



The Empty Cup Audit

A short, honest audit of where your energy is going and where it's leaking from before it runs out completely.

Why This Matters

You can't pour from an empty cup, and yet most leaders run on empty for months, sometimes years before they admit it. Not because they don't notice, but because stopping to check feels like a luxury they don't have time for. There's always one more decision, one more person who needs you, one more thing that has to be done before you can even think about yourself.

Leadership has a way of normalising depletion. Running on empty gets quietly rebranded as commitment. Skipping meals, working through exhaustion, and putting everyone else's needs ahead of your own start to feel like the price of the seat, evidence that you're serious about the responsibility you carry.

Left unchecked, this pattern doesn't resolve on its own, it compounds. What starts as tiredness becomes disconnection, then resentment, then the kind of burnout that takes far longer to recover from than it took to build up. Checking in on where your energy actually stands isn't self-indulgent. It's one of the more disciplined things a leader can do because you can only sustain the standard you hold for others if you're first sustaining it for yourself.

This audit takes ten minutes. It won't fix anything on its own, no worksheet does, but it will show you, starkly, exactly where the energy leaks are. That's usually the part people skip, because it's easier to stay busy than to sit still long enough to look honestly at what's costing you.

The Audit

For each domain below, you're looking at two things: what currently fills that part of your cup, and what empties it. 'Fills' means anything that genuinely restores you, rest, connection, movement, a sense of progress, time that's actually yours. 'Empties' means the obligations, habits, and pressures self-imposed or otherwise that quietly drain you, whether or not they feel optional in the moment.

Be specific rather than general. 'Work' isn't an answer but 'back-to-back meetings with no breathing room' is. The more precise you are, the more useful this becomes.

Once you've noted what fills and empties each domain, score how full it feels right now, from 0 (completely empty) to 5 (full and sustainable). Score how it actually feels today, not

how you think it should feel the honest number is the only one worth writing down. You may need extra paper!

Domain	What fills this cup	What empties it	Fill level (0–5)
Physical Energy <i>Sleep, movement, food, rest - the body you lead from.</i>			
Emotional Energy <i>How much you're giving to others' feelings versus how much is left for your own.</i>			
Mental Energy <i>Focus, decision fatigue, headspace for the things that actually matter.</i>			
Purpose & Meaning <i>Whether your day-to-day still connects to why you lead in the first place.</i>			
Relationships & Connection <i>The people who fill you up, versus the ones (and things) that just take.</i>			

Reflection

1. Which domain scored lowest and if you're honest, were you already expecting that?
2. What's one thing currently 'emptying your cup' that you have more control over than you're admitting?
3. What's one thing that fills your cup that you've quietly stopped making time for?
4. If you only changed one thing this week, which domain would move the needle most?

Your One Action

Pick one domain, one leak, and one small change you can make this week. Not a life overhaul one adjustment you can actually sustain.

Lead with clarity. Influence with purpose. Expand your impact.

Want to go deeper? This audit is the starting point for the '[Sustainability: Wellbeing Essentials](#)' work inside 1st Chair Energy™ courses. [Join the community](#) to hear of other ways to work with us.

READING LIST & SOCIAL ACCOUNT RECOMMENDATIONS

1st Chair Sustainability: Wellbeing Essentials

Suggested Reading List

***Burnout* - Emily & Amelia Nagoski**

The science of completing the stress cycle - pairs directly with the Burnout Early Warning Audit in Module 2.

<https://link.amazon/BohzFbojA>

***Why We Sleep* - Matthew Walker**

The most evidence-heavy book on sleep as a leadership performance lever, not a luxury. Referenced directly in Module 5.

<https://link.amazon/BoednYMM5>

***Thrive* - Arianna Huffington**

Redefines success beyond money and power to include wellbeing and wisdom.

<https://link.amazon/Bojg5xc3K>

***The Choice* - Edith Eger**

Heavier, but powerful on resilience and reclaiming agency - recommend selectively, not as a default.

<https://link.amazon/BobHGLmaF>

***Self-Compassion* - Kristin Neff**

The foundational research behind Module 7. Neff's distinction between self-criticism and self-compassion is central to the course - this is the book that started it.

<https://link.amazon/Bo43HyTWl>

***Tiny Habits* - BJ Fogg**

The habit design framework taught in Module 8. Tiny, anchored, environmentally supported - all Fogg's language. Essential companion to the habits section.

<https://link.amazon/Bo4MHh2gN>

***Atomic Habits* - James Clear**

Complements Fogg with a systems-level approach to habit change. The James Clear quote in the course ("You fall to the level of your systems") is from this book.

<https://link.amazon/Bo8eK8n8o>

***The Compassionate Mind* - Paul Gilbert**

The source for the inner critic as a protection system - referenced in Module 7. Gilbert's compassion-focused therapy underpins the self-compassion module.

<https://link.amazon/Bo2evUjXM>

***Atlas of the Heart* - Brené Brown**

The Brené Brown boundaries quote in Module 6 is from this book. Also a language-for-emotions guide useful for the nervous system and boundary work.

<https://link.amazon/BohujQcXb>

***The Power of Full Engagement* - Jim Loehr & Tony Schwartz**

The four-dimension energy model taught in Module 4 comes directly from this research. The framework for the energy audit exercise.

<https://link.amazon/B05Zba3ZO>

Social Account Recommendations

@susandavid_phd Dr Susan David

Emotional agility and psychological flexibility under pressure.

@adamgrant Adam Grant

Organisational psychology; well-sourced, shareable short posts on sustainable performance.

@melrobbins Mel Robbins

Accessible wellbeing and mindset content with strong everyday relevance.

@neffselfcompassion Dr Kristin Neff

Self-compassion research and practice - directly relevant to Module 7. Regular content on the inner critic, self-kindness and resilience.

@bjfogg BJ Fogg

Stanford behaviour scientist - habit design content that directly extends the Module 8 framework.

@jamesclear James Clear

Habit and identity change - the systems thinking that underpins the course's approach to sustainable practice.

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