The Value of Rest

by Glori Alexander

I'm a "go-getter". If I'm not being productive, my perception of my self-value/self-worth decreases. As a result, I tend to forego resting until my body does a complete shutdown. This is the point where the guilt comes flooding in - not the guilt of not listening to my body's needs, but the guilt of not being productive. How counter-intuitive is that?

Where does this disconnect come from? When did we stop listening to our bodies at the expense of our bodies? Studies have proven that rest is vital for better mental health, increased concentration and memory, a healthier immune system, reduced stress, improved mood, and even a better metabolism. In essence, we are overriding our body's basic needs for proper functionality. So why keep going? That's the big question, right? We have to be able to answer this question in order to make a change in our behavior.

Is the task at hand worth our health? We often don't see it in such black and white terms at the exact moment - it doesn't seem so "life and death"; all we see is our "to-do" list. How often have you heard or even said, "I'll rest when I die." So where do we draw the line? Where do we make the decision that our health - meaning our physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being, takes precedence? Here's how I have wrapped my head around this. That in order to be my best self, I have to make time to rest. In order for me to be the best mother, employer, employee, partner, daughter, sister, etc., I need to make time to rest. In order for me to be the healthiest version of myself, I need to make time to rest. That resting doesn't equate to laziness. Let me repeat that - RESTING DOES NOT EQUATE TO LAZINESS. Resting is purposeful. It has a beginning and an end.

"Resting does not equate to laziness."

How do we go about making time to rest?
Here are 3 suggestions that have worked for me.

TAKE A DEEP **BREATH** **LISTEN** *TO YOUR BODY*

1. Take a deep breath. Listen to your body. Do you feel like your heart and mind are racing? If you say yes, take ONE minute to close your eyes and take a few deep breaths in and out. Breathe in through your nose for 5 seconds and out of your mouth for 5 seconds. Only concentrate on your breathing. Empty your mind of any outside thoughts. This is only one minute and 6 deep breaths. You can do this!

Does taking only a minute to breathe really help? The Mayo Clinic says yes. They have found that deep breathing can decrease the effect of stress on your mind and body and help lower or stabilize blood pressure. If you have a breathing break setting on your watch, set it now.

TAKE A 30-MINUTE **TECH BREAK** *EACH DAY*

2. Take a 30-minute tech break each day. Put your phone down, turn off your computer and any notifications for 30 minutes. Our minds are constantly barraged with information. It's okay to turn off the stream for a few minutes. Can't do 30 minutes? Start with 10 to 15 minutes. You've heard the term, progress, not perfection. Give yourself some grace here.

Greater Good Magazine from Berkeley gives us 5 reasons to take a break from screens.

a. It gives us present-moment awareness, meaning being present, mindful, and aware of our surroundings. This includes our relationships and the people close to us.

b. Taking a break from our screens helps us have improved sleep. Giving your brain a chance to wind down with no screen time at least 30 minutes before bed will allow us to relax without disrupting stimulation.

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c. Allows us deepened connections - As we've learned during the pandemic, nothing compares to face-to-face conversations with our friends. Make it a point to enjoy time with friends and family without interruptions.

d. Better productivity and learning - a swarm of constant buzzing, beeping, and dings from our phones don't allow us to focus, leading to less productivity. Trying to write an article is nearly impossible when my phone is nearby.

e. The Power of breaking the habit - I don't know about you, but when I overcome a habit, I feel more in control and less stressed. I feel like I have power over my mind and I LOVE being more productive overall!

For the full article, check out this link

(https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/five_reasons_to_take_a_break_from_screens)

GO OUTSIDE. *TAKE A* WALK. *ENJOY* NATURE

3. Get outside. Take a walk. Enjoy nature. This allows us time to clear our minds of our screens, our projects, and our work. I love being outside. In nature is where I feel the most spiritual. I find that the more I am outside, away from my desk, I am able to think better. I listen to the wind, the birds, and try to notice something new around me. When I come back inside, I find I am able to concentrate better, my mood has improved and I feel more productive. In fact, I've gone outside once while writing this article and have taken 2 other short breaks.

Overall, taking time to rest our bodies and minds only *improves* our productivity. If we can wrap our minds around this idea, we are more apt to take care of our mental and physical health. Our work improves, our relationships improve, our sleep and clarity of mind improves. We are more productive when we allow ourselves to rest. What are some ways you have taken time to rest? What helps you recharge?

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