use the term treasured friend! Energy is enhanced when we value healthy relationships and release unhealthy ones. Friendships and other relationships drain energy if they go past their sell by date! As you've probably heard, people come into our lives for a reason, a season, or a lifetime. The trick is to determine who's who and act appropriately.

Instead we are given to complaining about people, whinging when things go wrong, and at our worst excessive energy can be used in anger, guilt, rage and resentment. All these emotions cause chemical reactions in the body. And according to pharmacologist

and research scientist Candace Pert, we get addicted to these chemicals. Emotions create specific chemical signatures in the body. So if you get angry time and time again, or harbour resentment, you get used to the chemical signature and start creating drama in order to get your internal fix.

You actually get addicted to whinging, complaining and living life as a constant drama. Now don't get me wrong. We all complain and get angry at times, but when our relationships at home or work cause excessive stress and negativity, they are toxic and its time to release and let go. Preserve energy by fully appreciating those you love and being courageous enough to release those who are with you for a reason or a season.

7 Cluttered environment

Last but not least your environment has a major impact on your energy levels. A clutter-free external space is generally a reflection of a clear and focused mind. Clutter usually reflects what is going on in your psyche. A busy, disorganised and distracting environment probably means you are overwhelmed, lack clarity and find it hard to concentrate. Our clutter reveals what is really going on inside.

It's important to mention that we all process information differently and that this is mirrored in our environments. Some people file things away neatly while others leave piles dotted around. Left-brain dominant people tend to be filers; they like things organized and sequential. Right-brain dominant people lose things in files and can find anything in piles, because they are spatial thinkers. It's useful to know your dominance and have realistic expectations. You can file or pile, whichever works for you, but clear your environment regularly to avoid overwhelm and energy blocks.

Your environment must be comfortable for you. Some people function in what is deemed clutter to others. Ultimately it's about freeing up your energy and learning to let go of excess; developing an environment where creativity flows and you feel energized.

So this winter, be expansive and boost your energy levels.

Remember, it's all about raising awareness of how you use and abuse your personal energy resources. Be sure to get sufficient exercise to keep your energy flowing and be mindful of the way you eat. Avoid energy-draining stimulants. Instead of reaching for coffee and chocolate when you are feeling tired, get into the habit of putting the brakes on. Take time to relax and re-balance your energy.

Don't let doing take over from simply being. After all we are human beings, not human doings! Stay mindful of how you speak to yourself and choose carefully who you allow into your inner circle, your energy field. Show gratitude to the people who truly uplift your energy. And be prepared to let go of things, thoughts and habits that no longer serve you. Make the conscious decision to enhance your energy and start living life to the max!



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