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Giving Back to Ourselves Takes Work

It seems counterintuitive doesn't it? We work so hard at living our lives and throwing ourselves full throttle into what we perceive will make a difference. Then, when we buckle because we're so burnt out, we have to work a little harder just to get back to where we started. Hmm! Makes you wonder who designed this system in the first place.

It's true! We are over-worked, over-stimulated, overwhelmed and overburdened. Most people (those of us who work for a living) labor well over 40 hours per week. Many people in management work 60-plus hours per week. I used to have a job where I worked more than 75 hours every week! Those who aren't in management often work two jobs just to pay their living expenses and to (sometimes) have a bit left over for a little luxury on the side. All this output of energy and our reward is a week or two of vacation in which to restore ourselves.

And there's more. I haven't even gotten to the responsibilities of child rearing or community involvement or continuing education or professional organizations. What if you have a generous enough heart to want to give back to society by becoming a volunteer? Or perhaps you feel strongly about our political situation and want to work hard at enlisting people to get

out and vote? What if you have a hobby? Or you want to stay in shape? Or what if you are interested in developing yourself spiritually? You'd have to have watched too many cartoons when you were young and thought yourself a "Super Hero" to do all of this at once.

The obvious fact is that many of us are teetering on the brink of exhaustion. I have to believe that we are just not getting it.

Giving Back to Ourselves Takes Work! After all you have given of yourself, you must look in the mirror and give back to the person you see standing there. We can not go on as fully-functioning and vital beings if we don't take the time to restore our burnt-out hulls.

We can learn how to give to ourselves and do so consistently. We can give ourselves time, attention and care. We can give ourselves healthy food, quality sleep and regular exercise. We can give ourselves positive messages by focusing on what we are good at and what we do right, rather than focusing on what we are not so good at and what we do wrong. We can be forgiving of ourselves and permit ourselves to be imperfect. We can take the time to know our own bodies and cherish them; to know our own minds so that we may learn to control them; and to know our own hearts so we may honor them.

SPIRIT, MIND & BODY

We can trust in the notion that the more care we give to ourselves, the more care we can give to each other. A good question to ask is this: Would you rather have one really close friend, someone whom you trusted and who accepted you for who you are? Or would you prefer twenty friends, each of whom would gladly come to your party, but none of whom you could call when your sunny skies turned gray?

Become your own best friend. Give yourself the love, respect, and care you would give to a dear friend you have known all your life.

Many clients come to me seeking permission to care for themselves the way they see themselves caring for others. It's a beautiful moment when someone finally turns to me and says, "It's time I go to work on loving myself."

This month, I suggest you see how many ways you can give back to yourself. Be generous and loving. Allow yourself to sleep in without guilt. Take that yoga class you keep promising yourself. Go for a long walk at the beach. Shop for and prepare a healthy

meal. Give yourself a day with no agenda. Just say "NO" to a social event that seems more a duty than a delight. Take a class that feeds your spirit. Let go of a commitment that is draining you. You know which one it is.

Tell yourself, "I Love YOU!"

"To allow oneself to be

carried away by a multitude of conflicting concerns, to surrender to too many demands, to commit oneself to too many projects, to want to help everyone in everything is to succumb to violence. The frenzy of the activist neutralizes his or her work for peace."

---Thomas Merton

BALLARD STREET by Jerry Van Amerongen



Roger is beginning to record insightful comments about himself.



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