



Managing our emotional energy

For decades I operated from the base assumption that my emotional energy was 100% renewable. Each morning I awoke, I began fielding whatever came my way. Long work day-check. Endless meetings-check. A friend who needed an ear-check. Kids that needed books read and put to bed-check.

When I would end the day, I'd look back with some level of surprise about how weary I began to feel. I now understand that my emotional energy was being depleted one calorie at a time.

Emotional Calories

I learn best by using images and stories. I experienced a burn out in 2015. I was emotionally and physically depleted. In my struggle to articulate what I was experiencing and how I got there, I began imagining my emotional energy using this concept.

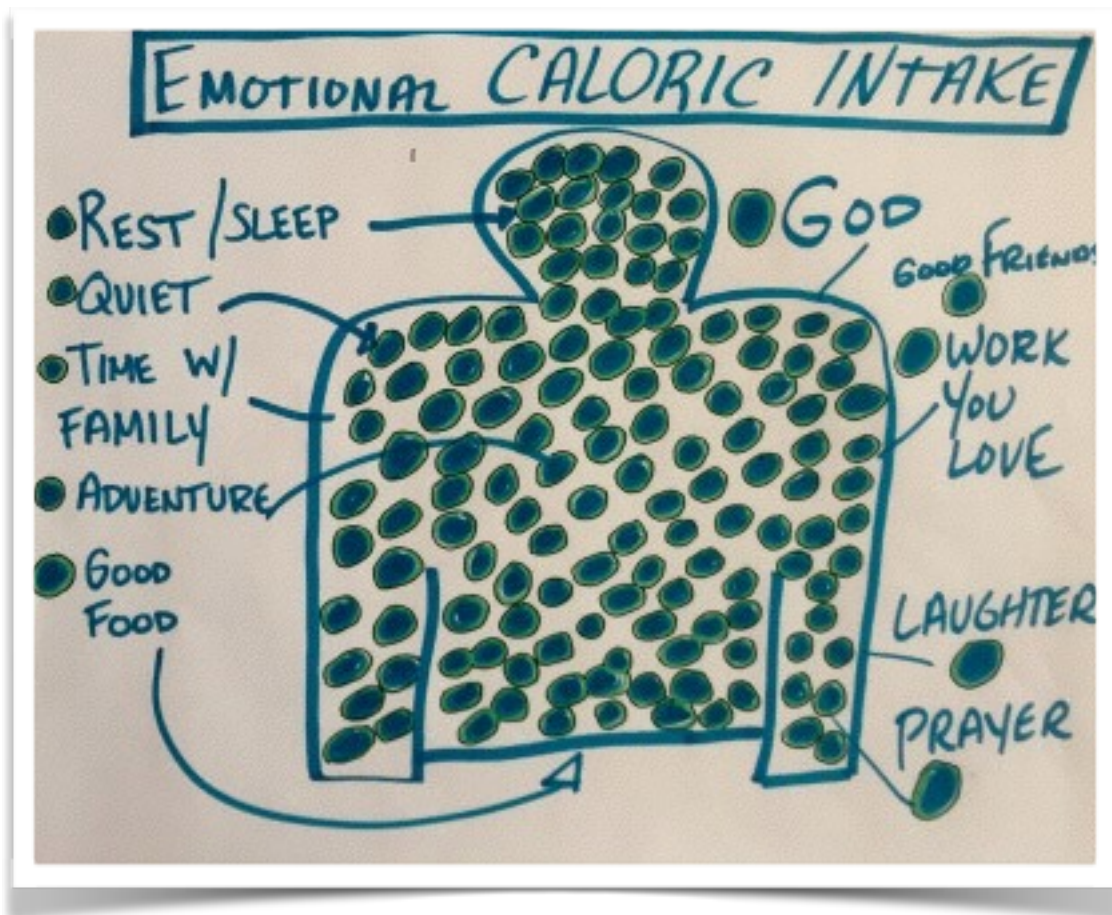
In order to better understand our emotional energy, we need to consider how our body works when creating, storing and expending energy.

To complete a one mile running race, we accept that our body must either contain or intake enough energy in the form of calories, fats, or nutrients. For illustration purposes, let's assume that it takes 100 calories to run one mile.

During the one mile run, we understand that 100 calories will be depleted or burned. When the race is over, our body needs us to intake new calories to keep going the rest of the day. Finally, we

appreciate that if we burned 110 calories during our run, we are either need to replenish those 10 extra calories or we may have had extra storage that we used.

Either way, in order to accomplish the task of running one mile, it requires energy, calories, nutrients and stored energy. I believe our emotional energy is exactly the same.



Emotional Cells

Stored within us are a limited supply of emotional cells. These emotional cells store energy. Energy is expended each day as we pursue our Work, Life, Play, Relationships and Health.

Caloric Intake

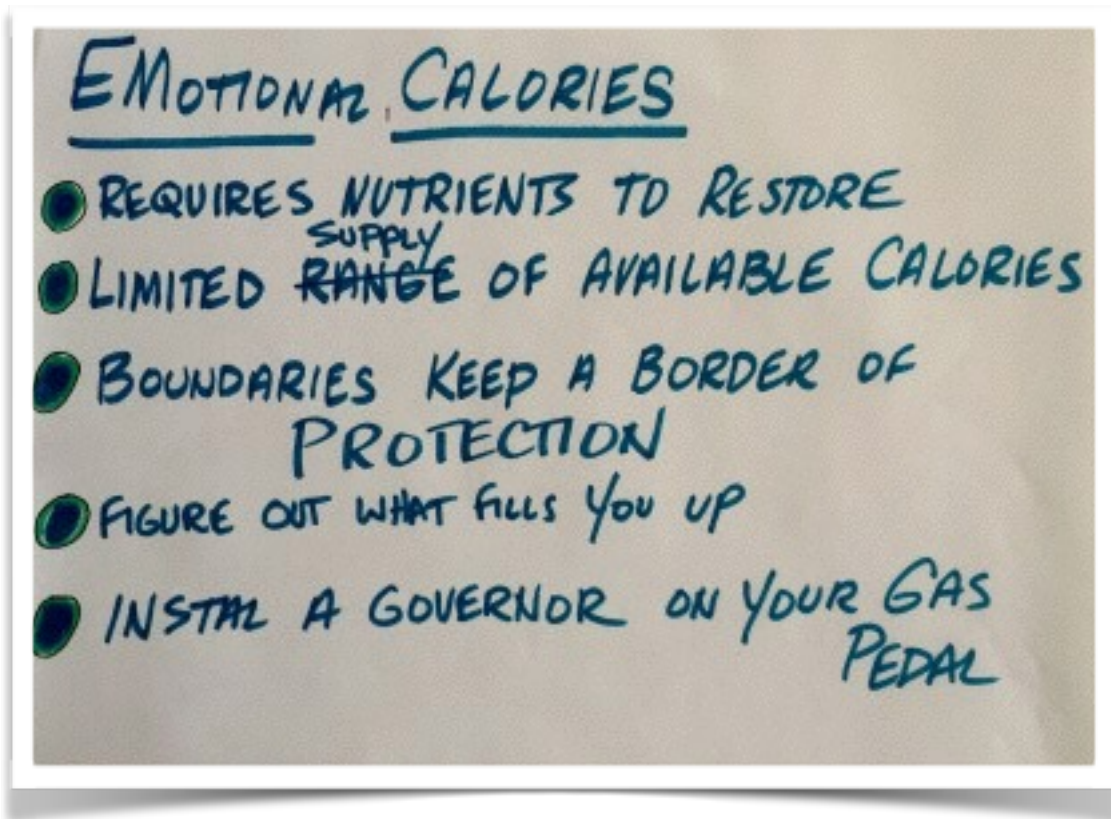
We must begin to understand that our emotional cells must be fed with nutrients, soul food. I know that I have to have a steady diet of nutrients to feed my emotional calories. Things that feed my emotional energy tanks are:

- Rest & sleep
- Quiet

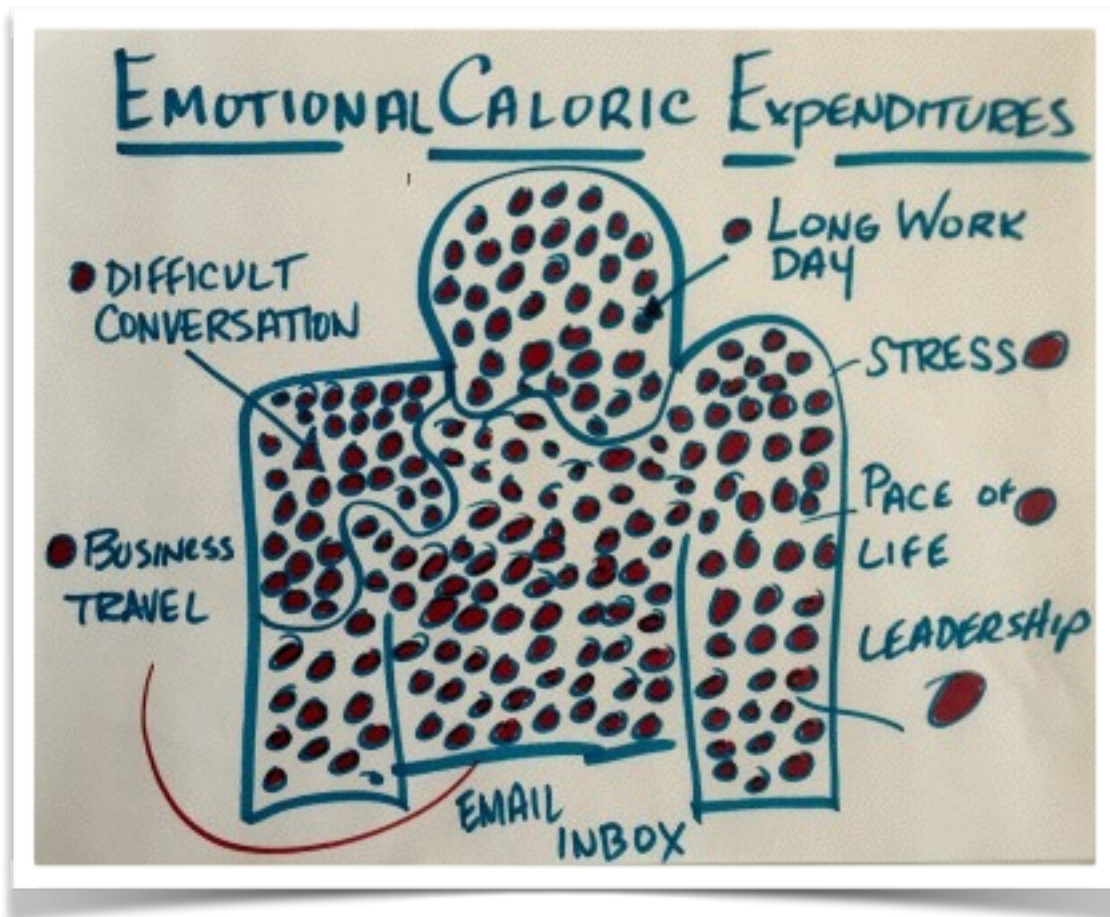
- Time with my family
- Adventure
- Good food and wine
- Laughter
- Prayer and time alone with God
- Doing work I love
- Being around good friends

I've begun to think of these nutrients like a packaging label on a nutrition bar.

Activity: Hour long run with a friend in the mountains
Calorie intake: 200 calories (100 Run/100 Being outside)



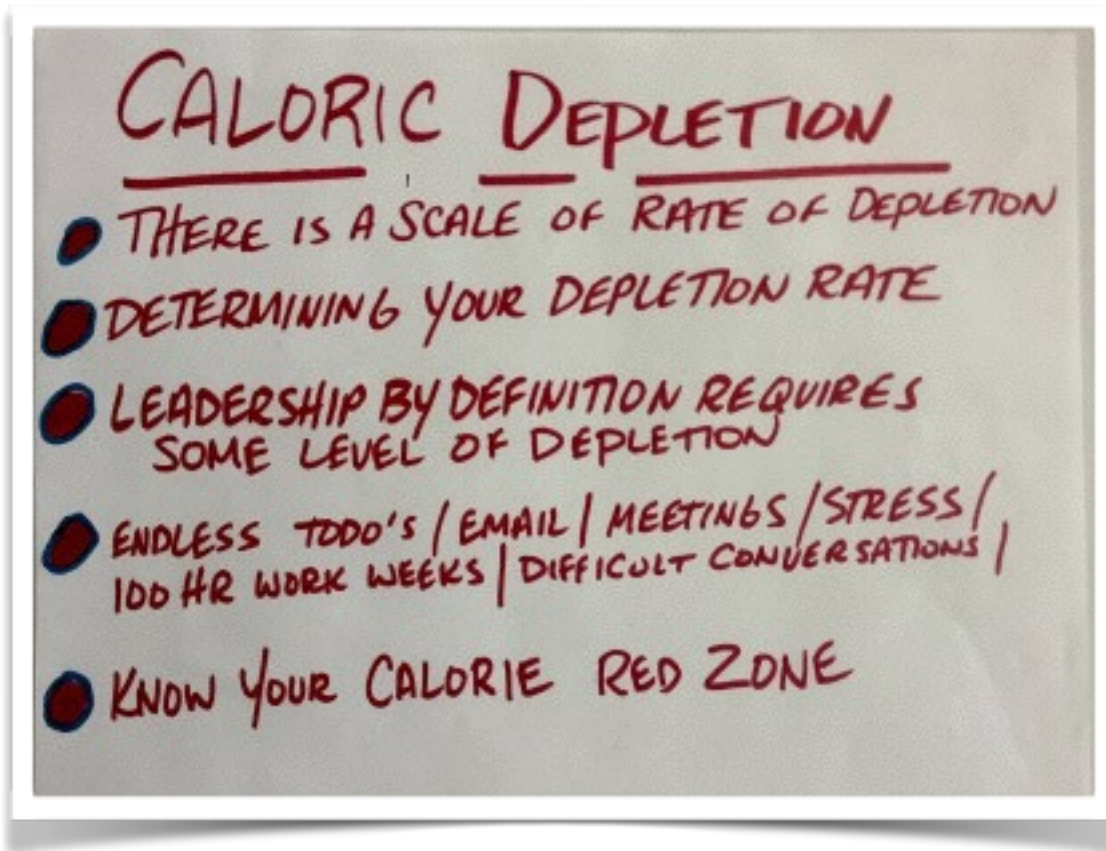
I am then able to invest those new 200 calories of stored energy into my responsibilities, my work, my creativity, my obligations, my relationships.



Caloric Depletion

We must understand what burns and depletes our emotional calories. Assign a daily emotional calorie count for these examples:

- Difficult conversation (100 emotional calories)
- Business Travel for three nights (100 emotional calories x 3 nights)
- Stressful day (150 emotional calories)
- Pace of Life is too fast (75 emotional calories)
- Endless ToDo's (150 emotional calories)
- 100 new unread emails (75 emotional calories)



Rate of depletion

Individual activities can be compounded in their caloric requirement by your rate of depletion. I believe that e.g. prolonged stress, being in a leadership position, working 100 hours and difficult relational conversations significantly increase my emotional calorie rate of depletion.

Difficult conversation (100 emotional calories)

x

(5) conversations this week

x

(20% increase)

=600 emotional calories of nutrients required to fuel these conversations

Resources:

[Necessary Endings: Dr. Henry Cloud](#)

I found this book very helpful in my shifting seasons. Dr. Cloud named many of my internal struggles and provided the affirmation that endings are natural and necessary.