



Liezel van der Westhuizen

The Burnout Business & Mental Fitness Coach

They call her The Giraffe. Not because of her height (although, yes, that too), but because of how she leads: head above the noise, eyes on the horizon, calm in the chaos. It's a nickname journalist Craig Jacobs gave her in the Sunday Times, and it stuck for a reason. Giraffes have the biggest heart of any land mammal, built to pump blood two metres uphill against gravity, every single beat. That's not a metaphor Liezel chose for marketing. It's the closest thing she's found to describing what it actually takes to lead, perform, and stay standing when the pressure never lets up.

Liezel is a Burnout Business and Mental Fitness Coach, Neuroscience Coach, Certified Hypnotherapist, and Positive Intelligence (PQ) Practitioner who works with corporate leadership teams, C-suite executives, sales leaders, and high-performing entrepreneurs across South Africa, Africa, and internationally. Her focus is deliberately commercial: help ambitious people and teams hit their numbers without burning out the humans producing them. Because burnout isn't a wellness issue sitting quietly in the corner of HR. It's a business cost, and Liezel puts a name to it: The Burnout Tax. Lost focus, disengaged top performers, absenteeism, attrition, and flatlining revenue are what happens when high performance runs on an unregulated nervous system. She helps leaders and sales teams find the difference between pressure that sharpens people and pressure that quietly breaks them, and then builds the systems to protect the former.

Who She Is

Liesel holds a Master's in Business Communication, an Honours degree, and a BCom in Human Resources Management and Industrial Psychology from the University of Pretoria. On top of that academic foundation, she has trained extensively in Neuroscience Coaching, Mindvalley Business Coaching, Positive Intelligence (PQ) Coaching under Shirzad Chamine, Certified Hypnotherapy, Laughter Yoga, and is a Level 1 and 2 Sound Bowl Practitioner. It's an unusual combination on paper. In the room, it's exactly why her work lands: hard evidence and business rigour, delivered through tools that actually shift a nervous system, not just a mindset.

She built and runs The Giraffe Brand, translating neuroscience and behavioural science into practical, measurable coaching for people who don't have time for theory. Her frameworks draw on Positive Intelligence, Tony Robbins' Six Human Needs, and Mindvalley-style coaching principles, always chosen to fit the problem in front of her rather than forced into every conversation. Ask her about Saboteurs, and she'll have you spotting your own Controller or Hyper-Achiever before the session ends. Ask her about what's really driving a disengaged sales floor, and she'll take you straight to Significance and Certainty.

Broadcast Career

Liesel is one of South Africa's most recognised broadcast voices, presenting daily on KFM 94.5, CapeTalk, and Talk Radio 702, and appearing regularly on television. Her broadcast career includes becoming the second woman in the world to present Idols, and she made history as the first female commentator at both the Comrades Marathon and Ironman South Africa. These milestones aren't decoration. They're proof of a career built on walking into rooms nobody expected her in, and holding her own.

Keynote Speaker & International Master of Ceremonies

As a keynote speaker and international MC, Liesel has hosted and spoken at more than 2,000 events across South Africa, Hong Kong, the United Kingdom, Italy, Romania, Indonesia, Thailand, and the Seychelles. She has shared stages and events with international artists including Lenny Kravitz and the Backstreet Boys. Her keynotes are built to do more than inform. Drawing on the Six Human Needs, she reads what a room is actually hungry for, whether that's Certainty in a season of change, Significance in a team that feels invisible, or Growth in leaders who've plateaued, and builds a talk designed to shift behaviour, not just applause.

Her signature keynote themes include The Burnout Tax (reframing burnout as a measurable business risk, not a soft HR issue), Mental Fitness for High Performers, and Finish Lines & False Finish Lines, drawing directly on her endurance career to explore resilience, recovery, and sustainable ambition.

Endurance Athlete & The Mental Fitness Laboratory

Liesel doesn't coach pressure from a textbook. She coaches it from the start line. She's a multiple Ironman finisher, multiple Dusi Canoe Marathon finisher, and multiple HYROX finisher, and has served as a HYROX judge in Hong Kong. She completed the 7.5km Robben Island to Blouberg open-water swim in roughly 11°C water, and one of her proudest achievements was co-piloting as part of the first South African all-female blind and sighted tandem team to cycle across the Himalayas: approximately 550km from Manali to Khardung La, at over 18,000 feet.

For Liesel, endurance sport was never about medals. It's a live laboratory for everything she now teaches: how the nervous system behaves under real pressure, how self-command is actually built, and why recovery is a performance strategy, not a reward for finishing.

Away from the stage and the finish line, she's an avid Mahjong player, drawn to the game as a genuine mental fitness practice: attention, memory, strategic thinking, pattern recognition, adaptability, and social connection, all in one sitting. She's also a proud dog-mom to rescue pups Luke and Leia Sky Walker.

The Work

Whether she's coaching a C-suite executive through burnout recovery, rebuilding a sales team's performance psychology, or standing on stage in front of a thousand people, Liesel's method stays the same: name the pattern, ground it in evidence, and hand people something they can actually use on Monday morning. No jargon for the sake of sounding clever. No performative wellness. Just neuroscience, business rigour, and lived proof that pressure can be a teacher instead of a threat.

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