

REST AND RETREAT - Claim the gift of rest, rather than pay the price of busy-ness

Prize (or price) for busy-ness

“What is the prize for busy-ness? Is there a prize?” you may ask. Yes indeed. Your prize may be receiving acknowledgement, accolade, a medal or “person of the month” award, a climb up the career ladder, a pat on the back or a self-applied band-aid to the wound of feeling a failure if you are not busy. Generally the prize for busy-ness has a short-term effect – one that elevates your mood or air of self importance or confidence, but equally may mask the real inadequacy you feel underneath, distract you from dealing with what is really important or deny you from enjoying life more fully.

Is there a price for busy-ness? Yes you may recognise this far easier than the “prize”. Do you recognise exhaustion, lethargy, moodiness, lack of time for what’s important, discontentment, that “running away” feeling or feeling like you are on the “same old, same old” treadmill that doesn’t stop?

What is busy-ness costing you physically, emotionally, mentally, socially, relationally, financially, sexually and, spiritually? Don’t just whiz past this question in your busy-ness. Take several moments to rest and reflect for this could be your turning point for claiming the gift of rest.

The gift of rest and retreat – a must, not a treat

What is the prize for rest and retreat? What is the price?

Just imagine yourself in a relaxed environment enjoying downtime and still time.(pause to stop)..... Even this time you are taking out of your daily busy-ness right now to imagine this can give you a taste of the prize for rest and retreat. Peace of mind, calm thoughts, relaxed body, calm environment, quality time... and the peace list goes on.

But I can’t afford it? Do you know that the price of rest and retreat is priceless? It doesn’t need to cost you a thing – just a choice in the moment in fact. Yes there may be a price tag if you prefer to retreat in an overseas tropical location once in a blue moon, but we are talking more regular consistent rest and retreat here – when you can regularly and consistently benefit.

Retreat = place of rest

What do you imagine when you hear the word “retreat”? A sanctuary away from the hustle and bustle might come to mind. A place of silence may come to others’ minds. A place where you eat well, drink juices, practice yoga, take time to journal and meditate might be someone else’s preference.

Create your own haven, sanctuary or still place...in your home environment. In fact even in your work environment, your holiday environment and wherever you go. So how do you do this? Still your environment using calming colours, images that make you happy, textures that feel good, sounds that soothe and relax you and spend more time creating a quality people environment. Create sacred areas – they could be in your garden, in your favourite

armchair or outside on your deck so when you go there regularly, you already have that intention of retreating.

Retreat = treat again, and again and again - the importance of daily retreat rituals

Retreats at a resort, on a luxury cruise ship or at a 10 day silence experience at a Buddhist monastery can be replaced with more regular re-“treats” and rituals. Give yourself the gift of time when you prepare yourself and your body in the morning. Take time for example to moisturise your body after your shower, sit quietly enjoying and mindfully eating your breakfast rather than scurrying out the door, mindfully brush your hair, put on your make-up, drink (don’t gulp) your coffee. It is not so much the activity, but how you carry that activity out that is important. Mindful attention and willingness to just “be still” rather than “move and do” is vital.

Retreat = withdraw

Another meaning of the word retreat is to “go back”, withdraw or retire in the face of the action with an enemy. How would your life and your health change if you were to stop the fighting, stop the hostage taking, stop the “having to win or be right all the time”? Take a rest from this too and experience the benefits that come from a lack of hostility, aggression and stress.

Withdraw or remove yourself from your old, outdated beliefs about productivity, work, rest and laziness. If your identity in the past has been around “busy is best” or “you are lazy if you are not doing something”. Change the programming NOW by entertaining a different thought, or doing an unfamiliar action that is not part of your “keep busy” repertoire. Consciously choose beliefs that are your own personal ones, not those of your parents, family or group. Give yourself this gift.

Be still and rest meditation

Be still, rest and pause awhile.

Sit or lie comfortably. Close your eyes and take a gentle **breath in** through your nose – from deep down in your stomach area. Notice your stomach rising and then your chest. Not the other way around. See the in-breath as a wave of an incoming tide - not forced, but coming in at its own pace.

With each out-breath, breathe out your nose (and not your mouth) – releasing the tension in your body and releasing any worries or anxieties that you have. See them on their way as if they were floating away with the outgoing tide.

Continue this pattern drawing a breath in through your nose and releasing it out your nose – each time taking a deeper breath - right from your core - and releasing more tension each time you breathe out.

Pay attention to your head area. Let go of your thoughts, your cares and any worries and just allow your head to feel empty. **Head, be still and rest.**

Your eyes. Let them just stay closed very gently. Not tight or screwed up in any way. Stop looking out for others over and above yourself. Stop looking for solutions. Stop seeing things in the wrong

light for which they were intended. Stop looking for problems that are not there. Use your eyes to seek out new possibilities for yourself, but for a moment **eyes, be still and rest.**

Your nose, cheeks and jaw area. Notice any tension here and let it just wash away into the ocean of life. **Nose, cheeks and jaw. Be still and rest.**

Pay attention to your mouth, lips and throat area. No need to talk, to express yourself, to explain yourself away. Stop fighting and being critical. Stop complaining and mouthing off. Speak with kindness and compassion. **Mouth, lips and throat. Be still and rest.**

Feel your shoulders and upper back. No need to shoulder others' burdens or worries. Put them down. Give those concerns back to those whose problems they are - knowing that you are responsible for you, and others are responsible for themselves. Only carry around beliefs, thoughts and behaviours that serve you. **But for a moment shoulders and upper back, be still and rest.**

Feel your arms and your hands. Let go of holding on to things and to people. Loosen your grip. Start embracing quietness and holding yourself in higher esteem. Arms and hands. Be still and rest.

Just allow yourself to quietly get things off your chest. Rather than screaming or shouting, just put down those things that are bothering you. Let them go. **Chest, be still and rest.**

Put attention on your spine. Stop bending over backwards for everyone. Stop cowering with insecurity and a belief that you are not good enough. Let your spine hold you tall and steadfast with confidence and without straining. Let that happen with ease and grace and unrestricted movement. **Spine and back, be still and rest.**

Let your stomach and main torso area guide your decisions. Don't let things stew forever. Stop the thoughts that are leading to your stomach churning around and around. Instead use your intuition by noticing and acting accordingly to your gut reactions. **But for a moment stomach, be still and rest awhile.**

Your **sexual and reproductive area.** Let this area and your entire body flow with sensuality. Express yourself sexually. Allow your creativity to flow. **But for a moment, be still and rest.**

Notice your legs and feet. For a moment, let them carry you no further. Allow them to stop, not walking toward any goal or signpost. Not walking again over miles well trodden. **Allow your legs and feet to be still and rest awhile.**

So stop and rest your entire body. Allow it to relax. Allow you mind to relax.

Enjoy the stillness. (Pause) Enjoy the rest. (Pause)

Be still ...and know that your body is magnificent. Be still and know that YOU are magnificent.

Rest, feel...and be that magnificence. Bathe in it. Feel it wash over and through your body. Invite it into the core of your being. You are magnificent.