

Heidi Hanna Interview

An interview with Heidi Hanna featured Sunday Workshop Speaker at the CEMA Summit by Tracey Bloom, Partner, SpeakInc.

“Human capital is our most valuable resource, yet most people fail to manage it effectively.”

I love your title, Chief Energy Officer. Why did you select that title?

I believe that our most important job in life is to bring our best energy to the time that we have, for the people who matter most to us. This seems simple in concept, but it's so hard to do in a world that's hyper-connected and disconnected at the same time.

My role in my own company and the organizations I serve is to help other people be their best self by providing simple tools to train brain health and fitness, which leads to better energy, health, engagement, resilience and joy in life.

We hear so much about stress, balance and burn out. Is it possible to manage stress and have balance in your life or is it as elusive as a Unicorn?

The word balance is certainly a myth, as it sets us up to believe that we are equal parts work and life, or stress and relaxation. In reality, everything about the human system is designed to oscillate – from heartbeats and breath rate to blood sugar and brain waves, we're supposed to have a rhythm or pulse that shifts from spending and investing our energy that keeps us charged for success when it matters most.

Optimal energy management happens when we have enough stimulation to foster growth and enough recovery to allow for adaptation. This pattern can change depending on our circumstances, and the more we invest in our energy proactively, the more quickly we can rebound when times are tough.

You use the term Monkey Mind. What does this mean?

As far as I know, the term “monkey mind” was first used by Buddha, who said we all have “drunken monkeys jumping around in our minds”. Imagine how crazy those monkeys act now that they're constantly stimulated by technology, providing more information and connection than we can ever access in a lifetime. The emotional part of the brain, often referred to as the monkey brain as it's the part we have in common with our primate friends, is activated by chronic stress and stimulation, making this area hyperactive and stress sensitive over time.

When we become more aware of the monkey mind we can tame it and train it to work in our favor, moving us towards our goals instead of hijacking our focus and attention. Mindfulness practices, music, movement, mirth (humor) and massage are just a few techniques that help soothe and calm the monkey mind. When we treat the monkey mind with love and compassion, this part of our brain can boost creativity, innovation, insight, collaboration and emotional intelligence.

Do you ever feel like your stress is out of whack? What is the first thing you do when you recognize this?

You don't become an expert on stress without having an intimate relationship with it! I've been grateful to learn from amazing mentors in the field who will also admit that we tend to teach what we most need to learn. My journey started when at twelve years old I was diagnosed with an anxiety condition that caused me to faint, so I had no choice but learn to manage stress. As I've learned more about the mind-body connection, I've become fully committed to training my stress from the inside out; building my capacity as much as possible through what I call my Prime Time each morning and throughout the day. I prime my brain to have a more resilient lens through which to see the world by getting regular physical exercise, practicing daily meditation, listening to music, using humor regularly, and scheduling a weekly massage. When we nourish the body and quiet the nervous system, the brain is able to see challenges as opportunities instead of threats.

A new practice based on my current research is that I also use as much curiosity as possible – asking the important questions like “What matters most to me?”, “What’s the lesson in this experience?”, and “How can I serve others today?” Curiosity changes the brain from being defensive to exploring options, allowing us to problem solve more effectively.

What tip you can share, that we can implement right now, to invest our energy wisely?

Take 3-5 minutes right now to recharge. You can go to www.recharge toolkit.com to try out a guided meditation, listen to relaxing music, or watch a funny video. Notice how it changes your energy. Then, spend a few minutes putting together a list of what recharges you and schedule 2-3 recharge breaks each day for the next week. Commit to it, try it out, and see if you notice a change.

Remember that we have a limited amount of time each day and we're never going to get it all done, so our best efforts are spent in making sure we have the best energy for the time that we have. Energy is contagious too, so if you can model this with your friends, family, colleagues and clients you can minimize the effects of stress on our community and help our world to be kinder and more resilient as a result.

Please join at CEMA Summit for Heidi's informative and interactive session on Sunday, July 30, 2017 2:00PM-4:00PM. Sponsored by Speak, I