

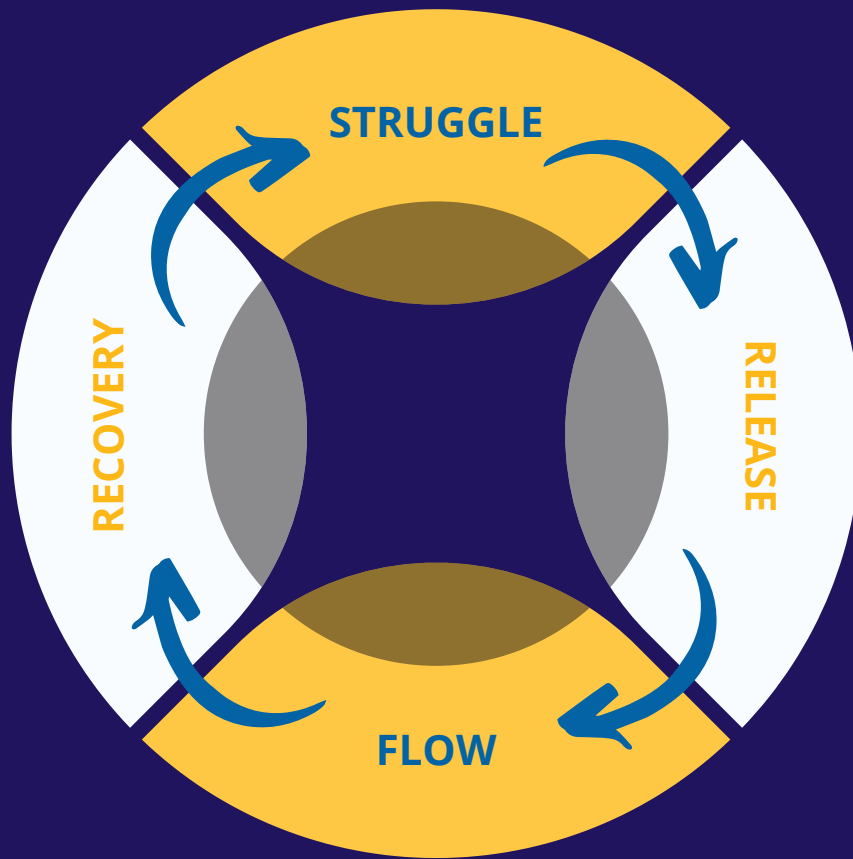


DESIGN YOUR CALENDAR FOR OPTIMAL PERFORMANCE

Optimal performance requires time without distraction or interruption. So, creating space for it is a leadership imperative.

The challenge is to design your weekly calendar for optimal performance, giving you the best chance to reach the optimal performance flow state, where we feel our best and perform our best.

This workbook details 8 practices to help you design your weekly calendar, in line with the neuroscience of optimal performance.



OPTIMAL PERFORMANCE: FLOW CYCLE

Optimal states of consciousness where we feel our best and perform our best are called flow states.

Historically we thought of flow as binary - either we're in the zone or we're out of it.

But, based on the foundational research of Harvard Cardiologist Herbert Benson, we now know that it is a four-part cycle of

Struggle, Release, Flow and Recovery.

The critical insight is that all 4 stages are interdependent. That is, we cannot get into flow without the other stages happening too.

Therefore, we must treat rest and recovery as high-performance non-negotiables to reach our performance potential.



DESIGN YOUR CALENDAR

Consider your own calendar and block out time for optimal performance using the following principles:

1

Weekly Priorities

Set three critical weekly priorities that connect directly to your quarterly and annual goals. Then, schedule specific daily actions to get them done.

2

Recurring Events

Set up recurring events for the things you already know you will do each week - like morning routines, flow blocks, weekly strategy sessions, shutdown routines, email blocks, team meetings, workouts, active recovery, or whatever matters to you.

3

Focus Blocks

Commit to one or two 90-180 minute flow blocks per day without distraction of any kind to do your deepest work. For most people, this is best done in the early part of the day.

4

Reactive Work

Focus on reactive work later in the day that doesn't demand high cognitive capacity like emails, calls and meetings.



DESIGN YOUR CALENDAR

As a leader, consider your own calendar and block out time for optimal performance using the following principles:

5

Shutdown Routine:

Spend 10-30 minutes at the end of each day completing a shutdown routine to celebrate progress and refine your daily actions for the next day to make them as specific as possible. It is important to celebrate the small wins as they compound towards achieving more over time.

6

Release Micro-Breaks

Take a suitably non-stimulating five minute release break every 45-60 minutes to stretch, breathe, hydrate or simply stare at the wall. Do not use your phone, email, TV or anything else that has the potential to distract you.

7

Recovery Macro-Breaks

Take long-term breaks to include any kind of movement, exercise, mindfulness, gratitude, fuel and hydration. It is underpinned by the principles of the high performance flow cycle where release and recovery are non-negotiables.

8

Buffer Zones

Remember to build in buffer zones to account for the undefined actions that will demand your attention along the way.

CELEBRATE THE WINS

Finally, research done by Stanford Social Psychologist, Dr. Christina Maslach, found that “insufficient reward” is just as much of a contributor to burnout as overworking is. Without a clear definition of what makes your day a 'win', you can never declare victory. So, make sure your day has a 'definition of done', by incorporating a daily shutdown routine.

"Sometimes we have the luxury of choosing our challenges, sometimes challenges choose us. What we decide to do about them is what counts."

Mark Pollock



NEED SUPPORT WITH TEAM PERFORMANCE?

Acknowledged as an expert in resilience and overcoming adversity, high performance, and collaboration, leaders around the world ask Mark to support their teams to adapt, perform and collaborate through keynote speeches or masterclasses, co-hosted with his colleague Paula Cunniffe.

If Mark can support your team to achieve more than they thought possible, get in touch at speaking@markpollock.com

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