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Need to be Busy 3: Make Time for Yourself

By Brooke Loening

In my previous three columns, we looked at many reasons why we might be very busy with work. Our work is just one way that we can make ourselves busy, but today I would like to address our need to be busy in general.

Deepak Chopra once suggested that man's greatest shortcoming is his inability to sit in a room and just be quiet. When was the last time you just sat in room and were quiet, without reading, listening to the radio, talking on the phone or doing anything? For many of us there is an inner need to always be doing something with our time, and sitting in silence is something that we might find challenging or even anxiety producing.

Why do we find it so difficult to sit in silence? Well, think about what happens to you when you are sitting in silence. It is just you, the space you are in, and yes, your thoughts. Who knows what those thoughts are going to be, they just arrive on their own without an invitation or a schedule. I would suggest that being alone with our thoughts is one of the major reasons that we have trouble sitting in silence. These thoughts may be uncomfortable because they might not all be cheery and positive; in fact some of them might be negative and could affect our emotional state in an undesirable way. Maybe there are things that are not going well in our lives and if we take a few moments of quiet time all the details and ramifications of those issues will be front and center instead of being safely hidden away in storage, seemingly protected by ongoing distractions.

Being busy is one way that we can avoid dealing with various thoughts about these potentially unpleasant issues in our lives. But of course, that doesn't fix the core problems; it just allows us to live with them in a way that is bearable. We might even say that it works for us, but the truth is that by not looking at these issues squarely, nothing will change. We are almost guaranteeing their perpetuation by not dealing with them.

We usually operate in one of two gears - survival or creation. If we continue to run our lives in overdrive, we are likely spending most of our time in survival mode, reacting and responding to life's events as they come at us. This approach makes our lives quite predictable as we tend to react and respond the same way we did yesterday and last week and last year. If you want to make positive changes in your life, fully embracing your issues as they stand now is a good way to start. By sitting with your thoughts, you can make the shift into creation mode. At this time, these issues will be allowed to exist on a conscious level, resulting in an opportunity make the necessary changes to address them.

Sitting in silence is an excellent way to check in with our higher self and acquire some wisdom about where we are and what our next step should be. Therefore, along with embracing the problems will come solutions. Some of the most profound life changes can be made starting from a place of quiet. Such wisdom is rarely tapped into when we

are always “going.” If you want some answers, many times all you have to do is ask the question to the universe, and allow that time of silence for the answer to be given. We all have the answers inside of us already; we just need to provide a way to access them.

Mediation

There are different ways of having quiet time during the day. Meditation is one practice that can make space for this communication with our higher selves. A daily meditation practice is a good way to process our subconscious thoughts by bringing them to the surface. I lead most of my coaching groups in meditation and they find this to be quite grounding, and they even look forward to that time during our meetings. This practice is also a good way to slow the mind down so that constant thinking does not predominate our day and block us from that inner higher self. I suggest starting with one 10 minute meditation during the week and increasing from that point until you have a daily practice of 20 minutes or so.

Journaling

Journaling is another good way to be in a quiet space and process-hidden thoughts. Simply writing two or three pages of whatever comes up in your mind without thinking about it too much is a great way to do this. The key here is not to allow the mind to act as a screening instrument as you write, just write freely.

Contemplation

Contemplation is another way to be quiet. Just sitting quietly and allowing yourself time to contemplate whatever comes up for you. I suggest 20-30 minutes of contemplation time while not doing anything else or moving around. Remember not to judge what comes up, just be with it for the time you have committed.

In conclusion, you may want to ask yourself “is busy really better?” I suggest that it is not better, and that the quiet time we take during the day might be the most valuable time we have. Most of my clients and coaching group members have found this to be true for themselves. This is time that we are opening our potential creative powers instead of just being on automatic pilot reacting to life as it presents itself to us. I will have more on being busy in my next column.

An affirmation that might be useful to you is as follows: “I spend quiet time every day and that allows me create a better life for myself and those around me.”

Brooke Loening is a life coach in Sharon who works with individuals, and runs weekly coaching groups on achieving growth in career, health and relationships. For more information and previous columns visit theloeningplan.com. Columns can also be found at tcextra.com