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accounting professional. With the 2010 Winter Olympics just around the corner, many Americans will be tuning in to watch the elegant figure skaters and speed hungry bobsledders. And would someone please help me understand the allure of the 500 year-old sport of curling?

**Tom Ellsworth** • Jan. 27, 2010

**This is the First in our Series on Health & Wellness**

**Part II: [Don't Let the Trivial Trump the Important](#)**

**Part III: [Minimize Assumptions & Take the Guesswork out of the Equation](#)**

Pace yourself: Wisdom suitable for a seasoned athlete ... or a dedicated tax and accounting professional. With the 2010 Winter Olympics just around the corner, many Americans will be tuning in to watch the elegant figure skaters and speed hungry bobsledders. And would someone please help me understand the allure of the 500 year-old sport of curling?

Some of the Olympic events don't receive as much televised attention but are just as remarkable for skill and endurance. Take, for instance, the cross country ski competition. True, watching it won't raise your blood pressure or make your heart pound, but it does provide at least one valuable lesson for everyday life — if you want to be a winner, you must pace yourself. A part of the winter Olympics since its inception in 1924, cross-country skiing is one of the most difficult endurance sports. Its motions employ every major muscle group in the body and burn more calories per hour in execution than many other sports. A cross country skier requires both upper and lower body strength, so conditioning involves a variety of exercises.

The Olympic competition involves several different times, lengths and combinations (the biathlon combines cross country skiing and rifle marksmanship), but the longest event is 50 kilometers. One can have the finest skis and equipment, be

physically prepared by the best trainers and have national support, but if the athlete

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An un-paced life is wearisome. Expending your energy quickly may be good for a sprinter, but it is disastrous for a distance athlete, leaving him weary when he needs the strength to finish. Too many weary days and you'll be flirting with burnout. As burnout sets in, your demeanor becomes irritable and inconsiderate. Tempers flare. Words become terse, patience grows short and email responses take on abrupt feelings that leave people wondering how to interpret them. Your usual, loveable personality packs up and goes on an extended vacation. And while you may be able to keep it together for the sake of your clients, your family often suffers through your meltdown when you shuffle through the front door.

An un-paced life often lacks integrity. When you bite off more than you can chew, some responsibilities are hard to swallow. You get IRS heartburn — Integrity at Risk Syndrome. Some wise sage once said, "The person who burns the candle at both ends isn't nearly as bright as he thinks he is." When exhausted, you are more tempted to cut corners in order to finish the work regardless of its quality. Cutting corners isn't ethical; it prevents you from doing your best for your clients. What's more, you won't find personal satisfaction in a job poorly done.

As the burnout deepens, you'll be tempted to do more than just cut corners. You may even consider compromising your integrity for personal gain. Normally, such credibility-challenged thoughts would be easily dismissed, but when you are mentally and emotionally exhausted, integrity can take a beating.

I enjoy anything that has to do with aircraft and aviation history. One of my favorite television series from the late 70s portrayed the WW II squadron known as the Black Sheep Squadron. Flying F4U Corsairs in the south Pacific, the series loosely reenacted the antics of squadron leader "Pappy" Boyington and the marine pilots under his command. Recently, I discovered a website that offered the entire television series for

sale on DVD. The site presented the product as “all thirty-seven uncut NBC episodes.”

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Consider these simple ideas to help you keep pace:

- Be realistic in estimating the jobs you can finish well in the next three months. Build in extra time to compensate for problems or issues that are not obvious at the outset. Don't take on more than you can accomplish with excellence.
- Consider investing in new technological tools that will reduce your time and improve your finished product.
- Make quality time for your clients. Your reputation is dependent upon your interpersonal skills as well as your accounting expertise.
- Take mini-breaks throughout the day to clear your mind and refresh your energy level: read a chapter from your favorite style of novel, do five minutes of stretching exercises, take a 10-minute walk outside in the sunshine, etc.
- Reserve time for your family or close friends. Invest emotional capital in those irreplaceable relationships so that when you are required to work extended hours, they can be your biggest support and encouragement.

While this publication is dedicated to the use and promotion of technology in the tax and accounting world, there is no new software or hardware product that can compensate for one's lack of common sense. Like the cross country skier's finish line, that infamous April date looms large in the not-too-distant future. Arriving at that date with your life, health and integrity intact is a goal you can't afford to compromise. Keep it steady. Don't overdo. Pace yourself!

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