

Summertime! And the livin' is easy?

by Beverly Denver

Since I was a young girl, the song, "Summertime," has been a favorite of mine. Each year, as the calendar pages turn and the months of summer unfold, the lyrics of the ol' classic come to mind. Routinely, I find that silent voice inside me humming the tune over and over—reminding me that a balanced life requires periods of rest and relaxation, calling me to slow down and sit a spell.

For us women, that isn't always easy. Seems we worry most about not being able to meet all the demands of our careers, our friends and our family. We keep on keeping on (as they say). so we will not disappoint those we love and care about.

Over time, we develop the bad habit of putting off the very things we know we ought to be doing for ourselves. Sometimes we do this to such an extent we sabotage our own health and happiness.

I know; I was guilty of doing that myself for a long, long time.

I've always loved my work, so focusing on it 12 to 14 hours a day wasn't unusual. I'd get to the office early; I'd stay late. After dinner, I was back at my home computer. When I got my first laptop, things got worse. I took my computer to bed with me!

Passion for my work became an obsession, and getting regular exercise and enough sleep became patterns of my past. I was not ignorant of the longings of my body and soul, only too willing to procrastinate indefinitely any efforts to deal with them. I put myself last. It showed, and nudges to live otherwise (by well-meaning pals) made little difference. I didn't drink, smoke or do drugs, so I figured I wasn't doing myself any real harm. Boy was I ever wrong!

It took time, too many missed opportunities and a serious health scare to change my way of thinking. Thankfully, I have lived to the Age of Enlightenment and am currently enjoying all aspects of my life more than I ever have.

I still love what I do for a living. In fact, editing and publishing this magazine is—by far—the most rewarding job I've ever had. And fun, can't forget to mention that. This job is fun!

Even so, I no longer work long hours. I put in eight hours a day, and at quitting time, start focusing on other things I enjoy. To do this hasn't been easy. I've had to take drastic measures to help myself de-program and develop new habits.

First, I had my phone line at home disconnected. It wasn't being used anyway. My mobile phone bill is evidence of that. Secondly, I had my high-speed Internet

cable connection disconnected. Today, I have no way of getting on the Internet at home. Which means, I can't check my business e-mails late at night, and I no longer feel compelled to give all those senders an immediate response.

Sound crazy? Maybe, but doing both has changed my life in ways I could never imagine.

Now, when I get home, I have time for myself and so many other things I only used to think about. Going to the beach, riding my bicycle, playing golf, playing the piano, writing a screenplay, learning to cook Thai, planning a trip!

Today, a new voice sings loudly and drowns out that old one that only whispered wishes. In harmony, they are doing a great rendition of that beloved song, "Summertime." and I'm thinking only about those places where "fish are jumping and the cotton is high."

In a few minutes, I will go home and start packing my travel bags for a long-awaited getaway vacation. Tomorrow, I will be heading west, to the mountains of Colorado. Seven high school girlfriends (from Bossier City, LA) will be joining me. There, I will renew old friendships and talk about old times. I will laugh and cry a lot.

At the same time, I will smile broadly — knowing I will be doing something for myself. Something, I will do more often. I will put work in its proper perspective, slow down and sit for a good, long spell.

Now that it's summer, I trust you will do the very same thing!

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