

Saved by the Bell

All Work And No Play Is No Way To Live!

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The brain needs rest from daily stress and that's why play-time really is a priority. As youngsters we enjoyed the ritual of recess and as adults we need to give ourselves that same break. It's not just "kids stuff", but rather a useful (and fun) way to relax, recharge and yes, refocus.

As a busy professional, you know all too well the impact that being connected has on your life. Cell phones, pagers, PDA's, voice-mail and the answering service all keep you tethered to your vocation. But a vacation from your vocation is also essential, even if it's just a ten minute respite during a busy day. Finding life balance may take some effort, but the payoff is priceless. "It's important for all of us to realize the direct relationship between play and leisure and good health," says family physician Clint McKinney of Cresco, Iowa. With that in mind, here are some simple tips to help you learn how to re-energize your adult and play like a kid again.

1. Eliminate The Guilt

The old adage that time is money certainly has truth to it, but in reality, time is time and it is **your** resource. Using part of your day to refresh your mind and body is a prudent investment. Don't waste time feeling guilty about taking time for yourself. It is an absolute necessity as you manage the built-in pressure of your career. So free up some time for yourself by checking out some time-saving, guilt-lifting services. In the long run it may pay off to pay someone else to do the tasks that nag at you like yard work, house cleaning, laundry or shopping.

2. R & R & R Is Not Out Of Reach

Schedule time for you. Set aside time each week for your own private play date. Plan it, put it on your calendar and keep it as though it was an appointment with a patient. Rest, relaxation and recreation are known ingredients in the total wellness recipe, for all of us!

3. Moments Matter Too

The idea that you need blocks of time to rest or relax isn't quite accurate. Breaking the routine with something as simple as a casual (non-work related) conversation can give that moment of relief from the stress that is your day. Do you have a favorite comic strip? Read it. Do pictures of your family bring a smile to your face? Carry one with you and look at it. Sometimes it's the little things that lift the spirit in surprising ways. These daily time-outs can serve as an emotional oasis and may be a key to getting through a demanding day.

4. Go Sailing

As a time management consultant, I am always asked how we can create more time in our lives. My answer is always the same. We can't. We can, however, create the *time of our lives*. When I ask people to think about the times that would make their Top 10 list, a smile usually accompanies those memories of carefree and fun-filled days. Recall those times when you plan your play. Allow your mind to *set sail* and you may end up doing something very different than you expected.

5. Enjoy The Buffet

It's good to have a long list of activities you consider play. If you don't already have such a list, enjoy the process of making one. Picture it as a smorgasboard of fun. It can be surprising what we come up with when we put our minds to it. There are hobbies to be discovered, museums to be visited, games to be played, concerts to be heard. There is an entire world of play open to you. It doesn't have to take a lot of time or money to create fun. Think about what kept you sane while in school, training, or getting married. Perhaps it's applicable today!

6. Get Into Vacation Shape

Knowing how to unwind is critical to a fun vacation. Many of us spend part of our vacation feeling pressed to stay busy and then lament how quickly the play-time has passed. Some vacation preparation may help. A week before your next hiatus, take an extra ten minutes a day for play. Attend to your priorities, but spend some time winding down so, on that last day, you can punch your mental time clock when you leave the office.

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