

**You talk about capacity. Can you explain what you mean by capacity?**

I started toying with the idea of capacity as it relates to growing a healthy, sustainable business several years ago. The more I considered its role in everyday life, the more intrigued I became. Quite literally, capacity points to *the ability to perform, produce, receive, hold or absorb, and is a measure of ability*. Ability is the key, not as a judgment but as a reality.

I can't remember how I made the leap, but when I started exploring capacity as a critical ingredient underlying productivity, I realized that all the good intentions in the world will ultimately backfire if one doesn't understand their limits. Independent business people are challenged because they are responsible for most of the tasks of running the business. If they don't understand their limitations, they wear themselves out. And those who are employed in more traditional jobs? Well, if managers and leaders don't account for capacity when setting sales and productivity goals, everyone suffers.

Those of us who have become severely or chronically ill, we know! One of the most emotionally challenging aspects of dealing with a serious, long-term illness is the unexpected, unwanted loss of capacity; physical, mental and emotional. As far as I'm concerned, we who must walk this path have an incredible opportunity to challenge the world's assumptions about what it means to be successful, and to reveal the fallacy in this idea that more is always better.

**What is the difference between bandwidth and capacity?**

Good question. Not much. In my model, bandwidth is an aspect of mental capacity.

**You identify 3 ESSENTIAL capacities: physical, emotional, and mental. Could you briefly define each of those capacities and provide examples of each?**

The Essential Capacities are just that: essential. They reflect your relationship to yourself, and your personal relationship with the immediate world around you. They strongly correlate with your ability to tend to your basic needs in life. If the essential capacities are not sufficient, the foundation is not secure.

**Physical** – one's ability to carry out the tasks at hand. Furthermore, the ability to recognize - and honor - the bounds of one's physical strength or stamina and to act accordingly.

For those who have become ill or injured, physical capacity is pretty easy to understand. Can you walk, can you feed yourself, can you even clean your house? (When Crohn's was really bad, all these things were difficult!) This is the time to ask for help, you independent do-it-yourself people (you talking to me?).

**Mental** – the ability to think and learn, having the bandwidth - or not - to see what is around you, to step back and observe and contemplate and consider, focus and assess. Awareness, intuitiveness, understanding.

Have you experienced 'chemo brain?' If you have, you know what I'm talking about. Fuzzy! Difficult to concentrate or remember where you put things. I haven't experienced it, but the meds I had to take when Crohn's flares were at an all time high, fuzziyyyy.

One woman, who knows herself to be extremely focused and organized, had to ask her small team to remind her about things she needed to do because she realized she could not. Post-its work well too, if you remember to look at them! It's also a good time to eliminate everything that's not critical to the mission, whatever that mission might be (at home, at work, and socially).

**Emotional** – the ability to live peacefully with some uncertainty, to weather stormy circumstances. The wherewithal to include facts, intuition and gut-level responses in the small and big decisions. Resilience, awareness, patience, empathy, courage and ease with ambiguity.

I'm going to go straight to depression and melancholy. These are a normal part of the human experience, and often increase when mental and physical capacities diminish. Some medicines can knock you off your emotional game too. If you can learn to ride those emotional waves, remember that the lows won't last forever, and share your truth without lashing out, the waves will be less daunting.

And, trust your instincts. If something or someone isn't healthy for you, this is your time to set boundaries, or get the heck out.

### **What is an INTERACTIVE capacity?**

The 3 Interactive capacities point to your ability to engage effectively with the world around you. As you go about your business on any given day, you will likely interact with people, projects, and information. Each of the 3 interactive capacities gauge your ability to make decisions and take actions that most likely lead to the best outcomes.

**Relational** – the ability to connect and be present with the person(s) in front of you, to see another person with empathy and to engage in a way appropriate to the relationship and situation.

I am in the process of extracting myself from a business relationship that was lopsided. Although the work was absolutely creative and fun, there was an imbalance in the give and take. It took me getting ill with a very bad bout with the flu that threatened my digestive system - and sent huge fear waves through my body, like I'd never experience before - to realize what was going on. I gave, he took. Of course, I played a part in creating this dynamic too, and it was OK until it clearly wasn't! He won't see it this way, and that's the point. No

matter what was happening with me, it turned into how it would affect him, even when he was "trying" to be cool. Little empathy, and completely self-absorbed in his own survival concerns.

I can compare this experience with another business relationship I exited a several ago. The difference? Her first response was to tell me it was OK that I needed to move on, and she only wanted what was best for me. Simple, easy. We spent the next 6 months finishing up projects that would leave her business in good shape.

**Responsive** – the ability to respond to what life throws your way with measure and clarity, to be able to view the situation and act in an appropriate manner. To know when it's time to press forward, and when it is time to let go.

This is not about perfection. Of course, when life throws you a curve ball, it's normal to react before you get right sided again. However, if you take the approach that life works itself out, that it - and you - can be trusted, it's easier to step back and also tune in. What is the best response here? What is needed? What do I need? Nothing to rush, nothing to push.

**Productive** – the ability to focus and produce a wanted result.

My investigation into capacity started with an inquiry into "personal productive capacity." In many ways, all capacities support this one. I identified it as one of the Interactive Capacities because it's all about your ability to take care of what's most important, and to eliminate or reduce the influence of everything life - and your mind - throws your way that takes you off course.

When you're body is out of balance, its health and welfare are your priority. What's the desired result? Identifying the best treatments, and to heal the disease. This is not to say you don't have to also tend to your job, your house, your family, even your friends. However, if you don't put your health and personal welfare front and center, you risk interfering with the healing process.

### **What is a Leadership capacity?**

The Leadership Capacities point to your ability to stand as your own authority, to embrace your unique perspective and share it with others, when appropriate.

**Creative** – the ability to take an innovative approach to solving problems, to see beyond what is obvious. Whereas productive capacity points to your ability to engage with the tasks of daily life, creative capacity points to your ability to devise fresh views, methods or solutions.

Let's look at health care. We have traditional, western medicine, and complementary and alternative holistic approaches to healing. I have to admit to a bias. While I appreciate the need for direct medical intervention, I'm not convinced that's enough to truly HEAL what ails you.

There seems to be a variety genetic, chemical-emotional and even environmental factors that create the climate for many of our diseases.

And, this might be the most frustrating thing, what heals one person won't heal everyone. Tuning into your intuition, considering complementary approaches, and landing upon something that actually works, this is where creative capacity comes into play. If you're lucky, your medical doctors will be open to looking with you. Most won't. This part is largely up to you.

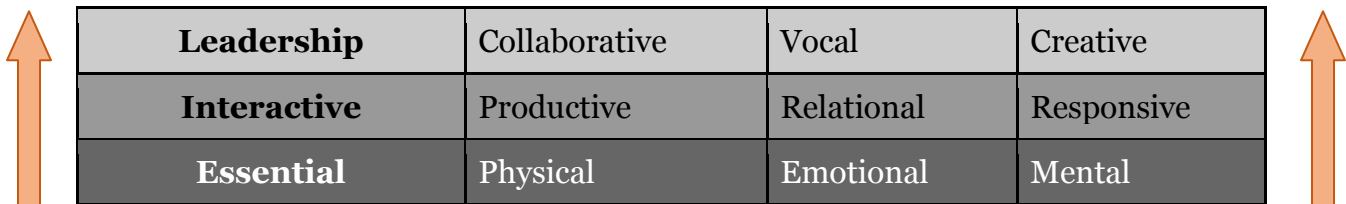
**Vocal** – the ability to speak up, and express what you stand for. The ability to lead others. For example, whereas relational capacity points to your ability to engage in conversation with others, vocal capacity points to your ability to speak up in the face of potential disagreement.

Speaking up for yourself can be difficult when you feel like crap. However, if something doesn't feel right to you, then it's essential to find your voice to say so. Remember, this is YOUR life. That being said, if you're in a lot of pain, it can be harder (or sometimes easier!) to speak up for yourself. This is where your allies come in to play. They can help you identify what you need to say, and if you realize that you need help expressing these things clearly, you might ask him or her to accompany you to the tough conversations.

**Collaborative** – the ability to work with a group of people and create order and/or structure through which actions can be effectively carried out.

It's most common to think about collaboration in a work environment, but it is also important in all other arenas of your life. Healing your body is a collaborative effort. Consider your healthcare team. Are they aware of each other, are they even talking to each other? Are they potentially cooperative? Is your doctor someone *you* can freely talk to? Do you feel respected, are your concerns addressed? Remember, you are as much a partner with them, as they are with you.

How do these 3 ESSENTIAL capacities relate to the Interactive and Leadership Capacities?



<b>Leadership</b>	Collaborative	Vocal	Creative
<b>Interactive</b>	Productive	Relational	Responsive
<b>Essential</b>	Physical	Emotional	Mental

Although the 9 capacities are presented in linear format, they are not linear. Just as we are not linear beings, the capacities cannot be separated from each other. They are fluid and ever-changing. Ability or disability in one capacity influences the others.

Without the 3 *Essential Capacities* it is difficult to develop and sustain the *Interactive Capacities*. Maintenance of the 3 *Leadership Capacities* is temporary if the *Essential Capacities*

are not tended to, and may be impossible if you do not have ability with the 3 *Interactive Capacities*.

## About Joan



Joan Friedlander, principal at Lifework Business Partners, is the author of *Business from Bed: The 6-Step Comeback Plan to Get Yourself Working after a Health Crisis* (Demos Health, 2012).

Joan coaches independent business owners standing at a Critical Crossroad. Something is changing - or has changed - and they need help with the essential decisions while navigating through murky waters.

Her clients are visionary leaders in their fields. They might not be famous, but their dedication to the vision of their own work - and their customers - is a high priority.

Joan has created a working model for Capacity, which offers her clients a non-judgmental view of where they might need to adjust their expectations or behavior in order to better align their actions with evolving circumstances.

Joan's ability to reach and teach goes far beyond her selective client list. To find out more about her services visit her website, [www.JoanFriedlander.com](http://www.JoanFriedlander.com). While you're there, be sure to look at the other resources and services Joan's made available to help you build a great business *and* enjoy your life.