

Do Not Disturb

What do you do when:

- you've reached your limit?
- had all the stress you think you can handle?
- given all you've got and feel there is nothing left?

I say it is time to put out the ***DO NOT DISTURB*** sign!

Seriously, sometimes you just have to acknowledge you are on overload and you just can't live this way one more minute. At some point, we all need a "mental health day" when we just say, "I don't want to!" to the whole world. If our life is to work we need to respect our need for respite and take it. Sometimes a day in bed, on the couch, or in a lounge chair in the backyard is the only thing that will help. You deserve a day once in a while where you act like a slug or a couch potato. So do it!

There are two important things to remember.

- Feel proud of yourself when you realize that a day of rest is the solution.
- Make no excuse to yourself (or anyone else) when you take one.

Don't worry that this will become a habit. If you are the kind of person who does too much, then you are not the kind of person who will get stuck on the couch.

When you choose to take a mental health day, make it a good one. Don't get dressed, or if you do, put on your most comfortable outfit. Skip the shower or, if you can't live with yourself, at least don't wash and blow-dry your hair. Brush your teeth but forego the makeup. Let the answering machine pick up your calls. Turn off the ringer on your phone lest you be tempted. Don't turn on your computer. You can live a day without e-mail.

Eat only foods you enjoy...and lots of chocolate. Watch your favorite DVD. Doze off with a juicy novel. Wake to read a few pages and then doze off again. If you get pleasure from playing in the dirt, spend some time in the garden but don't overdo.

This is not a day to go shopping or have lunch with a friend. This is a day to snuggle up on the couch or in your bed, pull the covers literally or figuratively over your head, not let your mind light on any worries or cares, and most of all not push yourself to do anything.

You might have to do some advance planning to take one of these days but don't put it off too long. If you have young children, perhaps you can make a childcare trade with another parent. If you have older kids, send them to a friend's house after school or for the whole day if school is not in session. If you are responsible for making dinner for a spouse or kids, tell them that they are in charge and that you may or may not join them depending upon your mood.

One day of rest and relaxation is not going to change the situation that has brought on the overload or stress but it can help you recoup your energy and strength to enable you to face it

with a fresh outlook and sense of renewal. In order to make our life work, sometimes we must call a moratorium on work of any kind. So, put out that ***DO NOT DISTURB*** sign and enjoy!