

# THE SET FREE LIFE

## Battling Bad Intensity

We know some things intuitively, don't we? For instance, we know that sometimes we can run ourselves into the ground and get so tired we can't fall asleep. All circuits are firing long after the juice is gone and something in our brains keeps us from dropping into restful slumber. We know we can become so overloaded with information we can barely perform the simplest of memory tasks, such as recalling our own telephone numbers. The names of our spouses or children. Little things like that.

So what I read in the *Wall Street Journal* was no big surprise: people are more productive when they actually take off some of the time they've accrued. They're able to focus better when they disengage from work tasks, from emails sent to BlackBerrys and iPhones, from sitting at the home computer making sure the spreadsheet gets done or the report is finished. We work better, along with greater satisfaction and a sense of balance, when we leave in time to have a nice, uninterrupted dinner or plan a long weekend truly away from the office.

What we've always known is true really *is* true! The *Harvard Business Review* is going to tell us so in its October issue. A four-year research project with a bunch of high-powered consultants has yielded the not-so-astonishing information that there is such a thing as work that has "good intensity" (the zip you feel when you're in the thick of a day where you're accomplishing something) and work that flows with "bad intensity" (that awful feeling of being inundated with stuff from the job even when we're supposed to be relaxing, or on vacation, or just zoning out for a while). Even some of the clients noticed the difference in the consultants' engagement and productivity during the research.

I have to admit my own propensity for staying connected to work no

matter what. I was recently away for two weeks on a fun professional development opportunity, taking a couple of days before and after to see friends. I responded to every email from work, checked my voicemail consistently, and was never really able to turn off from work mode unless I was sleeping. I honestly think I was more tired upon returning home as a result of my obsessive attention to things that really could have waited.

So many things we do now in the corporate work world in this country are just poorly thought out. We look longingly at the statistics out of Europe showing how long folks take off for vacation, expressing how great it would be if we could shut down for a month, when the truth is we may actually have that much time accrued but we don't take it in significant blocks, and/or we don't fully rest when we have *any* sort of time off. And it's wrong, all wrong. We think we need to be doing more, more, more to prove our value, staying on top of every detail and looking like we operate on the horsepower of a Ferrari. Even worse, our employers think it's necessary and many of them have no sympathy for research showing otherwise, no matter how prestigious and universally validated by those they claim to respect. (But tell *them* to call in every day while on that cruise to the Greek Islands and see what happens.)

It's just not good for us. It's not good for life, and now business researchers are showing us it's not good for business, either. I keep pushing even when I



*Sue Thompson is a personality expert, etiquette trainer, and an instructor in life lessons. Her seminars on recognizing and developing talent, identifying personalities and working effectively with the people who possess them, responding appropriately to difficult experiences, treating others with respect, and behaving like a professional have caused listeners at companies and business organizations throughout the country to rate her presentations as "the best seminar of the conference!" She trains those entering the workforce how to present themselves with style and authority; new employees in the importance of respecting one's work and the workplace; managers in the value of understanding employees' talent and temperament; and everyone in the timeless rules of behavior that will always bespeak excellence.*

### Quick Links

Adopt-A-Greyhound  
Most Dogs Aren't Bad—They Just Need Vlad!  
Bedlington Terrier Club of America  
BTCA-HEART Website

[Sue@SetFreeLifeSeminars.com](mailto:Sue@SetFreeLifeSeminars.com)  
[www.SetFreeLifeSeminars.com](http://www.SetFreeLifeSeminars.com)  
877.231.6993



feel exhausted deep down inside, right to my bones. I can sense how little patience I have with small events. Wait—"sense"? No, with all honesty, I can *hear* my own verbal explosions. I experience the phenomenon of bypassing simple annoyance when something goes wrong and heading straight for near hysteria. I find it hard to concentrate—I often have to force myself to slowly read through an entire newspaper article instead of skimming it as though there's some sort of contest going on.

But I did manage to read through this [one](#) ("If You Need To Work Better, Try Working Less," September 22, 2009), and I recommend it to you. I'm going to work on this one. Obsessively, of course. 🐾

## Teddy Bear Says...



There is a new presence in the Thompson home, one of which I approve wholeheartedly. A dog is in the house: a Bedlington Terrier named Sierra.

I have been gone for more than a year and a-half now (see Sue's tribute to me in the February 2008 newsletter in the archives) but my angel status has provided me this opportunity to instruct humans on the business of good character and proper manners. One might think I would be jealous of the new pet, but this is not so. People who love dogs need dogs to love, and there

are many, many dogs who need love. Sierra is nearly 8 years old, with the heart and soul of a fighter and the look of a lamb. She had to be regrettably relinquished to the Bedlington Terrier Club of America's rescue arm ([BTCA-HEART](#)) because her long-time family is experiencing some deeply trying life circumstances and they knew they could not continue to give Sierra the attention she needed. This was an act of great wisdom and affection, and they contacted the right people to take action for them.

I arranged on my end the circumstances that would put Sue in touch with BTCA-HEART and saw to it that Sierra was placed in this home where she will experience the same outpouring of besotted devotion they gave me and my dear friend, Killian. This is good for them and good for her, so I am very pleased with what I've accomplished.

There are a couple of reasons I like Sierra. One is that she is a purebred, as I am, the offspring of champions, as I was.

### Quotable

*Rest, rest, perturbed spirit!*

William Shakespeare

Contact Sue today to learn how she can meet your business needs

Sue Thompson

877.231.6993

[Sue@SetFreeLifeSeminars.com](mailto:Sue@SetFreeLifeSeminars.com)

[www.setfreeliveseminars.com](http://www.setfreeliveseminars.com)



(I reserve the right to be snooty, while allowing that being purebred has little to do with good relationships.)

The other is that she has an excellent temperament and is extremely well-mannered. She is smart and will learn quickly, and this is to her advantage. You see, this is one of those transferable skills that should make you perk up your ears—and I mean that it is a transferable lesson from the dog world to the human. When we understand our basic nature and realize that even with its limitations, we have the power to control ourselves and act with courtesy and respect, we will succeed in relationships far more than those who are clueless of these truths. Vladislav Roytapel, an up-and-coming celebrity dog trainer from the former Soviet Union, teaches what he calls "doglish"—the language of the dog that humans can employ to train their pups. With an education in animal behavior and experience in training dogs for military intelligence operations, Vlad tells his clients that we must "speak" to our dogs the way a mother dog communicates with her little ones. Dogs recognize their mother's commands and attitude from the pitch and tone of her vocalizations and they respond instantly to her actions, such as the little nips under the chin she will employ to discipline her young.

One of the wisdoms Vlad offers is that dogs are, quite frankly, a lot like humans: some are smart, some stupid, but they can all learn proper behavior. One of his clients seemed unsure that it was right to attempt to train her wild Welsh Corgi, asking Vlad if she really should try to change her dog "if this is who he is." His response: "We all have instincts. When I see a beautiful woman, I want to jump on her. But I have self-control. That dog needs self-control."

This man will go far, because he understands a key truth about dogs and about humans: we have authority over ourselves. We have the power to change our behavior. We may not have the power to change our instincts or our basic temperaments, but we can control how we respond and create powerful connections to others because we know when to bark and when to sit and wait. Sierra has adjusted her expectations and adapted quickly to new surroundings. She listens and observes and discovers what will work to establish her permanent place in the Thompson household. This shows she is a dog of stellar character and excellent manners. The Thompsons understand that a dog, like a human, can't be left to basic instinct alone, and they demand she respond rightly in every situation.



A little doglish can go a long way. As can a little dog. 🐾