

SELF-BELIEF FOR THE BIG REWARDS

QATAR TODAY KICK-STARTS A HEALTH AND LIVING SERIES WHERE THE TOP ECHELON IN THE COUNTRY REVEAL THEIR WORK-LIFE BALANCE STRATEGY AND HEALTHY LIVING GUIDELINES.

BY NICOLE VAN HATTEM



The desire to move ahead in business and ensure a solid financial future for yourself and your family can lead you to take short cuts with your health and wellbeing. Is this the best way to get to the top and stay at the top?

The Wellness Warriors series will be interviewing leaders in business in Qatar, who lead by living lives of balance and wellness. Learn how they stay on top of their game by investing in their life balance and how this approach impacts their performance at work and their quality of life overall.

We kick off this series with Hussain Al Abdullah, Head of Retail Banking for Barwa Bank and he explains his approach to fitness, food and relationships which enables him to deliver high level results in business.

Qatar has been described as the richest and fattest nation on earth, and is now the third highest in terms of diabetes rates. If this situation continues, how do you see the health of the nation in 10 years' time?

I think it will improve. There are programmes that are going on to improve the lifestyle of the nation. Huge investments have been placed to encourage exercise, healthy dieting, and the awareness of the risks tagged with some wrong yet common habits. I think it will pay-off in the next few years.

What impact will this have on the banking and finance sector in Qatar (eg:

Qatarisation strategies, talent pools, health costs, absenteeism rates, employee performance levels)?

Should we continue on the path of promoting good healthy habits, it will positively affect the way we conduct life and business. It will promote healthy competition and encourage productivity.

What health or lifestyle changes have you made in the last one to two years?

I have returned to exercising more frequently. I used to play volleyball professionally; however since my return from the US years ago, I started to exercise less and less.

What triggered you to make these lifestyle changes?

I gained a lot of weight and did almost no exercise, and so started to experience all types of pains. I ignored these at the beginning. However, there was an incident when a back pain kept me in bed for over 10 days and then I could hardly move. It was a very difficult situation where I had to depend on people to move me around. I couldn't reach or carry my kids, and it hit me; these kids have only me to depend on, what would happen to them if I was like this forever. It was a trigger that made me think of my life and the way I was approaching it.

How did getting more active affect your weight, mood and mental clarity?

I lost a lot of weight and I felt good about it. My mental makeup improved and I became more positive and energetic. With a clearer picture of my future and a plan to live well, everything else began to revolve around it.

What if any changes did you notice about your leadership abilities, as a result of getting fitter and leaner?

I can move around a lot more freely! I have more energy, better tolerance and more patience. I like to see results delivered by my team with me being at their side to motivate them. Being fit and healthy enables me to do



HOW DOES EXERCISING REGULARLY HELP YOU TO MANAGE STRESS?

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this.

How many times a week do you exercise and what types do you do?

I work out with a personal trainer 3-4 times a week. We do cardio and weight lifting. It takes about two hours but it's well worth the time invested.

What do you eat to fuel your performance?

- **Breakfast** - fruit along with tea.
- **Lunch** - varies, but in most cases any kind of protein.
- **Dinner** - very early light snack or fruit.
- **Snacks & treats** - once a week I let myself go and have whatever I like. Burgers and Chips, for example.

How does your spiritual practice support your health and wellbeing?

It's an important part of my life. It provides guidance, support and the path to my way. In my personal opinion, you can't have one without the other.

Relationships are a key part of health and wellbeing. If these are not being nourished, then it can affect other areas of our lives and health. How do you maintain good relationships with colleagues, family and friends?

Constant communication with your col-

leagues. Humour and food contribute to this relationship. You rarely go wrong with these two. I love to keep them close and motivated.

By doing that, I keep myself motivated. I am a family man by nature and like to keep myself close to my family and my children are the reasons behind everything I do. They keep me on my toes and keep pushing me toward these life changing challenges. I love them to death. They are my heart and soul.

My friends are my comfort zone. It is to their midst that I go to be myself.

Do you consider that you have a healthy work-life-balance?

It's better than before and I'm constantly trying to improve it. I do give time to those who need it most, including myself.

That's why I tend to break the routine by taking kids out for lunch sometimes or leave work early to catch up on my exercise.

As a leader in the community and the workplace, setting an example for others to follow, what would you say are your top 10 tips for managing stress?

- Self believe; believe that you can do it
- Find the few things that motivate you most in life
- Time management
- Prioritise your tasks
- Get enough sleep
- Take short trips to unwind
- Exercise
- Exercise
- Exercise
- And more exercise

What are your top tips for maintaining your professional performance at a senior level in business?

- Always come prepared
- Have confidence in what you do
- Have a "can do" attitude
- Positive thinking
- Take care of yourself
- Ask for help when needed

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