

MODERN SUCCESS STRATEGIES FOR ENTREPRENEURS

By **Paige Arnof-Fenn**



I started a global branding and digital marketing firm 24 years ago. As a small business owner it is easy to get overwhelmed. Staying healthy is about finding ways to unwind/relax as part of my day. It is about balance/integration. It might sound counterintuitive but a powerful habit is to disconnect from technology and focus on cultivating human/face-to-face relationships. Meeting for coffee/lunch even virtually not only allows you to refuel/recharge but it also accomplishes so much more than e-mail/social media posts. It's important to give yourself permission to say no. Whether it means sleeping in (no to an alarm clock), meditating, taking a walk, or just turning off the phone/computer (no I will respond later on my own

schedule), simple acts of letting myself relax and enjoy the moment are the very best gifts I can give myself. What I have come to appreciate and realize is that "*me time*" is not a luxury or pampering like it was in my youth, now it is maintenance! I have learned first hand that less can be more.

These habits were critical when my in-laws, father, mom and stepdad all started to get sick and I wanted to be there for them. They all lived thousands of miles away so I started to work less. After years of decline they each died about 8 months apart (7 people in 6 years). So I had to take very good care of myself or I would not have been helpful to anyone else. I started working out every day.

I started planning me time on my calendar. I became more comfortable with white space in my day and stopped over scheduling myself. And guess what? My business did not suffer, in fact it became stronger. We moved up the food chain and have better clients. I do not think I could ever go back. Downtime and vacations are not optional, you need to take breaks to be productive, creative and energized. I created a platform to do work I enjoy and feel energized by. I feel I have found my purpose because I used to work all the time and life was passing me by. I got raises and promotions but I was all work and no play and I did not feel fulfilled. Since starting my business I have joined boards and volunteered at several organizations. I am a mentor to the next generation of leaders and have helped build a very successful anti-bullying program that >300,000 middle school aged kids have gone through. As an entrepreneur I am able to write articles, contribute to books and speak at events to share my experience and lessons learned.

As a result of losing my loved ones my definition of success has changed a lot, instead of looking at finish lines like #s/job titles/houses/cars/level of public profile I factor in things like whether I get to do work that at least sometimes lets me feel like I made a genuine difference in the lives of other people. Being helpful to my husband/friends/clients/nieces/nephews/ godkids/mentees makes me happy.

It is great knowing my experience and hard fought lessons learned can be put to good use as a wife/advisor/coach /consultant/friend/volunteer/ aunt/godmother/Board member. I am just trying to leave the world better than I found it and be remembered by the people whose lives I touched as a force for good in their lives. After losing my loved ones I learned firsthand no one on their deathbed wishes they worked more/made more money/won more awards. They just want to be with the ones they love most to tell them they mattered. I think of those people often and the roles they played in my life. I want to be remembered for passing along the very best in me to others so their lives are better and happier in some way because I was part of it. That's pretty much it. I try not to sweat the small stuff, it's just a distraction.

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