

Tips & Advice

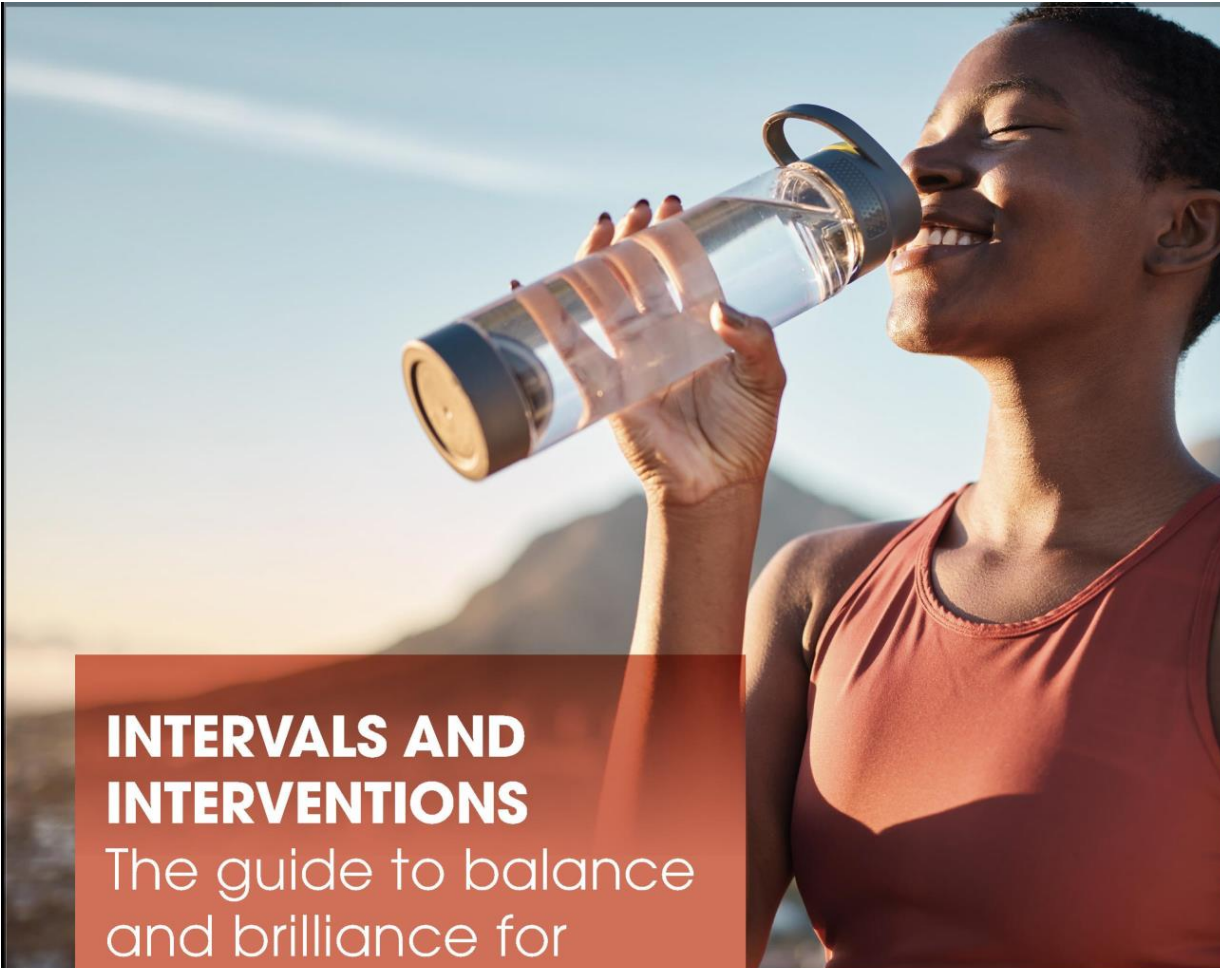
194 STANDARD BANK TOP WOMEN LEADERS



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INTERVALS AND INTERVENTIONS

The guide to balance and brilliance for businesswomen

By Lucia Dramat

For many, Monday mornings are the epicentre of fatigue and stress. But for the career-driven, for the quintessential businesswoman on the rise it's Game Time, a chance to solve problems, connect the elusive dots, and take bold steps forward. That said, even high performers aren't immune to the toll of imbalance. The 24 hours we all get can feel painfully insufficient when career, family, health, and relationships are all vying for your attention.

Over the past five years, topics like mental health, mindfulness, and burnout have taken center stage and for good reason. The Harvard Business Review reports that "burnout affects nearly 50% of top-performing professionals who lack deliberate recovery routines. Even more alarming, the ICAS 2023 Report ranks South Africa 5th in the world for burnout.

That's why I've spent the last few years developing strategies to counter these trends. One such strategy is the concept of

Intervals and Interventions, a powerful duo that can help you maintain energy, clarity, and joy as you build the life and business you desire.

Interventions challenge your comfort zone, allow for nerves and excitement but reward you with renewed perspective

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motivation, participants report higher confidence, happiness, and resilience in challenging situations.

Here's what adding Intervals to your life could look like:

10-minute morning movement: Walking outside or doing a short stretch boosts blood flow and endorphins. "Just 10 minutes of physical activity improves focus and mood for up to two hours." (Iowa State University)

Morning gratitude practice: A 5-minute reflection on three to five things you're grateful for reduces stress and boosts optimism. UC Davis found that daily gratitude journaling led to 25% higher energy levels and 23% more optimism.

Other impactful intervals might include:

- Drinking more water throughout the day
- No screens 30 minutes before bed
- Exercising 3–5 times per week
- Regular nature walks
- Relaxed time with friends or loved ones

To get the most out of Intervals, you need to customise them to your time, goals, and needs. It may require setting boundaries and realigning priorities but the reward is a more balanced, present and vibrant version of you.

THE IMPACT OF INTERVENTIONS

If Intervals are the rhythm of a song, then Interventions are the crescendos, the high notes, the chorus, the unexpected bridge. They are the bold, planned disruptions that energise you, reset your vision, and spark your creativity.

Without interventions, life can feel mundane and stuck on autopilot. Interventions challenge your comfort zone, allow for nerves and excitement but reward you with renewed perspective. One of my most memorable interventions was a solo trip to Paris for a speaking engagement. Going on

my own and not knowing anybody outside of a few online interactions to finalise the booking. I juggled the excitement of exploring this romantic and dreamy city while simultaneously feeling out of my comfort zone not knowing if the audience would relate to me and being unfamiliar with my surroundings.

The trip to Paris, albeit for work, was an intervention that turned out to be the highlight of my year. The entire experience energised me and elevated my zest for work and life. Interventions are great for fresh perspective, renewed energy and serve as a celebration of your milestones.

Unlike intervals, interventions may take more planning and investment. But when chosen wisely, their effects can last months, even years.

Examples of transformative Interventions:

- Creative escapes (Art, dance, writing, or music retreats): "People who engage in creative retreats report 20 - 30% greater life satisfaction for months afterwards." (University of Westminster)
- Personal growth workshops or conferences
- Vision boarding weekends
- Solo travel adventures
- Challenging physical activities (hiking, paragliding, skiing)

YOUR TURN: BUILD YOUR RHYTHM & YOUR HIGH NOTES

Whether you're building a business, leading a team, or chasing a dream, your energy is your most valuable asset. As I tell my clients, take time to take stock and reflect on your life, energy, and vision and create your own plan of Intervals and Interventions.

What would your life look like if you intentionally added rhythm and highlights?

Plan your Intervals. Book your Interventions. Your brilliance deserves a balanced, energised, and elevated version of you.

THE POWER OF INTERVALS

Intervals are the rhythm and routine in your life that not only create structure but also actively fuel your energy and clarity. They're the small, consistent habits that compound over time. And they work - even when they only take a few minutes.

In fact, McKinsey & Co. found that "people who engage in regular micro-wellness routines show 25% higher decision-making capacity." I see this firsthand through my programmes like 21 Days In Full Bloom and The Elevated Mindset Series. After just 10 minutes a day of structured





BUSINESS SUCCESS ADVICE FROM LEADING WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS - 10 TIPS

By Tara Turkington, Founder
of Flow Communications

PERSEVERANCE IS KEY

Starting a business is like taking the first step on a long hike that will have many peaks and valleys. Running a successful business is all about the route, the experience, getting lost and refinding your way, forging new paths, interacting with the people you encounter on your journey, and persevering through all the ups and the downs.

Statistically, most businesses fail within the first two years, so it's only the fittest, most tenacious and most resourceful that will survive.

LEARN FROM THE BEST

Here are 10 tips from leading South African women entrepreneurs to help you along your journey.

Know your "why". If you know what value you are wanting to add to the world through your offering, you always have your guiding direction. – Kim Potgieter, Chartered Wealth Solutions

Rather than worrying about finding a particular niche or a "new" idea (it's been said there is no such thing), rather know what problem you want to solve with your business. Do you want to help people, as Kim Potgieter does, with planning for a successful retirement? Do you want people to enjoy a healthier yet delicious way of eating chicken as Robbie Brozin and Fernando Duarte did when they founded Nando's? It doesn't have to be something huge and unique – it can be as simple as helping people to communicate better with one another or offering quality products or services in a particular field.

People will view you as you portray yourself. If you project confidence and passion, people will believe in you and your business. – Vimala Ariyan, Southern African Institute of Learning

As an entrepreneur, you need to believe in yourself and your ability to succeed.



There are plenty of times you will doubt yourself, which is fine (it's also important to remain humble and never be arrogant), but deep down, you need to believe you can. It's usually best to ooze confidence towards potential customers, suppliers and employees. If you ever don't feel confident in front of these people, quite frankly, you need to fake it.

Listen to advice given and take action where you feel it will benefit your business; you don't have to take action on all advice given. – Peta-Lynn Pope, PwC

You'll get loads of advice as an entrepreneur. Use what's useful and lose the rest. No situation and no business are the same. When in doubt, listen to your gut. As the saying goes, "if the plan doesn't work, change the plan, but not the ultimate goal".

Taking one step forward and three steps back is not necessarily a bad thing. Taking three steps back allows you to reassess, realign, refocus and regain your balance to restart with renewed power and purpose. – Zaida Enver, Pure Grit

If starting and building a successful business was easy, a lot more people would do it. You are going to go backwards and get lost, and that's okay. Always remember, you're in it for the long haul.

Find your tribe – it makes the very complex entrepreneurship journey easier to navigate. – Ayanda Mzondeki, Liyema Consulting.

Build a small circle of trust of advisors whose opinion you value. If possible, do this with other entrepreneurs, who will understand your journey.

Network, network and network. Linked to finding your tribe – put yourself out

there to meet different people to expand your network, expand your insights, see what others are doing and understand business trends. Make sure you meet other business owners and join business associations.

Running a successful business is all about the route, the experience, getting lost and refinding your way, forging new paths

Organisations like WEConnect South Africa (for women-owned businesses of all sizes, including start-ups) and the Women Presidents' Organisation (for businesses with over \$1-million in annual revenue) should be on top of your list. – Jean Chawapiwa, Win Win Solutions 4 Africa, and head of WEConnect South Africa: Networking gives you support and affirmation (managing a business is a lonely walk), and helps to scaffold you by learning through the mistakes and experiences of others.

Most problems in business, whatever your industry, are similar. They revolve around cash flow, sales, staff, and growing revenue and profitability. You might not be experiencing a particular problem, but understanding the issue from someone else's perspective will help to prepare you for if or when you do.

Don't be afraid to fail, remember that we all do at times. The success comes in recognising it and "failing fast". – Judy Sunasky, Prime Cleaning

Ask any successful entrepreneur about their failures, and they'll have stories to tell. Those who haven't failed, haven't tried

much. Failure and tough times will teach you far more about yourself and your business than the times when you're flying along.

Do not rush through laying the foundations of your business and attend to cracks before they grow. – Helen Williams, CleanAll Services

It's often said about parenting, "Small children, small problems. Big children, big problems." Businesses are much the same. Problems don't necessarily go away with growth. Don't be afraid to confront conflict and do what's right for the business.

Build a roadmap to success – know your purpose, have a vision and be disciplined enough to follow through. – Christi Maherry, LAWTrust, V3 Foundation
Your business efforts need to be intentional. Life is short; make sure you live it wisely by having an idea of where you want to go on your business journey. That includes the way you'd like it to end.

Entrepreneurship is like space exploration. Small steps are big leaps. Too often, people chase the single silver bullet (the one, great, game-changing idea ...), but the reality is, it is much more activity focused. Don't underestimate things like preparation, taking advantage of timing and opportunities and, of course, backing yourself, even in situations you've never explored before. If you're uncomfortable, you're learning. – Genevieve Allen, Sherpa Kids South Africa

One of the great things about starting and growing a business is that you'll never be bored. It will challenge you every step of the way. Enjoy the journey, allow yourself to enjoy the sights along the way and, hopefully in the future, you'll be able to look back and marvel at just how far you've come.





RESILIENCE, VISION, AND PURPOSE

9 lessons I've learned as
a woman entrepreneur

By Amber Sambo, Founder
of StrategiWorks

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As a woman entrepreneur building from the ground up, I've learned that success isn't just about hustle – it's about alignment, clarity, and staying true to what matters most. From navigating cash flow challenges and raising a child, to launching multiple income streams and partnering with purpose-driven brands, I've picked up a few lessons worth sharing. If you're a fellow woman entrepreneur – or aspiring to be one – these are the insights that have helped me the most. One thing you learn quickly? Resilience should be your middle name. Entrepreneurship is a battlefield – and when you're a woman, the obstacles are often doubled. But you keep going, because the vision is worth it.

1. Know your values – they're your compass

Before you brand, pitch, or plan – get clear on your values. They will guide everything: the clients you serve, the projects you take on, the people you partner with. When the business landscape feels uncertain, your values become the anchor that helps you navigate with confidence and integrity.

2. Don't wait to be 'ready' – start where you are

Many of us feel unqualified when we start. I did. I used free tools, borrowed resources, and offered my skills where I could. But here's what I've found: action builds clarity. You don't need perfection to begin – you just need momentum.

3. Structure your business around your life, not the other way around

Whether you're a mom, caregiver, or juggling multiple roles – your business should serve your life, not drain it. For me, flexibility is power. I've learned to build models that allow for parenting, rest, and creative freedom without sacrificing purpose or income.

4. Collaborate, don't compete

There is room for all of us. Some of my best wins have come from collaborating with other women-owned businesses.

Whether I'm outsourcing services or co-creating campaigns, I've seen how much more sustainable business becomes when we build together. The only person you should be competing with is yourself.

Always strive to be a better version of who you were yesterday – in mindset, leadership, and action. When we focus on growth rather than comparison, we all rise.

5. Have multiple income streams – but be intentional

I run a strategy consultancy, a nail brand, and launching a holiday club business. But I didn't start them all at once. Every stream was built with a clear purpose and audience in mind. Diversify but don't dilute. Be intentional about every move you make.

Whether you're a mom, caregiver, or juggling multiple roles – your business should serve your life, not drain it

6. Strategy first, always

As a strategist, I can confidently say: execution without strategy is expensive. Whether you're launching a brand or posting on social media, ask yourself: what's the goal? Who am I serving? What's the long-term plan? Clarity on these questions saves time, money, and stress. And this doesn't just apply to business – it works for your life too. Live it with strategy. Have a plan for achieving your goals. It becomes your personal roadmap – the thing that guides your daily decisions and actions. That's what intentionality truly looks like.

7. Lead with purpose, not just profit

Profit matters but purpose sustains. And when things get tough (because they will), purpose is what pulls you through. My deepest motivation is to create jobs and

unlock opportunities for other women and the youth of South Africa. When we build with purpose, we build legacies that go far beyond ourselves.

8. Network like it's your best business tool

Networking isn't just about exchanging business cards, it's about learning. Every conversation is an opportunity to hear what's working for others, get exposed to new strategies, and spot gaps you didn't know existed. Some of my best insights and partnerships came from simply showing up and listening.

9. The 1% mindset: Your only competition is who you were yesterday. Steven Bartlett often speaks about the 1% mindset – the idea that small, consistent improvements compound over time to create extraordinary results. I live by this. It's not about quantum leaps or overnight success. It's about showing up, reflecting, learning, and improving – little by little, every day.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

According to the 2024 GEM SA report, women own just 21.9% of businesses in South Africa – and yet, the majority of those businesses hire others and contribute directly to job creation. Over 70% of women entrepreneurs employ at least one person, with many making their first hire in the first two years.

These aren't just statistics – they are proof that women-led businesses are building the backbone of our economy. And while youth unemployment remains staggeringly high (45.5% in early 2024), fewer than 12% of young South African women are engaged in entrepreneurship.

Imagine the ripple effect if we empowered even a fraction more. We don't just need more women in business. We need more women building businesses that matter – and doing it with resilience, vision, and purpose.





5 GROWTH STRATEGIES FOR SCALING YOUR BUSINESS

By Keshni Morar

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Standard scaling advice: build systems, hire smart, watch your cash flow. But after years of helping founders navigate exponential growth, I've discovered that sustainable scaling requires something deeper than just tactical execution.

HERE ARE FIVE PRACTICAL - YET OFTEN OVERLOOKED - STRATEGIES THAT HAVE HELPED MY MOST SUCCESSFUL CLIENTS SCALE EFFECTIVELY:

1. Strategic pause points

Most businesses try to scale by doing more. The counter-intuitive secret? Building intentional assessment windows into your growth strategy.

Practical implementation:

- Schedule quarterly strategic review days to assess market shifts
- Build 48-hour analysis periods into major pivot points
- Create weekly deep-work blocks for strategic thinking

Real impact: One of my clients implemented mandatory assessment periods before any investment over R100K. Result? Better decision-making and 40% faster execution on approved initiatives.

2. The performance matrix

While everyone knows about prioritising tasks, few apply systematic performance tracking during scaling. The key is identifying which activities create the highest return on time invested.

Action steps:

- Track your highest-impact activities for 4 weeks
- Schedule critical meetings/tasks during optimal windows
- Delegate or batch lower-value operations

Case study: A founder I worked with reduced her working hours by 30% while doubling revenue by strictly protecting her core revenue-generating activities.

3. Systematic feedback loops

Most scaling strategies focus on output. But sustainable growth requires building systematic input channels first.

Implementation framework:

- Create monthly customer deep-dive sessions
- Establish bi-weekly team feedback rounds
- Set up automated market monitoring systems

Measurable results: Companies using this approach consistently spot market opportunities 3-4 months before competitors.

4. The constraint advantage

Instead of fighting limitations, successful scalars use constraints as accelerators.

Practical application:

- Set artificial time limits on project phases
- Create clear boundary conditions for new initiatives
- Use resource constraints to force innovation

Example: One tech startup limited their feature development sprints to 72 hours. Rather than limiting growth, it increased their speed-to-market by 60%.

5. Strategic integration cycles

High-performance scaling isn't about constant acceleration. It's about intentional oscillation between growth spurts and consolidation periods.

Implementation strategy:

- Build 2-week stabilization phases after each major growth initiative (adjust to the size and impact of the initiative)
- Schedule quarterly strategy review sessions focusing on actual results and adjusting or pivoting where necessary
- Create clear focus blocks for intensive project work

ROI evidence: Teams using this approach show 35% higher sustained productivity

compared to traditional "always-on" scaling models.

KEY PERFORMANCE METRICS TO WATCH

When implementing these strategies, track:

- Team retention rates
- Decision-making speed
- Innovation pipeline health
- Customer feedback velocity
- Cash flow stability

THE COMPETITIVE EDGE NOBODY SEES

While your competitors focus solely on external metrics, this integrated approach to scaling creates compounding advantages:

- More accurate market sensing
- Faster strategic adaptation
- Higher team performance
- Sustainable growth patterns
- Reduced operational waste

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

Month 1:

- Audit current operational patterns
- Identify key leverage points
- Set up initial measurement systems

Month 2-3:

- Implement strategic pause points
- Begin performance tracking
- Launch first feedback loops

Month 4-6:

- Fine-tune integration cycles
- Optimise constraint frameworks
- Measure initial results

THE BOTTOM LINE

Sustainable scaling isn't just about working harder or moving faster. It's about building systems that multiply your effectiveness while preserving your resources.

By implementing these strategies, you're not just building a bigger business – you're building one that's designed to thrive long-term.

Remember: The goal isn't just to reach the next level. It's to arrive there stronger than when you started.





WHAT DRIVES YOU - FEAR OR FOCUS?

By Sonja Shear

Most business owners start their businesses for the same reason. They have a passion for something they want to do, which drives them to come up with an idea and take action. This passion is powerful. It gets the owner to take the risks that many others would not dare take. They leave a secure job to start up their own business.

At the start, this passion helps them overcome obstacles and motivates them to work long hours to succeed. However, as time goes by, the business owner starts losing some of that passion. They will tell you that they get up every day and work tirelessly, trying harder than anyone else, and they are exhausted and often unfulfilled at the end of the day. The business owner now loses the passion that ignited them to start the business in the first place. They stop loving their

business and wonder why they work so hard and still can't get the financial results and business growth they want. They now start considering if they should go back to their old jobs.

Are entrepreneurs just delusional? If what you're doing feels like a struggle, is that how it should always feel? Based on real-world research and case studies from groups of successful entrepreneurs, entrepreneurs driven by fear debunk the



idea that success and happiness go hand in hand.

Do you want to know why so many entrepreneurs, people that are usually fearless in life, are driven by fear when they start their own business? They are not driven by a focused desire to succeed and make a lot of money. They want the safety of a regular salary but the freedom of their own business. Because most of us seek security in our lives, unfortunately, we do the same when we go into business. We miss out on opportunities by being scared off and focusing on failures instead of looking at what the potential rewards could be if something is successful.

The fear of failure drives many entrepreneurs. It keeps them up at night, causing them to second-guess every decision and spread themselves too thin on multiple fronts. But the truth is, entrepreneurs who are driven by a fear of failure are not focusing on what should be their focus: the success that could result from their business ventures.

Entrepreneurs driven by fear of their failing businesses will often make poor business decisions, burn through cash and ultimately fail in two years. Others who are operating under the fear of putting in the effort and facing rejection with new ventures fail to stay focused on what matters most to them, also leading to failure.

Imagine being held back and missing out on many opportunities and successes because of your fears. Success doesn't happen overnight, and it doesn't come easy. The more you know about a successful business and how to start one, the more likely you will succeed. So what if you could turn the tables? What if there was a way to make your business

more successful than ever? What if your business wasn't driven by fear but by focus and rewarded for its successes?

The moment you take the stance that your business will succeed, you start creating opportunities for yourself. You no longer think about failures but look at what rewards are possible when something does happen. We become more stable and secure when we accept that there are no guarantees in life and instead seek opportunities. Creating a vision for your business and planning your business success is crucial if you want it to succeed over the long term, but it may be hard for some entrepreneurs to take a step back and have a big-picture view.

Entrepreneurs driven by fear of their failing businesses will often make poor business decisions

Entrepreneurs driven by fear will get caught up in the day-to-day running of their business rather than developing plans for long-term profitability or other goals. Recognising this difficulty can help you become more aware of your behaviour and drive you towards planning and creating a vision for where you want your business to go.

It is important to remember that business development is a process, not an event. One cannot expect complete success after a single attempt at launching a company. We are all afraid at the beginning. It is perfectly normal to be frightened by

failure and uncertainty. But many entrepreneurs, driven primarily by fear and worry, jeopardise their business by behaving irrationally.

Just think about it, why do entrepreneurs spend over 70 percent of their time working in their business versus on their business? They are driven by fear, and as a result, they cannot turn their ideas into reality because the fear of the unknown paralyses them. You can eliminate the risk of failure and drastically increase your chances of success. If you switch to focus, set goals for the short and long term, and then develop a plan to achieve these goals. When things go off track, get back on track and do not give in to fear.

It all starts with you, the entrepreneur and visionary behind a new venture. Learn how to produce more than expected by working smarter, taking calculated risks, knowing your strengths and using others to assist you in doing what you can't.

With a vision in place for your business, you will be driven by a focus, not by fear of failure. Focus gives you the confidence to know that you are on the right path, that your product or service will deliver value to your customer and that you have so much more to offer than your competition. Imagine running a business with a solid foundation of independence, accountability and financial security. That is the difference an inspired vision makes.

A business start-up can be very rewarding. There are many reasons to start your own business, everything from control over the work environment to managing your time. No matter what your business entails, you have to focus on success and not lose sight of your end goals and dreams.





ARE YOU TRULY THRIVING OR SIMPLY SURVIVING

By Lindiwe Msiza, Founder
and Managing Director,
Transform Leadership
Consulting



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It is not surprising that women in leadership are expected to balance multiple roles while delivering peak performance. But with the mounting pressures of the workplace, coupled with personal responsibilities and societal expectations, it's no wonder that mental wellbeing often takes a back seat. It's time to change that narrative. Mental health should be at the heart of success, not an afterthought.

BENEATH THE SURFACE: WOMEN'S HIDDEN STRUGGLES

As female professionals, we carry invisible burdens that go far beyond our job descriptions. Grief from the loss of loved ones, divorce, betrayal, and personal setbacks can weigh heavily, yet many of us are expected to keep going without pause, maintaining a veneer of strength. These experiences need time and space to heal, but workplaces often overlook the real emotional toll they take.

We fostered a culture that embraced openness, prioritised mental wellness, and transformed the work environment into one of empathy and support

It's crucial to understand that healing is not a linear process. Whether it's grieving, recovering from trauma, or facing significant life changes, true healing requires patience, professional support, and a compassionate environment. Let's acknowledge that vulnerability and mental wellness are not signs of weakness. True resilience lies in embracing our full, authentic selves and giving ourselves the grace to heal.

A PERSONAL CALL FOR CHANGE: A ROAD WELL TRAVELLED

In 2022, I made a bold decision: it was time to challenge for change. During a meeting with female executives, I asked them, "What is it that truly matters to you?" Their response was unanimous - they wanted to create a workplace where it's okay to be vulnerable. And together, we made that vision a reality. We fostered a culture that embraced openness, prioritised mental wellness, and transformed the work environment into one of empathy and support.

This isn't a concept; it's a transformation I've coached many women to achieve. If you're ready to navigate this transition in a trauma-informed workplace, let's take that journey together.

THE POWER TO LEAD CHANGE: IT STARTS WITH YOU

Female leaders, you are the catalysts for change. You have the influence to reshape the work culture and make mental wellbeing a priority. Here's how you can start:

- 1. Foster vulnerability:** Encourage open dialogue about mental health. Normalise these conversations and create an environment where it's safe to be vulnerable.
- 2. Provide resources:** Ensure access to mental health professionals, support groups, and counselling services that employees can tap into when they need it.
- 3. Rethink expectations:** Challenge outdated performance metrics. Recognise that personal challenges impact productivity and that true strength is found in acknowledging life's ups and downs.
- 4. Lead by example:** Demonstrate your own commitment to mental wellness. Take time off when you need it, set healthy boundaries, and show that self-care is not just permissible - it's essential.

Vulnerability and mental wellness are not signs of weakness

HEALING, NOT JUST COPING

While self-care is important, it's not a cure-all. Deep healing from grief, trauma, and life's challenges often requires professional help. Seeking therapy isn't a sign of failure - it's an act of courage.

By investing in your mental health, you're taking steps to truly heal, reclaim your strength, and grow into your full potential. Healing allows you to not just function, but to flourish and inspire those around you to do the same.

A NEW ERA OF WORKPLACES: THRIVING, NOT JUST SURVIVING

The time has come to revolutionise our workplaces. Imagine environments where women aren't merely surviving but thriving. It requires a collective commitment to challenge the stigma around mental health and a recognition that wellbeing is a fundamental human right.

Let's create workspaces where it's okay to be vulnerable, where mental health is celebrated, and where women support each other in their journey toward healing. Striving for excellence doesn't mean perfection - it means growth, resilience, and self-compassion.

YOUR WELLBEING MATTERS

Your time, energy, and mental health are invaluable. Don't be afraid to:

1. Be patient with yourself.
2. Celebrate your progress.
3. Seek support when you need it.

Let go of unnecessary burdens and prioritise what truly matters - your wellbeing and happiness..





10 WAYS TO CONFRONT YOUR PROCRASTINATION PATTERNS

By Bukeka Mbam

The first step in overcoming procrastination is to confront your procrastination patterns head-on.

In this article, we explore how to find the triggers and behaviours that lead to procrastination in your own life. By shining a light on your tendencies, you can begin to understand why you procrastinate and take the necessary steps to address it.

Self-compassion helps you treat yourself with kindness and understanding

CULTIVATING SELF-AWARENESS

Self-awareness is a powerful tool in recognising when you're procrastinating and understanding the underlying reasons behind it. Through mindfulness practices, journaling, and reflection, you can deepen your understanding of your patterns and begin to challenge them.

HERE ARE SOME 10 WAYS TO CULTIVATE SELF-AWARENESS AND OVERCOME PROCRASTINATION

1. Mindfulness meditation

Regular mindfulness practice helps you become more aware of your thoughts and emotions, allowing you to recognise when you're procrastinating. It helps you develop greater control over your impulses, making it easier to resist distractions and stay

focused on your goals and priorities.

This practice also helps to develop a growth mindset, viewing challenges as opportunities for growth and learning, rather than threats.

2. Journaling

Writing down your thoughts, feelings, and actions helps you identify patterns and triggers, and gain insight into your behaviour. Jotting down your goals and priorities helps you focus on what's important, reducing procrastination caused by lack of direction. Writing down your progress and achievements can motivate you to continue working towards your goals. Regular journaling can hold you accountable for your actions and progress, helping you stay on track.



3. Self-reflection

Regularly take time to reflect on your actions, goals, and values, helping you understand what drives your procrastination. You develop self-regulation skills such as self-control and self-motivation, essential for overcoming procrastination.

4. Find your values

When you find and live in alignment with your values, you can overcome procrastination and achieve your goals with more purpose, motivation, and direction. This requires self-discipline, which can help you overcome procrastination and can boost your confidence, helping you tackle challenges head-on. Living in alignment with your values can bring a sense of fulfillment and purpose, reducing procrastination caused by feeling unfulfilled.

5. Recognise your emotions

Acknowledge and understand your emotions, rather than avoiding them, because emotions play a significant role in procrastination. Recognising and accepting your emotions reduces the need to avoid or deny them.

Label and process emotions: Classifying your emotions (e.g., "I'm feeling anxious") helps you process and manage them, reducing their impact on your behaviour. Increase motivation: This can help you identify what motivates you, allowing you to tap into positive emotions and boost your motivation.

6. Develop self-compassion

By developing self-compassion, you can cultivate a more supportive and encouraging relationship with yourself, helping you overcome procrastination and achieve your goals with greater ease and kindness.

Reduces self-criticism: Self-compassion helps you treat yourself with kindness and understanding, rather than judgement and criticism, which can lead to procrastination. Develops resilience: Self-compassion helps you develop resilience, enabling you to bounce back from setbacks and difficulties that might otherwise lead to procrastination.

Increases self-acceptance:

Self-compassion promotes self-acceptance, helping you accept yourself as you are, rather than trying to meet unrealistic standards that can lead to procrastination. Fosters a sense of common humanity: Self-compassion helps you recognise that you are not alone in your struggles, reducing feelings of isolation and shame that can contribute to procrastination.

7. Practise Gratitude

Focusing on the good things in your life helps you develop resilience, enabling you to bounce back from obstacles and setbacks that might otherwise lead to procrastination. Gratitude practice can help you connect with your values and goals, giving you a sense of purpose and direction, and reducing procrastination caused by lack of clarity or direction.

8. Use self-awareness to challenge negative self-talk

Become aware of your inner dialogue. Notice the thoughts that come up, such as "I'm not good enough," "I'll never finish," or "I'm so lazy." Notice when you're engaging in negative self-talk and reframe those thoughts in a more positive and supportive way. Replace negative thoughts with positive, empowering ones. For example, "I'm capable and competent," "I'll take it one step at a time," or "I'm strong and resilient."

Challenge their validity: Ask yourself if these thoughts are true. Are they based on evidence or just assumptions?

Focus on the present moment: Instead of dwelling on the past or worrying about the future, focus on what you can control in the present moment.

Use affirmations: Repeat positive affirmations to yourself regularly, such as "I am capable and motivated" or "I trust myself to make progress."

9. Practise self-forgiveness

Let go of self-criticism and forgive yourself

for past procrastinating, allowing you to move forward with a clean slate. Self-forgiveness allows you to acknowledge that mistakes are a natural part of the learning process, reducing the need for perfectionism. It helps you to release feelings of guilt and shame, which can weigh you down and prevent you from taking action. Self-forgiveness helps you break the cycle of self-blame and negative self-talk. By practising self-forgiveness, you can develop a more compassionate and supportive relationship with yourself, helping you overcome procrastination and achieve your goals with greater ease and kindness.

10. Seek feedback from others

Asking for feedback from others is a crucial aspect of living a productive life, as it allows you to gain new perspectives, identify blind spots, and refine your strategies for success. By seeking feedback, you can gain a deeper understanding of your strengths and weaknesses, develop a growth mindset, and make informed decisions that drive progress towards your goals. Feedback from others can help you stay accountable, build resilience, and cultivate a culture of continuous learning and improvement, ultimately empowering you to achieve your full potential and live a more purposeful and fulfilling life.

CELEBRATING PROGRESS

Finally, overcoming procrastination is cause for celebration, and I encourage you to acknowledge and celebrate your progress along the way. Whether it's reaching a milestone, overcoming a procrastination hurdle, or simply showing up and putting in the work, every step forward is worth celebrating. By taking the time to recognise your achievements, you reinforce positive habits and build momentum towards even greater success.

Excerpt from the book 'The Productive Life: From Procrastination to Productivity' by Bukeka Mham





HOW BUSY WOMEN CAN NURTURE A LIFESTYLE THAT SUPPORTS WELLBEING

By Sue Ramauthur

In today's fast-paced world, the demands on working women are immense and can feel overwhelming. Balancing a career, personal life, and self-care can seem like a daunting task. However, creating a holistic balance that incorporates exercise and mental health practices is essential for overall wellbeing. A holistic balance refers to the integration of various aspects of

life, ensuring that mental, physical, emotional and spiritual health are all nurtured. For working women, achieving this balance requires conscious effort and strategic planning. The goal is not perfection but a sustainable lifestyle that supports overall wellbeing.

Here's how busy working women can achieve this balance and thrive both personally and professionally.

PRIORITISING SELF-CARE

The first step towards holistic balance is prioritising self-care. This means recognising the importance of taking time for oneself despite a hectic schedule. Self-care can take many forms, like taking a relaxing bubble bath, immersing yourself in a good book, or just taking a few minutes at the end of your day to sit down in a quiet place, with a cup of tea and reflect on the day that was.

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By establishing a routine, we are able to make time for these important aspects of self-care and creating consistency is key to building habits that promote wellbeing. As women, we always feel the need to please those around us, often at the expense of our own personal priorities - learn to say "no" and set boundaries at work and in your personal life. This prevents burnout and ensures that there is time for rest and rejuvenation. Don't be afraid to communicate your needs clearly and prioritise tasks that align with your goals and values.

GET ACTIVE

Regular physical activity is crucial for maintaining both physical and mental health. Exercise helps reduce stress, improve your mood, and boost energy levels. For busy working women, finding time for exercise might seem challenging, but it is essential. If time is a challenge, perhaps opt for short, high-intensity workouts that can be done in 15-20 minutes. Activities like HIIT (High-Intensity Interval Training), brisk walking, or even dancing can be highly effective. These workouts can be squeezed into a lunch break or early morning routine.

If possible, integrate physical activity into your daily commute. Walk or cycle to work or park your car further away and walk the rest of the way - this can add valuable movement into your day.

Make use of breaks during the workday to stretch, walk, or do simple exercises at your desk. There are numerous desk workout routines available online that can help keep you active even in a sedentary job.

PRACTICE MINDFULNESS

Mental health is a critical component of holistic balance. Managing stress

and maintaining a positive mindset are vital for overall wellbeing. Incorporate mindfulness practices such as meditation, deep breathing exercises, or progressive muscle relaxation into your daily routine.

These practices help reduce stress and improve focus and emotional regulation. Take a few minutes each day to journal your thoughts and feelings. This can be a powerful tool for processing emotions, setting goals, and reflecting on achievements. Journaling helps in maintaining mental clarity and emotional balance.

SEEK HELP WHEN YOU NEED IT

Don't hesitate to seek professional support when needed. Therapy or counselling can provide valuable insights and coping strategies. Many workplaces offer employee assistance programmes that provide access to mental health resources. A supportive environment is crucial for maintaining holistic balance. Surround yourself with people who encourage and support your goals.

Cultivate a network of friends, family, and colleagues who understand and support your self-care practices. Share your goals with them and seek their encouragement and understanding.

Whenever possible, negotiate for flexible working arrangements. Remote work, flexible hours, or job-sharing can provide the balance needed to manage work and personal responsibilities effectively. Use technology to your advantage. Fitness apps, meditation apps, and online wellness communities can provide guidance, motivation, and support. Virtual fitness classes and mental health resources are readily available and can be accessed from the comfort of your home. Incorporating holistic practices into daily life requires commitment and creativity.

The first step towards holistic balance is prioritising self-care

HERE ARE SOME PRACTICAL TIPS:

1. Meal planning

Prepare healthy meals and snacks in advance to ensure you're fueling your body with the right nutrients. Balanced nutrition supports both physical and mental health.

2. Time management

Use time management tools and techniques to organise your day effectively. Prioritise tasks, delegate when possible, and break large tasks into manageable chunks.

3. Enjoying hobbies

Make time for hobbies and activities that bring you joy. Whether it's reading, gardening, or painting, engaging in activities you love is essential for emotional wellbeing.

Achieving a holistic balance as a busy working woman is challenging but entirely possible with conscious effort and strategic planning. By prioritising self-care, incorporating regular exercise, fostering mental health, and creating a supportive environment, you can achieve a sustainable lifestyle that promotes overall wellbeing. Remember, the goal is not perfection but progress. Small, consistent steps can lead to significant improvements in your physical, mental, and emotional health, enabling you to thrive both personally and professionally.

Sue Ramauthar is a Wellness Ambassador and Physiotherapist at SuedeWellness

