

“If one thing protects and builds Resilience, it is Integral Daily Practice (IDP). Here we transform ideas into actions that create the freedom of Resilience. IDP is the fuel of growth. Discovering the right IDP and shaping it into one’s life is the making of Resilience. This Resilience Insight is a personal reflection on IDP as a father, Resilience practitioner and older athlete” - Dr Sven Hansen.

Our calling is to live and work with BODY, HEART, MIND, and SPIRIT. Both in our own lives and in our work with others. Realisation requires the daily work of practice. In a busy, information cluttered world, holding this attention on practice is very challenging.

Life tests our resolve relentlessly. Again and again our good intentions slip under the deluge, practice wavers and sometimes collapses, resilience fails and the death spiral sucks us down. Then we come back to the recognition that our Integral Daily Practice (IDP) has slipped.

Accept, embrace and work at your IDP. It defines who and what you become. It is never too late.

Intention and a better life

Research shows very clearly that daily exercise of body, heart and mind reaps many benefits. If you care about yourself and your impact on the world you will find a way to do it. **The fact is that many of us don’t care.**

At 14, I recognised that one game of life is the realisation of potential, and I was free to choose a high road or low road. What a responsibility.

Ultimately, we have to care. We have to value our short journey and accept responsibility for nurturing the inputs of life’s experience. To see our life as an input to other’s experience widens the circle of care and empowers choice. Once we see that every feeling, thought and action can damage or enlighten, intention becomes clear.

A better life is a natural human impulse. Your daily practice is a commitment to live that better

life step by step, skill by skill and day by day. With a good measure of humility and humour for our frailty the goal is fierce determination.

I learned about IDP from my father, who woke at 4am to his research love, a run, a swim and breakfast with us before a long, demanding day. By the age of 15, I had some success with waking early, enjoying the dawn, early exercise and some preparation for the day. At 30, yoga helped me understand how to prepare body, breath and consciousness for the day.

Since then my IDP steadily evolved with trial, error, children and wisdom. As I encourage, stretch and discipline my body, heart and mind it has become an increasingly spiritual practice. IDP gives me enormous joy so I look forward to it. IDP is now my default choice each morning.

Base Practice – the morning

I wake just before 5am, practicing some gentle warm up exercises and stretching before more vigorous basic yoga poses and some strength work. By 5.30am I shift into mindfulness/prayer focusing on an ethical stance, breath extension and control, cultivating positive emotion, and a period of meditation. Just after 6, I head down to the beach to exercise the dog and on a good day have a walk and coffee with my wife Susan. Three days a week I go out for a hard Ski paddle – ideally with a group.

As a consequence, by 7.30am, I am ready to rock. For some, that sounds like madness. There are times I slip and sleep in a bit or have to head out for an early flight. I am about 90% compliant. Every time I miss this practice I can feel the edge of confusion and irritability. It is so marked that within a day or two I am vigorously rebuilding my routine. When I am consistent life is in flow.

Getting this right has taken years of determined experimentation. Tackle IDP with a passion.

Aligning work

My entire career has nudged in this direction. In retrospect, pathfinders, sport medicine, executive health, and leadership training are all expressions of my urge to encourage the expression of body, heart, mind and spirit in life and work. While at times travel and work intensity can interfere, the fact is that I have designed my career to suit and support my Integral Daily Practice.

It is with some horror that I listen to stories of how people pour resources into machine-like work and leave nothing to invest in themselves.

Start nudging. Look for communities and businesses that respect a full and rich life.

Learn to manage your boundaries and how to say no. Move away from people and organisations that sacrifice humanity for a dollar. And be sensible!

Enlightened organisations recognise and encourage Resilience at work. Motivations include productivity, employment brand, engagement, risk management and wellness initiatives. As we watch some of the world's most successful organisations experiment we are confident that we will see measurable benefit.

For example, in recent times, Boston Consulting Group has shown improved productivity when consultants have to take a day off a project per week. Over several months of testing this improved productivity has been a consistent finding. We can now link sustainability and organisational performance (Harvard Business Review). Sustainability initiatives will work with people as the critical element of business input. Building productive, satisfying workplaces that support IDP will attract and nourish talented people.

Eat with intention

While I love to indulge and enjoy treats, I am very careful to craft my nutrition to meet my needs. Basic meals are a priority and always planned well in advance. I firmly push in the direction of veggies, fruit, fish and fibre and will mostly have a quality morning and afternoon snack. Breakfast is a base. Dinner is early and light or simply missed.

Smart eating has a short term productivity and energy payoff and huge long term health and longevity benefits. Get this sorted! Work with your family, friends and workplace to nudge toward smarter eating. Keep fruit readily available, remove sugar snacks and drinks, and build intelligence into the supply of food to yourself and those who matter to you.

Developing smart IDP practices in exercise, relaxation, sleep and nutrition will have profound impact on the long term wellbeing and success of your children.

Disciplined rejuvenation

Given our connectivity and 24/7 lifestyles, rejuvenation is absolutely critical. It is easier when you run your own business but the more I take conscious down-time, the more effective I become. I book little breaks in all over the place. Every few minutes I reset and slow my breathing. I take power naps when I can. Good sleep is a non-negotiable. Find a way to secure your sleep.

I have found meditation immensely helpful to lift energy and stay calm. After regular exercise, daily mindfulness practice which can include prayer, relaxation, meditation and biofeedback such as Em-wave, is the single biggest contributor to your Resilience.

Yes, you will need to invest in learning and practice and it will take time to recognise the payoff. Practitioners in the various expressions of self development, meditation or performance arts and sciences pretty much all find a way to embed

a mindfulness practice into their day. Build your practice on sound diaphragmatic breathing.

Mastering the evening

Evenings are often the fail point. One is tired, hungry and can be distressed. It is easy to come home too late, drink too much, eat too much, watch TV and end up going to sleep too late to sustain your morning practice.

For many years I would come home at 5.30pm to be with the family and then go back to work to “keep up”. Some years ago I just stopped working at night. Productivity continued to improve.

As a family we always eat together around 5.30 to 6pm, practically never watch TV and instead read, talk and prepare for an early night. This has a huge impact on the quality of sleep.

Necessary sacrifice

Without doubt this is not for the faint-hearted. You will have to make space for an IDP that works for you. You will also need to reduce energy-sapping activities such as alcohol, TV, online addictions and late nights. Over time the negative effects of these indulgences will be so obvious, you will enjoy their absence.

Consistency

Consistency is challenging. The body aches, your emotions will scream against you and your mind manufactures good excuses. Practice is hard because the body is stiff and the mind weak. Skill takes time. At times you will feel like you are making no progress. The trick is to get enough help to be able to practice skilfully. Then one

needs to establish bench strength and you will start to feel the benefits. Then try to arrange your home/travel practice around your life so that it is convenient, flexible and can adapt.

However, IPD is a non-negotiable!

Build support networks

There is nothing like having fellow travellers. You will need to seek them out and treasure them. It is far easier to find people who will undermine your practice. You will be working against the centre of gravity of our time. I have struggled to form more than a couple of close colleagues on the full journey. Much of my research and support has been through books and the Integral Institute. The practice and dedication to IDP can be a lonely journey.

Seek out small committed groups of friends or colleagues. See if you can build a practice group at work. I suspect Practice Groups will become increasingly common and sophisticated.

Family as Practice Group

We all struggle with this as there are so many choices today. Young people tend to resist structure and self discipline plus we have different circadian rhythms. On the other hand, what could be more important than building your family into a Resilience Practice Group?

With enormous sensitivity, try to involve your family in components that work for them. Quality meals, family walks and shared adventures will prepare the way. Encourage your kids to sleep early and stretch in the mornings. Build it into your partnership. Experiment with aligning to the rhythms of others.

Ultimately we have to care.
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journey and accept
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What about a conversation around the role of Integral Daily Practice in your family? Consider asking children to research various practices. I asked our daughter Lauren to research coffee and she promptly became a coffee drinker!

Encourage your family to experiment and learn for themselves what works best.

Developing smart IDP practices in exercise, relaxation, sleep and nutrition will have a profound impact on the long term wellbeing and success of your children. This is one of the most important roles of parents and family. It is not one to outsource!

Good luck and let us know what really works for you.

References

Murphy, M & Leonard, G (2001) The Life we are Given
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