

Accenture Cybersecurity Forum Women's Council



Sustaining high performance in 2021

The role of the CISO has grown increasingly complex and requires a savvy balance of business, technical and communication skills. And now the challenge has extended to balancing professional responsibilities while facing the continued impact of the COVID-19 disruption and other sources of uncertainty and concern.

At our February 24, 2021 Accenture Cybersecurity Forum Women's Council virtual roundtable, top women enterprise security leaders, women board members and male allies explored how we are managing and optimizing energy and focus to be effective leaders.

The discussion introduced strategies, techniques and behavior shifts we can make for recovering energy to help sustain high performance and achieve professional and personal well-being.

Seasoned executive coach and subject-matter expert [Mimi Darmstadter](#) shared a framework based on the "Performance pyramid"* for reenergizing that looks beyond the traditional focus on cognitive ability and examines the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual dimensions of high performance.

The following is a high-level summary of the rich, candid conversation.

Facing complex challenges

Executives are continuing to serve their professional responsibilities during the ongoing pandemic while juggling their family's health, remote work, home schooling and social distancing. Political disruptions, neighborhood hunger and unemployment have also added sources of uncertainty and concern. In short, for the cybersecurity executive, the need for enterprise resiliency is now coupled with personal resiliency.

How are we managing our energy and focus to be the most effective leaders during these challenging times? We have all adapted to meet the new normal, but are we optimized? Are we effective in renewing or recovering energy? What core behavior shifts might be necessary to support positive professional and

*Source: Performance pyramid— <https://hbr.org/2001/01/the-making-of-a-corporate-athlete>

personal outcomes? What strategies and techniques should we consider for recovering energy to help sustain high performance and achieve personal well-being?

A formula for sustaining high performance

Mimi pointed to the power of maintaining rhythmic movement between energy expenditure (stress) and energy renewal (recovery). This movement can be supported by adopting rituals that build capacity across four fundamental domains that she identified as the “Performance pyramid”:

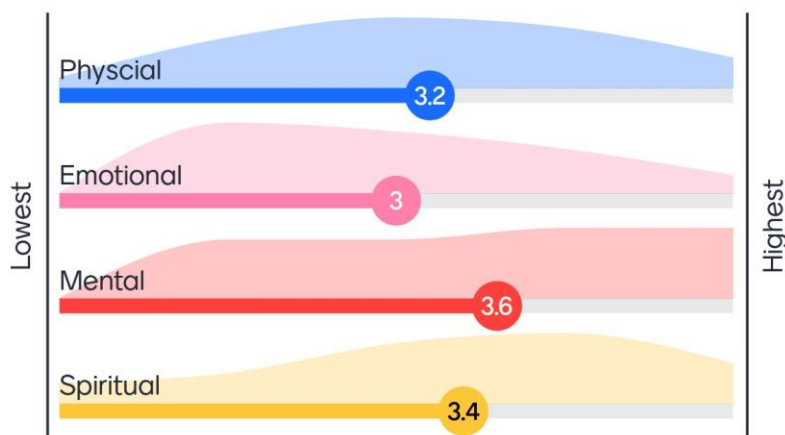
- Physical capacity (the body)—Builds endurance and promotes mental and emotional recovery.
- Emotional capacity (the heart)—Creates the internal climate that drives the ideal performance state.
- Mental capacity (the brain, which like a muscle, needs both rest and stimulation)—Focuses physical and emotional energy on the task at hand.
- Spiritual capacity (not necessarily religious)—Activity anchored in core values that provides a powerful source of motivation, determination and endurance.

Mimi said that executives get depleted at all four of those levels and may not even know it. “We spend much more time exerting energy than we do replenishing it,” she said. “The key is to build energy back up and then sustain it.”

Rating current energy levels

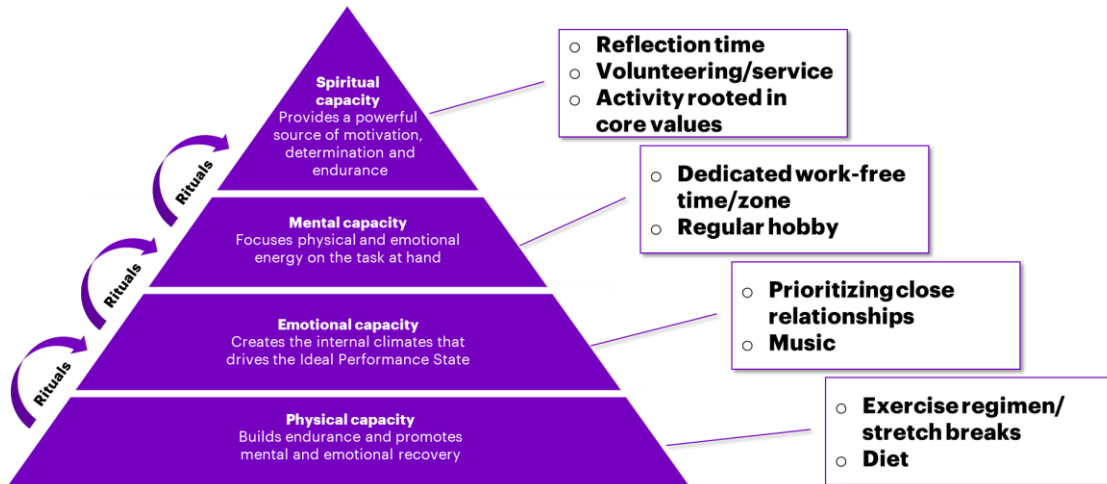
Council members were asked where they rate their current energy levels. The results suggest that cybersecurity executives scored highest in mental energy, but overall reflect an opportunity for recharging across all categories

On a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 is fully energized and 1 is fully depleted, how would you rate your energy level?

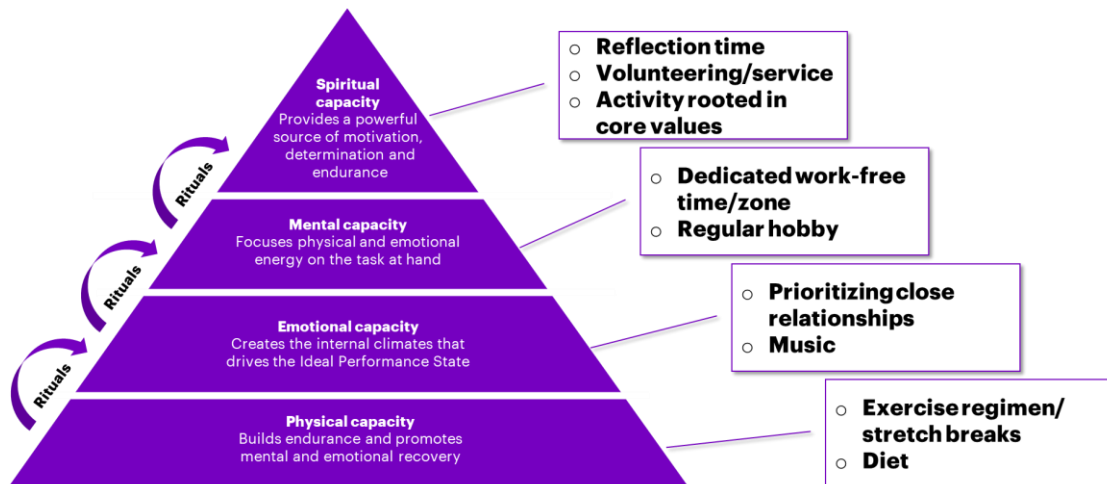


Macro and micro practices for high performance

Macro practices that you can apply to your life in a sustained, purposeful way to promote high performance and energy include:



Micro practices that can be applied on a daily basis to promote high performance and energy include:



Members' high performance and energy practices

Council members shared their practical experience with a variety of rituals they find useful, including:

- Get closure from work—Shut off computer and store in a closet at the end of the day.
- Explore—Take a Saturday family road trip to a new, randomly selected destination.
- Connect—Hold regular teleconferences with former college classmates.
- Connect—Have weekly teleconferences with siblings.
- Move and share an experience—Do virtual yoga sessions with friends, followed by wine tasting.
- Make quiet time—Make a team “no meeting” policy for two hours, once a week (ie, “Whitespace Wednesday”).
- Repurpose commute time—Sleep, exercise, listen to music and podcasts.
- Celebrate a loved one—Plant a memorial garden and watch it grow.
- Wake up your senses—Light a scented candle near your workstation.
- Move—Set a reminder to get up every hour from your desk.
- Be creative—Get hands-on with knitting, sketching, coloring, photography.
- Connect—Have lunch with family at home, drive kids to an activity or school.
- Celebrate the team—Start team meetings with “Someone tell me some good news.”

Mimi suggested seven behavior shifts to help avoid energy-sapping activity that gets in the way of high performance, including:

- Loosening control.
- Empowering others.
- Establishing boundaries, to say “no” or set limits.
- Building emotional intelligence (eg, self-awareness, empathy, optimism).
- Seeking help and support.
- Building an “opportunity” mindset (as opposed a “cost” mindset).
- Taking risks.

Shifting derailing behaviors

Traditional leadership qualities have most leaders outwardly focused on team, mission and results. Mimi shared that traditional leadership strengths also have a “positive opposite” quality to consider. She had members consider where tapping into the positive opposite qualities could foster a new leadership practice or restorative practice.

Traditional Leadership Quality		Positive Opposite Quality
Care for others	➡	Self-care
Confidence	➡	Humility
Strength	➡	Vulnerability
Decisiveness	➡	Flexibility
Tenacity	➡	Acceptance
Urgency	➡	Patience
Toughness	➡	Tenderness
Results-focus	➡	Reflectiveness
Candor	➡	Empathy

We asked Council members to share what rituals and practices they were going to adopt to achieve sustained high performance in 2021. We captured those “next steps” in a visual below. It is worth noting that the most often cited words—walking, breath and accept—can address multiple fundamental domains, such as physical, mental and emotional. As an example, a Council member spoke about the importance of ritual: using a regular weekly commute to replenish her soul with music and introspection.

[illegible]

As our energy is expended throughout the day of professional and personal activities, we need to create the practices and space that allow us to recharge throughout the day. Just like the professional athlete, exertion should be followed with recovery for maximum performance. These patterns can be as simple as a two-minute breathing exercise or as lengthy as an afternoon road trip. The key is to bring intention to these restorative activities and to understand their power—our power—in bringing us back to our full potential to expend and restore energy. In closing, Mimi encouraged Council members to consider, “What’s the cost if I don’t replenish my energy, if I don’t take a walk or reconnect?”

- “My 30-day self-care journey,” Ellyn Shook, Chief Leadership & Human Resources Officer, Accenture
- “Be comes before do,” Rahul Varma, Chief Talent Officer, Accenture Technology
- “What Makes a Leader,” Dan Goleman, *Harvard Business Review*
- “Making of a Corporate Athlete,” Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz, *Harvard Business Review*
- “The Power of Full Engagement,” Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz, Simon & Schuster

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*Source: Performance pyramid– <https://hbr.org/2001/01/the-making-of-a-corporate-athlete>

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