You are an advocate for naps and taking a needed mental break, but do you believe this is possible or even safe in a prison? How can your love for naps help inside a correctional facility?

Sleep is a fundamental and non-negotiable human need. So if correctional facilities are truly committed to ensuring inmates’ and wardens’ safety and well-being, they will create conditions that allow for healthy sleep and naps.

In an environment like a correctional facility, where people may be more likely to experience high levels of stress, uncertainty and even fear, it’s especially important for people to have the chance to take a few moments to recharge during the day with a nap.
Naps are great for us even when we are getting good sleep at night. According to David Randall, the author of “Dreamland: Adventures in the Strange Science of Sleep,” even a short nap “primes our brains to function at a higher level, letting us come up with better ideas, find solutions to puzzles more quickly, identify patterns faster and recall information more accurately.”

What are some of the little changes we can make in our life to help set our minds up for success? What are some little changes that a business or correctional facility can make?

The first change is recognizing that, for far too long, we’ve been operating under a collective delusion that burnout is the necessary price we must pay for accomplishment and success. Recent scientific findings make it clear that this couldn’t be less true. Not only is there no trade-off between living a well-rounded life and high performance, [but] performance is actually improved when our lives include time for renewal.

Right now, we are in the middle of an incredible transition where multiple behaviors are coexisting in the world of business — from executives congratulating employees for working 24/7 to CEOs like Jeff Bezos and Satya Nadella speaking publicly about needing eight hours of sleep to be most effective and Aetna, led by CEO Mark Bertolini, offering to pay its employees up to $300 per year if they get seven hours per night.

The changes a correctional facility can make may differ from businesses, but the principle is the same. Business leaders are now beginning to talk publicly about the role of sleep and recharging in making good decisions and growing a business. So there is a very
In an environment like a correctional facility ... it’s especially important for people to have the chance to take a few moments to recharge during the day with a nap.

relevant parallel here: We need the leaders in our correctional facilities to spread a similar message and create conditions that allow people to recharge, knowing how that can lead to wiser decisions and meaningful growth.

How is it OK to complete a project by dropping it, or as many people would define as quitting? How can we look at dropping old projects as a more positive thing?

How can we use the third metric and four pillars in a correctional facility?

Stoic philosophy can be especially relevant for those in a correctional facility. In his “Meditations,” Marcus Aurelius did not sugarcoat life: “When you wake up in the morning, tell yourself: The people I deal with today will be meddling, ungrateful, arrogant, dishonest, jealous and surly. They are like this because they can’t tell good from evil. But I have seen the beauty of good, and the ugliness of evil and have recognized that the wrongdoer has a nature related to my own — not of the same blood or birth, but the same mind, and possessing a share of the divine. And so none of them can hurt me.”

Too often, Stoicism is confused with indifference, but it’s really about freedom. As Seneca said, “Once we have driven away all that excites or affrights us, there ensues unbroken tranquility and enduring freedom.”

Some might look at these practices as a luxury — that it’s all very well for emperors and the financially independent, for people who have their basic needs met and have what are known as “first-world problems.” What about those without a job who are struggling to put food on the table? Or those in a correctional facility? In fact, it’s in extreme circumstances that Stoicism has the most to offer us. It is in times of great adversity when we are pushed and challenged that these principles become essential.

How can using these four pillars of well-being, wisdom, wonder and giving help us to become better transformational leaders?

The function of leadership is to be able to see the iceberg before it hits the Titanic. And when you’re burned-out and exhausted, it’s much harder to see clearly the dangers — or opportunities — ahead. And that’s the connection we need to start making if we want to accelerate changing the way we live and work.

How can we find our place of wisdom where we stand in a prison system so we can all thrive together?

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Especially in a prison system, our ability to find our place of wisdom takes on great importance. I’m convinced of two fundamental truths about human beings. The first is that we all have within us a centered place of wisdom, harmony and strength. This is a truth that all the world’s philosophies and religions — whether Christianity, Islam, Judaism or Buddhism — acknowledge in one form or another: “The kingdom of God is within you.” Or as Archimedes said, “Give me a place to stand, and I will move the world.” The second truth is that we’re all going to veer away from that place again and again and again. That’s the nature of life. In fact, we may be off course more often than we are on course.

The question is, how quickly can we get back to that centered place of wisdom, harmony and strength? It’s in this sacred place that life is transformed from struggle to grace, and we are suddenly filled with trust, whatever our obstacles, challenges or disappointments. As Steve Jobs said in his now legendary commencement address at Stanford, “You can’t connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards. So you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future. You have to trust in something — your gut, destiny, life, karma, whatever. This approach has never let me down, and it has made all the difference in my life.”

What is the third metric, and how can people, including mothers, teachers, businessmen, leaders and even prison wardens, use it to improve themselves and where they work?

Over time, our society’s notion of success has been reduced to money and power. In fact, at this point, success, money and power have practically become synonymous in the minds of many. This idea of success can work — or at least appear to work — in the short term. But over the long term, money and power by themselves are like a two-legged stool — you can balance on them for a while, but eventually you’re going to topple over. And more and more people — very successful people — are toppling over. To live the lives we truly want and deserve, and not just the lives we settle for, we need a third metric, a third measure of success that goes beyond the two metrics of money and power and consists of four pillars: well-being, wisdom, wonder and giving.

All of us, no matter where we are in the world or in our lives, can use these ideas to bring more perspective to our struggles and our challenges.

Where did you first get the passion and idea to create The Huffington Post and how do you work through all of the rejections and criticisms we all receive every day?

Bringing together people from different worlds and facilitating interesting conversations has always been part of my Greek DNA. So from the beginning, the whole point of The Huffington Post was to take the sort of conversations found at water coolers and around dinner tables — about politics and art and books and food and sex — and open them up and bring them online.

As for working through the inevitable rejections and criticisms, my mother used to tell me, “Failure is not the opposite of success, it’s a stepping stone to success.” So at some point, I learned not to dread failure. I strongly believe that we are not put on this earth just to accumulate victories and trophies and avoid failures, but rather to be whittled and sandpapered down until what’s left is who we truly are.

What are some of the other differences you have noticed in your life since you passed out from exhaustion at work, and what can we all learn from your past mistakes?
These days, 95 percent of the time, I get eight hours of sleep a night. Once I started giving sleep the respect it deserves, my life improved in pretty much every way. Now, instead of waking up to the sense that I have to trudge through activities, I wake up feeling joyful about the day’s possibilities. And I’m also better able to recognize red flags and rebound from setbacks. It’s like being dialed into a different channel that has less static. One thing anyone can learn from my past mistakes is that our sense of being indispensable is central to the sleep crisis we’re facing — so we need to dispense with that as soon as possible! When I had my painful wakeup call, I’d just returned home after taking my daughter Christina, then a junior in high school, on a tour of prospective colleges. The ground rules we’d agreed on — or, more accurately, that my daughter demanded — were that during the days I would not be on my BlackBerry. But that didn’t mean I would stop working (sacrilege!). So each night we’d eat dinner late and get back to the hotel exhausted. Then, in some sort of role reversal, Christina would do the responsible thing and go to sleep while I acted the part of the sneaky teenager and stayed up late. After she’d fallen asleep, I’d fire up the computers and the BlackBerrys, responding to all the “urgent” emails and generally attempting to squeeze a full day’s work into what should have been my sleep time. This would go on until about 3 a.m., when I couldn’t keep my eyes open any longer. And after three or four hours of sleep, I’d be back up for the day shift. Work, after all, was much more important than sleep, at least to my 2007 self. Because, hey, I’m running a start-up — one that’s got my name on it. Clearly I’m indispensable, so I must work all night, responding to a hundred emails and then writing a long blog post, while being the perfect mother during the day. This way of working and living seemed to serve me well — until it didn’t.

ENDNOTES

1 For more information, visit www.huffingtonpost.com.

Pedro Moreno is national director of the Warden Exchange, a program of Prison Fellowship. For more information, visit www.prisonfellowship.org/warden.