



PERSPECTIVE:

“Taking a Time Out” Dr. Hamilton 5.23.12

A teacher says to two squabbling students, “Why don’t you just leave; as a matter of fact, why don’t I just leave” and storms out. Therapeutic group leaders joke about taking the pre-school teachers for the play therapy session, instead of the three to five year olds; the teachers happily go along for the fun. Psychology interns lock themselves in their offices and play Scrabble between the multitudes of clients. Sometimes you just find yourself needing a time out.

Time outs have been associated primarily with discipline, a response to unwanted behavior. We say they are used to give children time out from reinforcement, time out to think about poor behavior, time out from attention, time out from fun. However, the concept of time out really can and should be reframed positively into time out to take care of you.

Time-out for meditation

Although you may feel rushed and pressured to keep going, going, going, taking time out for meditation, can relieve stress and has demonstrated mental and physical health benefits. From reduction of anxiety to post-operative healing, meditation can have almost magical effects on functioning. According to WebMD, “Any condition that’s caused or worsened by stress can be alleviated through meditation (cardiologist Herbert Benson, MD).” They also cite improvement in fertility, immune system functioning as well as the reduction of symptoms associated with PMS. And there are numerous other benefits associated with taking a time-out for meditation.

Time-out for chocolate and wine

For some time now, wine, red wine in particular, has been thought of as promoting heart health. And dark chocolate, has gained some press recently for possible health benefits. Both dark chocolate and red wine are thought to improve health through the provision of antioxidants, which may help with disease prevention. While drinking excessively and chocolates that are heavy in milk, sugar and fat can work against health, moderate use of red wine and choosing dark chocolate (with higher concentrations of cocoa) may be beneficial. Savoring, a rich dark chocolate as part of a meditative ritual can be one way of practicing mindfulness and treating yourself body and spirit to a time-out.

So, when you are healthy, take a paid sick day off from work~ to be well.

Time out for exercise

Part of what may keep you from taking time-out is that you have to take time away from whatever endeavor in which you are endeavoring. And exercise can feel almost impossible to sneak into a packed day. These 5 Quick Exercises You Can Do at Your Desk were found at Yahoo; and I find them to be a quick way of taking time out to work your body. Print them, post them in a conspicuous place in your cubby at work. When you look up from your computer and find yourself needing a time out, take one...to exercise...

<http://voices.yahoo.com/5-quick-exercises-desk-138744.html>

Time out to be well

I have a spiritual theory about illness, that sometimes we become sick to force us to pay attention to ourselves. We will keep going and going until the flu, or an injury slows us down, stops us, causes us to lay flat on our backs. Then, we stay home, sick, miserable, but taking care of ourselves. When we are sneezing and stuffy, headachey, backachey, tired and worn down, we finally rest. Many times we don't consider that we could have rested before, that we could have taken a time out in health and spent that time out enjoying, appreciating and caring for ourselves, just as much as we do when we are ill. We forget that we don't have to be sick to take good care of ourselves. So, we wait until we are sick to do so.

Reframing time out

To come full circle, this message should also be passed down to our children. We can begin to promote mini time outs during the day for meditation, quiet time (remember in grade school... "place your heads on the desk"), coloring or simple reflection. Making it a general practice may encourage children to take their own time outs (and learn how to self-care) when they are becoming overwhelmed. Taking a time out is not a negative experience. Rather, a time out is an opportunity to regroup, regain balance, and to take care of the self. There are many ways to do it. But it begins with the conscious desire to take time out for you.

-Dara

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