

Taking Care of Yourself in Stressful Times

I'm fine. That's a common answer to many questions today, isn't it ranging from how you're doing today to, you seem really stressed? How are you doing? And we answer, I'm fine.

It reminds me of when I was on a bicycling tour in Switzerland with my wife. It was led by two Italian nationals, who were very fluent in English, as well as in German, French, and Italian languages you would expect a guy to be familiar with when you're in Switzerland. The group consisted of mostly Americans, but there were a few Canadians and a couple Europeans involved. At one point in the trip, one of the guys asked me, "How are you doing?"

And I said, "I'm fine."

He goes, "Ooh, that's not good," and we got into a conversation and I asked, "What do you mean, that's not good?"

He says, "We've learned that when Americans say, I'm fine, that they're really not. Or if they ask whether they really enjoyed something to do with the trip, and they said, It's fine, then it really wasn't."

Let's take this to the broader concept related to the essay that accompanies this podcast episode, where I suggest that we're all \$1 million race horses. If you owned a million dollar racehorse, you'd make sure that it got adequate diet, a good diet. You wouldn't be feeding junk food, right? No junk food for a \$1 million racehorse, you make sure it gets plenty of exercise, you'd make sure that it has proper training, and that it had enough sleep. Well, if you consider yourself as that million dollar racehorse, are you really taking good care of yourself?

If you're not, what should you be doing? In the essay, I go through various aspects of taking care of oneself. But one of the things that struck me was the fact that the more you take on in projects or work, the more free time you really ought to schedule for yourself. And by free time, that means no work. That means don't check emails, don't return phone calls, don't check in with the office. It's not just work it's projects. For example, in my office, we've instituted a new CRM client relationship management platform, it's been fairly stressful to implement both for the employees as well. As for the attorneys. We've revamped our client care program significantly. I also take time out all the time to write articles for trust estates magazine, of which I'm on the editorial advisory board, and that believe it or not, is a little bit of stress, you want to make sure that the articles insightful, and that it provides valuable information to the readers. I also write a weekly column in the newspaper geared not to professionals, but to just plain people about estate planning, and again, trying to make that interesting, 52 weeks a year.

All of these projects that I have, mandate that in order for me to stay fresh and focused and to produce good work, excellent work, I need to take time off, and I do. This summer I spent eight weeks in my Mountain Home up in North Carolina. I was working part of that time. But other parts of that time, I was bicycling in the mountains. I was doing all these things with my wife, we went on some really nice hikes, and we spent plenty of time touring breweries, which negated all the exercise that I got, and some other things. So, I am adhering to my own mantra of you have to take time off, you have to take free time.

Now the biggest complaint or the biggest obstacle that I hear from my colleagues, estate planning attorneys around the country, is "I don't have the time to do that, Craig, you have a fabulous practice, and you're able to do this good for you, but if I left my practice for any period of time, it would die."

What you want to create is something called a self-managing practice, it should be able to survive your absence for a period of time. For example, two years ago, even though I exercise a lot, and I was a triathlete competing in Ironman triathlons, I had an emergency triple bypass, and I was out of the office for quite some time after that. But my law partners and my staff kept things going as if I wasn't even absent. So that's kind of what you want.

Now, some of you are solo practitioners, but even so you can still create a self-managing practice, and that's one of the things that we talk about in the Freedom Practice and in our Blueprint Program, how to create that self-managing practice, but it all starts with you. It all starts how you prioritize yourself, and not only your physical health, but your mental health.

So I hope that this provided you some insight. Keep in mind by the way, that this coming Friday, we have the Practice Xcelerator Preview, where I promised to give you a tip. We're going to do in about 50 minutes, I'm going to tell you how to double your average estate planning fee without changing your fee structure in that time period, so do tune in. It's at noon eastern time. This Friday, we have a sign-up button near this essay.

As always, to your bigger future, I'm Craig Hersch.