

Running on Plenty

by **Suzanne Adele Schmidt and Krista Kurth**



Suzanne and Krista

Like many entrepreneurs and professionals, my partner, Krista and I originally became interested in running on plenty out of necessity. Although we hadn't met yet, we each had a personal "wake up" call that let us know we could not continue working and living in the overextended way that we had been.

Krista's Story

I was working full-time, going to graduate school at night, volunteering in my faith community, and taking care of my young active son. I had always been very competent, so I thought that even though people were saying to me, 'How do you do it all?' I could handle it. Until I dropped from exhaustion. Years of burning the candle at both ends had already done their damage. Shortly after finishing my course work in the fall of 1990, I came down with a flu from which I could not seem to recover. After many tests and visiting numerous doctors, I was diagnosed with chronic fatigue syndrome. The prescription was "aggressive rest therapy," which basically meant doing nothing but resting—no work at all.

It was not an easy time, physically, mentally, emotionally or spiritually. In addition to doing nothing so my body could heal, I had to deal with the mental and emotional pain of giv-

ing up all of my concepts and feelings about myself in relation to work. I had to find a new way of being in, and relating to, the world, and a new way of anchoring my self worth—of proving myself.

Gradually, over the course of two years, with much help and support, I healed physically, transformed my self identity, and grew spiritually, all of which eventually influenced my doctoral research and future work.

I came out of the illness knowing that "living according to spiritual teachings and living in a balanced way at work and home was the only way in which I can remain healthy and live a joyful loving life." So, upon completing my doctorate I decided to start a consulting business that would allow me to work in a way that honored my own well being, as well as support others in working in more uplifting and healthy ways

Suzanne's Story

I like to push the envelope—just to see how much I could accomplish. When I was taking classes for my Master's degree, I worked full-time at an outdoor school that required me to be on 24-hour call two days a week. The other two days of the workweek I taught all day and then drove an hour and a half to graduate school. Every weekend I studied. There was little time for recharging my batteries.

When I was working toward my Ph.D., I was also teaching courses at the local college, actively engaged in the American Society for Training and Development, at both the local and national levels, and participated in many events at church! And of course, I spent time with my family, driving many hours to attend important celebrations. Nothing changed when I went to work managing a human resources department for a large company. New leadership asked me to be less forward-looking in the way I managed and to use an antiquated personnel model and I began to feel as if I was no longer being nourished in my

workplace.

In 1994, I attended a retreat facilitated by Parker Palmer, entitled "Gifted and Called: Where Do I Go from Here?" It was during that workshop that I began to see that I was being called to a different kind of work and a different way of working. I took this information to my spiritual director and together we began to explore the questions of God's call in my life and how I could live and work in a more life giving way. As a result of our work together, I decided to leave my corporate employer and start my own organizational development consulting practice so that I could help organizations create workplaces where the human spirit would be honored and nurtured.

Their Collective Story

In 1995, after each of us had been in business for about a year, a mutual colleague introduced us to each other. Because of our common interests, we hit it off immediately and agreed to do some projects together. As we worked jointly with clients, we realized that not everyone who has experienced extreme burnout has the option of leaving his or her workplace like we did. We began to feel called to serve and support people who were feeling the brunt of stress in the workplace. Eventually we decided to form a business together that offers services and support to individuals, teams, leaders, and organizations that want to revitalize themselves and work in healthy, productive ways.

In forming our company, we realized it was essential that we both serve as a model of renewal for others. Some days we are more successful with our own renewal practices than others. Every time we meet though, we create an oasis in our workday by scheduling time for lunch and stretch breaks. Many days, we also do individual practices that renew us spiritually. And we take real

vacations where we don't check our email and voice mail while we are away! We each have a corner of the world that is especially renewing for us where we get away from it all at least one or two times a year.

To Benefit Others

Since we began to work together, we've collected tips for renewing professionals physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually right where we are—in the workplace. We intentionally generated ideas that required few resources (time and money) and yet resulted in people feeling revitalized. We started with a website (www.RenewalAtWork.com) and have expanded it into a practical handbook called *Running on Plenty at Work: Renewal Strategies for Individuals*, which is geared to white-collar workers who are facing non-stop change, working long hours, and looking for more balance in their work lives.

The statistics on work habits in America paint a vivid picture of hectic and fast-paced workplaces. People are putting in longer hours, working faster and harder, and enjoying less free time at home due to the blurring of work and personal boundaries caused by the advances in computer and networking technology. Many professionals are expected to be available via phone, email, or beeper 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Given this situation, it is no surprise that studies also indicate that illnesses related to work stress and burnout are on the rise. By taking time for renewal at work, we hope to create a positive revolution to enhance productivity along with personal well being—running on plenty at work!

Krista Kurth and Suzanne Adele Schmidt are co-founders of Renewal Resources, a Maryland based consulting firm dedicated to the renewal and revitalization of individuals and organizations. You can reach them and sign up for their complimentary on-line renewal course at www.RenewalAtWork.com.

Running On Plenty is available through Faith@Work

Listen to the Longing

by Ted Loder

Lord, we have only human words
to address you lest we be
entirely dumb before you.

So, listen now, beneath our words,
to the longing that reaches toward you
and the gratitude that beats in our hearts
and fills us with joy for everything
that is just and true, good and human,
and the gritty, muddy, bony, bloody, hairy,
sweaty, smelly, beautiful, tough, tender,
possibility-laced, throbbing living-ness of it.

Forgive us for taking it all for granted,
for acting as though it is not a gift but ours by right,
as though there is not enough for everyone;
for hunkering down in our race or nationality,
our gender or class or culture or religious dogma,
our sexual orientation, or political one,
assuming they stake the boundaries of your kingdom.

Scorch into our souls once more the awesome truth
that you have entrusted us with the great, glad responsibility
of handing on abundant life to our children
and our children's children.

Excite your image in us
that we may sweat and pray, sing and battle,
sacrifice and rejoice, be eager yet at ease
in the task of giving them bread, not stones,
and leaving them not violence or any kind of poverty,
but freedom, a treasure of chances,
green forests, sparkling seas, scoured air,
because in our time we have walked together with you,
as sisters and brothers in the human family,
and shared mercy and lived bravely and faithfully,
justly, and thankfully as followers of Jesus.
Amen.

Excerpted from The Haunt of Grace. Copyright © 2002 by Ted Loder. Used with permission of the publisher, Innisfree Press, Inc.

Ted's imaginative leadership – described as a breath of fresh air – led the First United Methodist Church of Germantown (Philadelphia), Pennsylvania in a refreshing openness to hard questions, to change, and to justice for almost 40 years.

Ted's books are available through Faith@Work.