

2.

LIVE THE CIRCLE OF REST

One of the greatest obstacles to meaningful rest is the belief that rest is somehow a waste of time, that we are more productive when we work with little rest. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Look at what Jesus was able to do after his nap on the boat that night. He was able to fearlessly and creatively face chaos. How bold and innovative to speak to the storm. No one had ever tried that before.

In their book, *The Breakout Principle: How to Activate the Natural Trigger that Maximizes Creativity, Athletic Performance, Productivity, and Well Being*, Herbert Benson and William Proctor write, “*Backing off* is far more effective for solving problems and generating creativity than we might have ever imagined.” The co-authors state:

To make your escape from the downward spiral into destructive stress, you can “Back off,” “let go,” or “release” the pressure that is bearing down on you by switching on the Breakout mechanism. As we have seen, that may mean soaking in a tub of water, taking a walk in the woods, listening to a Bach concerto, or retreating in solitary prayer....

Pulling the breakout trigger in any of these ways will sever past patterns of thought and emotion. At the same time a series of helpful biochemical “explosions” will begin to bubble up inside your brain and body.

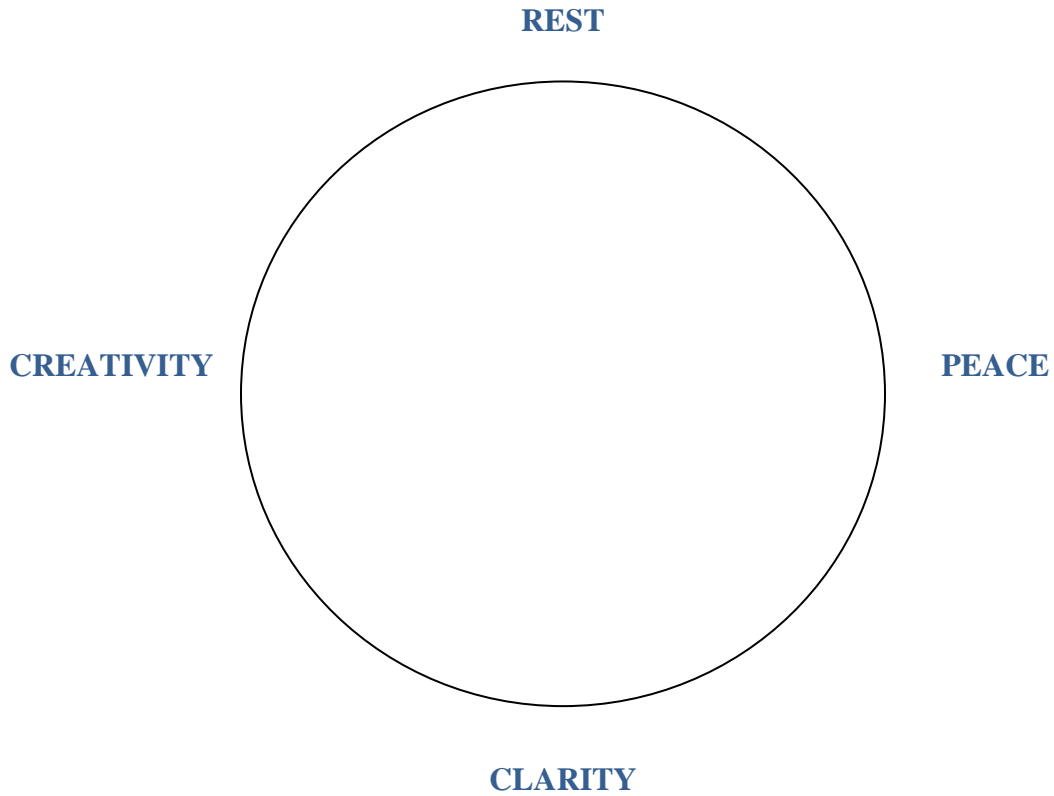
Of the various biochemical explosions Benson and Proctor highlight in their book, none is more vital than the leisure induced release of nitric oxide, “message-carrying puffs of gas that course through the entire body and central nervous system.” Among its fascinating wealth of offerings, nitric oxide (the No Molecule) enhances memory and learning by operating as a transmitter between brain synapses, increases the release of dopamine and endorphins which promote a sense of well-being, and helps regulate blood flow throughout the body.

Going, going, and going like the little bunny in the old Energizer bunny commercials is not only a serious health risk, it is a sure way to impede energizing creative vitality.

I may act like the energizer bunny and resist rest because:

As I observe the life of Jesus now, I see what I missed earlier on: the crucial link between his dynamism and his respite. He seemed to always have energy to give, to share, to bless. Where did it come from? How did he stay so full all of the time? He lived in what I refer to as **“The Circle of Rest”**:

THE CIRCLE OF REST



Rest Leads to Peace.

Peace Leads to Clarity.

Clarity Leads to Creativity.

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In her beautifully profound, *The Secret Life of Bees*, Sue Monk Kidd includes the following insightful passage:

Every human being on the face of the earth has a steel plate in his head, but if you lie down now and then and get as still as you can, it will slide open like elevator doors, letting in all the secret thoughts that have been standing around so patiently, pushing the button for the ride to the top. The real troubles in life happen when those doors stay closed for too long.

*There are few things in life
more dynamic than a rested soul.*

Much of our creative energy is dissipated in the constant busyness and rush of everyday life. Observing mental stillness regularly provides the openings for deeper reflection and clarity-making. In *What We Ache For: Creativity and the*

Unfolding of the Human Heart, Oriah Mountain Dreamer makes the following observation:

If there is one consistent thing that stops people committed to doing creative work from doing it, it is this: a lack of necessary silence in their lives, an inability or unwillingness to find and stay with the stillness, to regularly create empty time in their day or their week.

How many times have you experienced an answer to a pressing concern just popping into your head while you were mindlessly involved in a leisurely task or resting? That was no accident. Your mind dislodged from intense rigid engagement was free to roam in other places, places that contained the solution you sought. This is not to say there is no place for hard thinking, but hard thinking does not hold a monopoly on creative insight. The mind in eased stillness is a potent underused source of mammoth creative energy and insight. The only way you can discover this for yourself is to dare to live the dynamic circle of rest. I dare you.