

Find your third place!

As a workplace performance consultant working with thousands of people each year, the number one complaint I hear is that people don't get enough time to spend with their family.

Yet when most people get home, what are they thinking about? WORK! Due to the rising levels of stress and pressure, fewer and fewer people are truly engaged and present with their family members at the end of the day. Most people arrive home and even though they have physically left the office, mentally they are still there. What is going wrong? Why are we performing better at work than we are at home?

One of the reasons why people are finding it hard to switch off at the end of the day is that we are not tapping into the mindset of the home environment. Every external environment has a specific mindset and when we successfully adopt that mindset we become less stressed, more present and more successful in that environment.

For example the mindset during most people's working day is one of fast pace, time scarcity, competition, high expectations, and decisive decisions. Compare that to the mindset of our home, which is slower paced, nurturing, supportive, and far less focused on outcomes and performance. Obviously these two environments are very different and making the mistake of entering one environment with the mindset of the other is a recipe for disaster.

The research I have done into this issue reveals that most people are carrying the mindset of the work environment home with them and expecting their home to run like their office.

One executive from a large financial institution articulated this problem perfectly: "Because I work such long hours, I rush home at the end of the day; the problem is that my mind is still in work mode and I try to run my home like my office. I walk in the door and I finish my wife's sentences because she doesn't talk fast enough, I yell at the kids because they are not time efficient. I drive my family crazy!"

The result of this inability to switch into the home channel leads to family tension, disengagement and a serious decline in personal relationships. The key to switching from work to



Here's how to improve your life with a profoundly simple idea – just formalise the switch from your work mindset to a home mindset.



Dr Adam Fraser explains how it works.

home is finding your third place. Your third place is where you alter your mindset from work to home; it is a formal time where you consciously switch over. A coaching client of mine who works in a high-pressure environment has his third place down to a tee, the result is that despite the stress of his job he manages to be incredibly patient, supportive and attuned to his home environment.

When he enters the house at the end of the day, he goes straight to his room without talking to the family, takes off his suit, has a shower, does five minutes of meditation and then writes down all the things that were bothering him. Then he goes out to greet the family. This ritual allows him to release the stress of the day and switch onto the home channel by altering his mindset to suit his environment.

Other people I have worked with have their own variation of the third place. Some people use the train trip home, while others use the gym. One female executive parks her car three streets away from her house and sits in her car for five minutes practising meditation to calm

down before she walks in the door. That is her third place.

One thing that the third place does is that it helps you to be more "present" when you are with your family. "Being present" is a term to describe living in the here and now. It's about focusing on the current task so much so that you lose yourself in whatever you are doing. If you are writing a report, focus entirely on that report without thinking of the other things you need to do later in the day.

Likewise if you are having a conversation with someone, totally immerse yourself in that conversation, don't let your mind drift. So often we have conversations and we are not really present, we might be talking to that person but we are thinking about other things.

Business is built on relationships, and the greatest compliment you can give another person is your undivided attention. We all have a highly tuned BS detector, and we know when people are not truly engaged or listening to us.

Some people believe that being present is the key to team building. Companies spend millions of dollars a year getting people to build better relationships within an organisation. They usually spend this money on personality profiling, but isn't the first step getting them to engage and be present with each other?

Fewer memories

In addition, some psychologists are now talking about the concept that people are creating fewer and fewer memories. The reason for this is that memories are created in the present and the fact that most people are either obsessing about the past or worrying about the future means that they are not laying down current memories.

The third place facilitates the chance of being present at home because when you are aligned with the mindset of that environment you are far more likely to focus on what is happening in the here and now. **What will be your third place?**

Dr Adam Fraser recently presented at each of the QLS CEO Breakfast Seminars and will speak at this month's Gold Coast Regional Symposium. He is one of Australia's leading educators, researchers and thought leaders in the area of human performance. For the past seven years, Adam has been working exclusively in the corporate and business world to elevate and sustain the performance of the employees of the companies that hire him. See: www.dradamfraser.com.

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