

A Needed Rest

Brace yourselves... I am about to say some scary words...

Rest... Quiet... Solitude... introspection...

We may not want to admit it, but for most people... most Americans, anyway... these words *are* scary. Many people feel that these words represent the opposite of “work”, which, then, by logic, would make them synonymous with the words “laziness”, “idleness”, “unemployment” and “failure”. Some even go so far as to lump in there with them, “fun”, “entertainment”, and “pastime”.

The American Puritan Work Ethic is something that we all have at least a little bit of within us. Our culture emphasizes the values of hard work, discipline, and frugality, and this is not a bad thing! In fact, our American culture would scarcely exist without them.

However, at the same time, our economy is based upon the ability of advertising to lure people away from these values. “Live a little”, we are told... “take that vacation!... buy that car!... Eat that pizza!”

We have become so used to the continuous double-message that our sub-conscious is being subjected to every day, that we fail to notice when we are told to “Browse jogging pants in all sizes”, “Shop Quality Golf Clubs”, “Look! Affordable Humidors!”, “Buy Plus Size Clothing”, “Click here for Low Cost Car Deals”, and “Come in and try our Wonderful Women’s Perfumes!”

So, essentially, we are told to work hard, play hard, be disciplined... just enough to save our money so that we can spend it on something that will make us happy, as well as show all of our friends just how hard we have worked.

And then... seemingly out of nowhere... every so often... something comes along that makes us...

... Stop...

It took me a long time to learn this. My spouse sometimes *still* says to me “will you *please* take a break before you fall on the ice and hit your head?”

Now, this is in that special language that one develops with a partner if one is fortunate enough to have been together for many years.

What she is referring to is a time when we were both going to school, and I was also driving a school bus and working in the campus chapel. I was working basically non-stop, trying to keep up with everything that was going on, and one Friday, after I had dropped all my kids off for the day, I parked my bus and was walking back to the garage to turn in my paperwork, and I slipped on the ice and hit my head.

Fortunately, I wasn't injured. But, apparently, my head hitting the ice made an awful sound, management called 9-1-1, and I was taken away in an ambulance.

The point is, even though I wasn't hurt, I could have been, and the accident happened for no other reason except I was trying to do too much. I was walking too fast, not paying attention, and hit a patch of ice.

My spouse says that me getting hurt or sick is Mother Earth's way of telling me that, if I won't stop and rest on my own, She *will* force the issue. And, I have come to agree.

Emma Zeck wrote:

*With this open time...
You do not have to write the next bestselling novel.
You do not have to get in the best shape of your life.
You do not have to start that podcast.*

*What you can do instead is observe this pause as an opportunity.
The same systems we see crumbling in society, are being called to crumble
in each of us individually.
The systems that taught us monetary gain takes priority over humanity.
The systems that create our insecurities then capitalize off of them.*

*What if we became curious with this free time, & had no agenda other than
to experience being?
What if you created art for the sake of creating?
What if you allowed yourself to rest & cry & laugh & play & get curious
about whatever arises in you?*

What if our true purpose is on this space?

*As if Mother Earth is saying: " We can no longer carry on this way. The time
is now - I am reminding you who you are. Will you remember?"*

The Coronavirus Pandemic is a terrible thing, which has resulted in the deaths of thousands of people worldwide, and my heart goes out to each and every one of them and their families, but what we are being asked to do to combat it... basically, is just stay home and wash our hands. This is not a terrible thing.

This time of rest... this *pause* in our regularly scheduled programming... can carry with it *so many gifts!*

For one thing, if we have pets, I'm sure they are *thrilled* to have us home more! And, those of us with children at home, yes, we now must home school them... but is that really a bad thing? Yes, it is an adjustment for everyone, but you may find, when this is all over, that this time together brings some of your most cherished memories.

If we are fortunate, as I am, we can do most or all our jobs from home... sharing our space with our spouses, and our kids and our animals... which is, again, an adjustment...

Here is something else interesting...

Most of us have this wonderful 21st century technology. This Stay at Home pause is forcing us to use it in ways that perhaps we haven't before. I am very fortunate to be able to come to you today via live stream. I mean, we have been doing this for some time, here, but maybe you had never attended this way before, and, maybe it's not as rewarding for you as attending in person, but, on the other hand, when was the last time you attended in your pajamas, drinking coffee with your cat on your lap?

Afterwards, we will still be doing our Fellowship Hour via Zoom. Again, that is new and different, but we will make it work. The important thing is the time we spend together. It doesn't really matter how that happens, just if it does.

I have lived all over the country, so I have friends everywhere, and we have all been keeping in touch for years through the magic of the internet, but this time has brought to me an heightened appreciation of the people who I care about but whom I never actually see. For one thing, my friends have been sending me links through Facebook to musical artists that we all share an appreciation for. Every evening, at 6pm, my friend in Wisconsin, who I know from California, sends me a link to Melissa Etheridge, who has been doing a little mini concert from her living room every day. Now, I used to know Melissa when she was still playing in little women's bars in the 1980s. I haven't seen her in at least 20 years, but I used to help her unload her gear from her car. So, here I am, sitting in my apartment in beautiful downtown Worcester, sharing an intimate little concert venue with her and many of the women that I used to sit next to in Pasadena in 1985. What a gift!

A few nights ago, my brother-in-law accidentally video called me through Facebook. He was giddy! He could not believe that he was sitting there, in Southern California, seeing and talking to his sister & I, 3000 miles away! Then my spouse turned around and did the same thing to the minister that married the two of us. It must be a family thing. But we had a *lovely* conversation, and I feel *so fortunate* to still have these connections after all these years!

...But...there is one very important thing that I would like to share with you...

I have worked as both a hospital and a hospice chaplain, and, as such, I have spent a fair amount of time sitting with people as they knew they were walking their last mile upon this earth. And, do you know what not one person ever said to me?

Not one person ever said, "I wish I had spent more time at work." Every single person wishes they had spent more time doing the things they love with the people and the animals that they love.

I heard on the news that one in four people are going to lose their jobs because of this, and that the disruption in commerce is causing great uncertainty in the stock market. I *know* the economic ramifications of this are scary. But we will figure it out. We will have to figure out new ways of doing things. There will be changes. I have total faith in all of you... in *us*... because we are all in this together. We are strong and we are resilient, and if we just stay home, wash our hands, eat good food, take our vitamins... rest... sleep... RELAX... because stress impairs the immune system...protect the lives and health of ourselves and one another, and keep focused on the fact that the only thing that matters *is* each other. We *will* get through this!

And I really believe, with all my heart, that we will be the better for it. Things may never be the same, but, in the end, some things we may not to be.

