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Baby, I'm Too Blind to Notice My Scars!

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Entrepreneurs refer to their ventures as their babies due to their high psychological attachment which impacts their experience of daily time pressures as they navigate their daily challenges and uncertainties. These time pressures can be emotionally demanding and fatigue the entrepreneur on a day-to-day basis, eventually depreciating entrepreneurial well-being. These draining time pressures rely on the entrepreneur's willpower resources. Thus, entrepreneurs with differing beliefs about their willpower experience these time pressures differently. For example, entrepreneurs with a growth mindset about willpower believe that engaging in straining tasks doesn't deplete their energy (or willpower) and can even activate and energize them. On the other hand, entrepreneurs with fixed mindsets of willpower believe that willpower is a limited entity and decreases with every strenuous task they perform. Thus, we examine how entrepreneurs with growth and fixed mindsets experience and react to daily time pressures.

Our research (data from 87 entrepreneurs who reported their daily experiences for up to 16 days each, leading to a rich 1090 observations) suggests that time pressures trigger emotional demands within an entrepreneur, which fatigue the entrepreneur. Importantly, among different entrepreneurs, we found that growth mindset can produce dual effects in the daily lives of entrepreneurs. Specifically, we found that willpower mindsets reduce the emotional demands caused by these time pressures. However, since entrepreneurs with a willpower growth mindset believe that willpower is an unlimited entity, they tend to ignore the signals of exhaustion and burnout. This leads them to act more intensely towards the time pressures without managing the workloads and taking up more work. Thus, such entrepreneurs experience higher fatigue at the end of the day. In other words, entrepreneurs with growth mindsets do not react as emotionally to time pressures, but the emotional reactions do hit harder with respect to feeling drained and exhausted at the end of the day.

On the other hand, entrepreneurs with a fixed mindset about willpower experience heightened emotional demands due to time pressure, but their belief system helps them detect exhaustion signals. This adherence to burnout signals helps them proactively manage their workload better and limit their exertions to strenuous tasks that need to be completed under time pressures. This prevents more exertion and makes them feel less fatigued at the end of the day.

In sum, our research highlights that willpower growth mindsets can have a favorable influence on handling daily stressors commonly experienced by entrepreneurs (by lowering emotional demands), but this mindset can also be detrimental for entrepreneurs who nevertheless experience heightened levels of fatigue at the end of the day. Thus, entrepreneurs should [1] monitor and take restorative actions to such heightened stress levels, which shall help mitigate the downside consequences, [2] be aware of one's beliefs, and understand that a growth mindset is 'not all gold' and can have its downsides. This understanding is particularly important because growth mindsets have been a part of positive psychology (and rightly so) but need some refinement to clarify their effects more closely. In sum, this research depicts that entrepreneurs need to be more aware of their mental health and belief systems while battling their daily stressors.

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