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MDRT Minute

White Space: The Magic Ingredient for Life

We live in a time when we never feel like we have done enough. The pace and pressure of daily life endlessly increases. And we go on and on with these masterful, multitasking, whirlwind days only to hear a little voice that says, “What else could you have done, been, bought, or shown off that would have been even more impressive?” It is an exhausting and ultimately unproductive way to live.

White Space

White Space is blocks of open time that occur in between the scheduled events of your day. It is a wonderful place to appreciate the end results of the hard work you do. It is the place for big picture thinking. It is a place to memorize your children before they are up and out.

There are only two roads to White Space. You can do a little less stuff or you can do a few things less well. Both are hard for people with giant aspirations. But if we begin having a habit of mindfully scanning our lives, we find things that we can choose to say “no” to and areas where good enough is actually good enough.

Here are five ways to use White Space to impact your daily experience and create balance:

White space for calendar. Protect the spaces between events on your schedule. Delay slightly each commitment to discretionary requests and appointments. Remember, everything takes longer than you think, and having fluid time in between items is pivotal. Ask yourself questions like, “What can I let go of or postpone?” and “What should I have turned down?”

White space for email. To protect yourself from the onslaught that zaps your productivity, put yourself on a diet of three email meals per day. You can check email at breakfast, lunch, and dinner and then you can have two snacks. If something can’t wait 90 minutes, they can call you.

White space in conversation. When you are sitting with a client, do you feel a compulsion to fill silences in conversation? Don’t. You will get to know him or her much better if you wait to hear what he or she says next.

White space for transitions. Any time you’re switching hats in your life, pause mindfully to complete the shift in your focus and personality. Take a moment to let go of one aspect of your life and move fully into the next one.

White space for parents. When we were young we went out after school and played. We did not have every minute scheduled. We went to the backyard and we fired up the neurons of our brains by making up dragons, diamonds, demons, and dinosaurs out of nothing. Let your kids taste some of that. Demonstrate downtime for them. Cancel some of their busy activities.

Juliet Funt is a motivational speaker and stress expert. As daughter of the “Candid Camera” television show’s creator, she has spent her life observing the hidden truths behind our social selves. Funt has served as a weekly columnist for the Womenof.com Internet community and is co-author of “The Communication Path” and “The Wellness Path” in the Path Training Series. Her entire 2010 Annual Meeting presentation is available at www.mdrtpowercenter.org.