



Springing into Summer

by GAIL CARROLL

Summer is quickly approaching. This year we are particularly looking forward to summer after a very long winter.

So, what are you doing to prepare yourself for a wonderful summer break? How many of you took me up on my challenge from the previous article in *The Bulletin* to take better care of yourself? For those of you who did and for those of you who only decided to implement a small change that would promote better wellness and balance in your life, a hearty congratulations! For those of you who haven't taken the challenge yet or who have not read the article entitled *Spring into Wellness* in the March/April issue of *The Bulletin*, the good news is that there is still time. Time to read the article, time to consider my challenge and time to make small incremental changes. Choosing wellness is choosing life and making the quality of yours better. The great news is that with summer approaching now is the time to make some choices that will allow for better wellness and balance in your life. No excuses!

Sometimes the busyness of the school year challenges us to find the time to take care of ourselves. Finding work/life balance can be one of the major challenges we face each and every day. This year, as the school year comes to a close, make a promise and a commitment to yourself to take better care of you. Start with baby steps but, start somewhere.

- Choose one thing that could enhance your health and well being. It might be as simple as deciding to eat breakfast every day as opposed to skipping it.
- Go to bed at a time that allows you to have the best rest.
- Add a little walk to your daily routine to get exercise, fresh air and enjoy the great outdoors.

Robert Brault, in *Stress is a Choice: 10 Rules to Simplify Your Life*, advises us to "Enjoy the little things in life, for one day you may look back and realize they were the big things!" So, make a conscious choice to enjoy each and every day this summer whether your plans are to take a longed for trip, just enjoying your garden or sitting outside with a good book. Consciously choose to "be in the moment" and enjoy.

Exercise: We all hear so much about mindfulness and living in the moment. It has great value. Here is a little exercise for you to enjoy. A number of years ago when working in western Canada and doing some work with Native and Indigenous populations I attended a work retreat where an elder from the native community took us on a "Medicine Walk" to introduce us to mindfulness and meditation. This is an easy one for you to re-create and will give you a great break from marking those final papers and exams and help you get ready to enjoy our wonderful approaching summer. All you have to do is choose to take a walk outside. It can be a long walk or a short walk and you can go by yourself or take someone with you. As you are walking along don't converse with your walking buddy, just breathe the fresh air and notice – no thinking about what you have to do or anything else – just be in the moment. Notice what you see, hear and smell on your walk. Just notice. After your walk, talk with your friend or note to yourself what you saw or noticed. Did you see, hear or notice anything that might be giving you a little message about your life? It doesn't have to be profound. The first time I did this exercise the message I received came from doing the actual exercise itself. The message of course was to take time to slow down and smell the flowers once in a while. What will your message be?

Oprah Winfrey challenges us to question our busyness. "How busy are you? What are you busy at?" Once you've answered these questions, challenge yourself to really look at the purpose this busyness plays in your life. Some of us thrive on being busy. We live in the moment and enjoy each and every minute and activity. We see and enjoy the little things. However, some of us keep super busy because we have developed a habit of busyness and continue this path because we do not know any other way or we have never questioned it.

Challenge: "What purpose does the busyness serve in your life?"

- Make some choices about how you will spend your time.
- When time challenged, don't just prioritize; ask yourself the purpose of each item you must attack

and get rid of those that you really do not need to invest time in.

- If there is something on your list that you are avoiding or procrastinating, choose to do that item first as the misery of avoidance can actually take more of your time than completing the task.
- Delegate some tasks to others where you are able and make time for little breaks during the busyness. (Remember this while the madness to complete the school year ensues!)

Mary Engelbreit in *Stress is a Choice: 10 Rules to Simplify Your Life*, once said, "if you don't like something, change it; if you can't change it, change the way you think about it!" That is my next great challenge to each of you. Change the things you can to bring greater wellness and balance into your life. Don't sweat the small stuff or the things you cannot change. We all have our challenges whether it is time, workload or some type of personal or life challenge. Thankfully, taking a good look at ourselves and choosing wellness can be a great launching pad for summer vacation.

Remember, everyday you are in control of your own remote. Make choices that will help you spend time enjoying the great outdoors this summer. Gardening, camping, hanging at the beach...while a dream right now will quickly become a summer reality. Take every minute to enjoy it. Revive your energy, your spirit and you.

Wishing you all rest, relaxation and fun this summer!

Gail Carroll is a Coordinator with the Employee Assistance Program for Teachers. For confidential assistance contact Gail Carroll (ext. 242), gmcarrroll@nlta.nl.ca or Judy Beranger (ext. 265), jmberanger@nlta.nl.ca.



Slow down and enjoy life. It is not only the scenery you miss by going too fast...you also miss the sense of where you are going and why. (zenhappiness.net)

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