

What's up with "weisure?" The real need for real R&R

"What do I want to take home from my summer vacation? Time. The wonderful luxury of being at rest. The days when you shut down the mental machinery that keeps life on track and let life simply wander. The days when you stop planning, analyzing, thinking and just are. Summer is my period of grace."
-Ellen Goodman

New York University sociologist, Dalton Conley, has recently coined the term: "weisure" the result of blurring the line dividing work and leisure. More and more, work is carrying over into folks' leisure time. It appears that places and activities usually regarded as "fun only" are now work-play ambiguous. No surprise here!

Folks are using their smartphones to connect with their business colleagues while at home or hanging out with their families in the evening. Folks are chatting with facebook colleagues on weekends and holidays. And, of course, all their other electronic leashes are keeping them connected so they can take care of business while "on vacation."

What's happening!

Some, including Conley, say the work-leisure phenomena is happening because more folks are finding work to be fun and want to stay connected during leisure periods. Really! Who's kidding whom!?

For couples and families that have an honest, true, sincere and intimate connection with one another, I wonder how they view the "fun of weisure" as a reason for disconnecting with one other at home, at play, or on vacation. Perhaps you can ask ten of your closest friends how their spouses, partners or children feel about the separation caused by one of them experiencing all the "fun" doing business at home, or on vacation.

Rather than enjoying the "fun" of doing business and choosing to stay connected 24/7, 365, my anecdotal research says folks are (1) inundated with more and more work they cannot handle in a "normal" workday work and/or (2) fearful, guilty or anxious that if they don't stay connected 24/7, 365, they may find themselves out of a job, and/or (3) they are addicted to their computers and/or (4) they have become estranged from their families in favor of social networking and connecting outside their relationship - their "lover" is the Internet. My take is that "weisure" is NOT ubiquitous because work now has more "meaning" or provides "fun". The test - "If you won the lottery today would you continue to work as long and as hard in a 24/7, 365 "weisure" world? Be honest.

The downside of "weisure"

"No man needs a vacation so much as the man who has just had one". - Elbert Hubbard

The really upsetting fallout of living in a "weisure" world is sacrificing one's privacy and the abdication of precious relaxation time. With the increasing blurring of work and leisure, research shows fewer and fewer folks are actually taking vacations. Many feel not only that they have to stay connected on holidays and weekends but that they actually fear they might lose their jobs if they went on vacation. And for those who actually do take a vacation, how many need to "*unwind*" after they come back from a "weisure-driven" vacation as stressed when they return as they were before they left? The number of these folks increases yearly.

Stressed out, overworked and overwhelmed, many folks need time off but are worried and fearful that a short vacation could lead to a permanent one. They feel damned if they do; damned if they don't. Not a very psychologically healthy place to be.

The psycho-emotional-mental-physical effects of a "weisure" lifestyle are quite disturbing. More and more folks are experiencing stress-related dis-eases and illness, family dysfunction and disruption, and really rough times holding it together at work. The workplace is being populated by ever-growing numbers of disengaged, unproductive, underperforming and exhausted employees not to mention those experiencing serious states of depression, addiction, self-neglect and serious overt or silent anger.

At home, these folks now have no idea how to "take it easy" or relax without working.

The parking areas of many of the office parks I run through, and drive around, are often one quarter or more full on weekends, evenings and holidays. "Weisure?"

Why vacations and honest leisure time are important

"Using a camera appeases the anxiety which the work-driven feel about not working when they are on vacation and supposed to be having fun. They have something to do that is like a friendly imitation of work: they can take pictures." - Susan Sontag

Simple, taking time for one's self is a non-negotiable "must" to maintain a healthy mind, body and soul. It's impossible to run a car engine on all cylinders 24/7, 365. The human body, mind and psyche are no different - dependency on energy drinks notwithstanding.

Leisure time and vacations, spent consciously, serve as preventative medicine. They allow time for de-stressing, decompressing, rejuvenating, replenishing and re-connecting with one's self. It is when we consciously allow a real genuine opportunity of space for relaxation and novelty that we can discover the unconscious level of tension and stress we've been carrying day-to-day. In fact, the first few days of vacation usually begin the process of unwinding, which is followed by the recognition of a need for rest, relaxation and a deeper settling of our body, mind and spirit. And, if you're fortunate, your vacation is long enough to allow you to enter into the phase of real rejuvenation.

Now the greater question is what type of vacation do you take? For some people vacation is wall-to-wall sight seeing, visiting family, exercise boot camp, or staying "connected" i.e., doing, doing which is inevitably followed by that odd aftermath of I need a vacation from my vacation.

So, some questions for self-reflection are:

- When was your last real vacation?
- What does vacation mean for you?
- What are the elements of a favorite vacation for you?
- Do you take the type of vacation that really nourishes you? Be honest.
- How do you prepare for your vacation?
- How do you transition from vacation to home to work?
- How is the first week back after your return?
- How are you at the end of the second week back after your return?
- What did you discover about yourself on recent vacations? Did you have time for any discovery?
- Is there something you learned about yourself on vacation that influences a change you want to implement into your everyday life?
- How do you experience your self on vacation? Do you enjoy your self away from the everyday routine?
- Was your work life and home life supported in your absence? Were the bases covered?
- Were you able to really disengage or were your Blackberry and laptop traveling companions?
- What was vacation like before you had a cell phone, Blackberry, I-phone or laptop?
- How much vacation time do you have and take each year? How much do you need?

- Has your relationship suffered because of your "weisure" activities. Be honest. What would you spouse, partner or children say?
- What were vacations like when you were growing up?
- Can you visualize a world where you can take a vacation and truly leave work behind? Would you want to?

"And so we take a holiday, a vacation, to gain release from this bondage for a space, to stand back from the rush of things and breathe again. But a holiday is a respite, not a cure. The more we need holidays, the more certain it is that the disease has conquered us and not we it. More and more holidays just to get away from it all is a sure sign of a decaying civilization; it was one of the most obvious marks of the breakdown of the Roman empire. It is a symptom that we haven't learned how to live so as to re-create ourselves in our work instead of being sapped by it." - Evelyn Underhill

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Peter G. Vajda, Ph.D, C.P.C. is the founder of True North Partnering an Atlanta-based company that supports conscious living through coaching and facilitating. With a practice based on the dynamic intersection of mind, body, emotion and spirit, Peter's approach focuses on personal, business, relational and spiritual coaching. He is a professional speaker and published author. For more information, www.truenorthpartnering.com, or pvajda@truenorthpartnering.com, or phone 770.804.9125. You can also follow Peter on Twitter: @petergvajda