



Things to Think About!

Grump Busting: Make Time for Recess!

By Linda Jorgensen

I've been writing about Grump Busting, newsletters or Facebook posts, for over two years now. And I am still getting questions from folks about how I do it and what works for me. To be honest, working time for myself into my whacko schedule is still pretty tough. There are too many variables that prevent me from calendaring, "3:00pm-4:00pm ~ Personal Time", every day. But what I HAVE been able to do is ensure that somewhere in that whacko schedule every day I have managed to take at least a few minutes of the day just for me. The key is flexibility then making time in the day to take two short breaks.

Do you remember having recess as a child? I sure do! We had a total of three. A fifteen minute break mid-morning, lunch recess that lasted at least half an hour if you ate fast, and another mid- afternoon between lunch recess and dismissal. I loved those breaks. We were outside regardless of the weather and were able to run about and blow off steam to our hearts content. It was a great way shake out some cobwebs, get our brains in gear and gain more energy for learning. As an adult I'm learning the same thing still works.

Recess Time

Taking a couple of recess breaks during the day has turned into a wonderful habit. I schedule a 15 minute break mid- morning and another in the afternoon. I turn off, or step away from, all the electronics. Voicemail is a wonderful invention and works very well so I use it to prevent interruptions.

These two short breaks, or "Recess", as I call them, are for some brisk activity. Just a few minutes to re-set some calm and shake out the cobwebs in the middle of what can be a crazy day. It doesn't matter if I just walked in from a long appointment or have been sitting for an hour or more at the computer. If it's the middle of my morning (about 10:00am) or middle afternoon (2:30pm) it's time for a recess. And if I missed my appointed time I stop as soon as possible and take one. Later is better than none, in my opinion.

I start with some good stretching and deep breathing then I get up and move. Just like when I was a kid on the playground. Physical activity is great for waking you up and calming you down. (And if my physician is to be believed, it's also good for your cardiovascular system.) Sometimes it's a brisk walk down the sidewalk to the corner and back. A round of jumping jacks, jump rope in the garage, running up and down the stairs are all activities I like. Sometimes I'll put on some music I like and dance for a few minutes. Anything you enjoy that gets the circulation going and relaxes you. Two minutes to deep breathe and stretch again and you're refreshed, more alert and ready to go back to work.

Children Need Recess, Too

Kids need to learn this principle, too. Not just at school but at home. When I was a child my Mom used to give me lunch, send me outside to play for 15 minutes then call me in for a nap. She started this practice when I was little and kept it up until I was quite a bit older. And even then I was still sent outside for at least 15 to 20 minutes for free play (or just blow away the cobwebs) in the yard every afternoon. She did this with all 5 of my siblings and me. Regardless of the time of year she would dress us for the weather, set the oven timer and send us outside for play. When the timer went off we could come in and play inside. Watch a favorite kids' show, do an art project, read, play games, "help" cook dinner, you name it, we did it. When we got older there were age appropriate things we could do and she still shooed us outside. We were busy and engaged and that extra 15-20 minutes outside burned off some energy and got us into creative mode for our time indoors.

Taking time for physical exercise is good for your brain, your cardiovascular system and your mood. Time for recess!