

A Priceless Vacation

by: Donna DeNomme



Is your life hectic and chaotic? Many of us lead lives full of personal projects, desired pursuits, family responsibilities, and job demands. We are often burdened with financial concerns, parenting challenges, issues of aging and health. How complicated is your weekly schedule? Are you counting the days until your next precious vacation (even if you just had one!) or are you simply trudging onward, unconsciously living from one day to the next without much enthusiasm?

I recently completed a very demanding and taxing national book release in New York, where everybody seems to move at the speed of light. In contrast, I am now particularly aware of the extraordinary sweetness of simple and sometimes surprising pleasures—cleaning a glass table until it shines, furiously weeding the overgrown flower garden, sitting in a chair in the backyard under a shade tree. It is not the nature of the task itself, nor even the experience of the activity, but the mental and emotional atmosphere surrounding it. Even washing the dishes has brought me simple pleasure! Taking the time to be fully present in the moment is so very delicious. No “to-do” tasks tugging at my apron.

Just savoring the moment at hand, enjoying it for the totality of what is there. I notice the colors and the textures while eating my breakfast of a thinly sliced gala apple, fresh blueberries in the height of their season, and those primo cherries. The flavors intermingle, giving me a heightened experience of delight!

Even though I am still accomplishing a great deal and moving forward with challenging work projects, there is an edge of “pushing through it all” which has been released. I allow myself to linger a bit when I water the garden, noticing the new bloom on the azalea, admiring the striking purple clematis adorning the side of my studio cottage, and am enthralled by the exquisite sound of the waterfall dancing in mesmerizing little pools, massaging the lily pods in my pond. The birds commune with me. Even the bee buzzing loudly in my ear does not disturb my sanctuary. It is a vacation from the normal busyness, the hustle and bustle of my get-it-done personality. A vacation is not necessarily an escape from one’s life, not necessarily an outer destination, but rather a state of mind. Some of us take little vacations every day—very healthy—physically and mentally. Take two and call me in the morning!

The American Heritage Dictionary defines vacation as, “a period of time devoted to pleasure, rest, or relaxation.” The Latin roots mean “freedom, release from occupation” and “to be empty, free.”

A busy receptionist recently shared with me that she and her husband opted not to travel this year for their vacation. Instead, they are staying home, sleeping in, working a little around the house, seeing a few movies, but mostly just taking it easy. She said it is the best vacation ever. Sometimes they just “sit on the back porch and watch the birds.”

In times past, these were every day American occurrences: taking time to sit and chat, to sit and ponder, or to just sit! Creating downtime can bring such delightful times of recharge and rejuvenation. The colors seem somewhat richer, the cherries taste even sweeter, and our lives take on a renewed meaning. Our senses are heightened and even the simplest of choices can be realized for their significance. I believe these mini-vacations are an effective antidote for boredom, apathy, or burn-out. Even for people who absolutely love their lives find it beneficial to release the mind chatter that can cloud their everyday thoughts, and open their minds to the broader sense of things. We simplify and yet, somehow expand. Through this uncluttered space, we discover what we feel and know on deeper levels.

Take a vacation – in your own backyard or wherever you are. A vacation is a state of mind, not a destination. Take a vacation and truly come home to yourself. *END

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