



Things to Think About!

Banishing the Grumpmeister

By Linda Jorgensen



By Brandan Atkin

Recommended reading:

http://www.helpguide.org/mental/stress_management_relief_coping.htm

If there is anything that is not discussed in our newsletters and you would like to see it discussed, or you would like to be added to our newsletter mailing list, please contact us at snrproject@hotmail.com

Newsletter Fair Use Policy

You may download, print and copy newsletters on this site for personal, nonprofit, educational purposes. For those wishing to share information on message boards we prefer that you provide a link to the page you wish to share. If posting a link is a problem please share the web address (www.snrproject.com) so others may know where to go for more information.

*SNRP does NOT share e-mail address information.

Has anyone bothered to look up the word *respite* in the dictionary lately? If you haven't, I wouldn't recommend it. I spent an entire afternoon in a funk after looking it up in my copy of Webster's Complete Dictionary. It is my personal opinion that definition is pretty depressing and not exactly accurate. So, instead of saying "I need respite", I'm going to say, "I could use a break". And we don't have "Respite Provider/Workers" at our house; we have "Break Buddies" or "Break Providers" instead which sounds ever so much better and not nearly so depressing, which brings me to my point.

Recently I was informed by my daughter that I am a "grump". But not just any old garden variety grump, oh no. I am a confirmed "Master Grump" or "*Grumpmeister Extraordinaire*." Yes, she has a good vocabulary and I'm assuming that's not a good thing.

So why would I be grumpy? Perhaps a long running compilation of time and energies spent on many tasks: coordinating home health staff, medical appointments, state agency services, school issues, fixing insurance and billing problems, arranging medical equipment repairs, personal care for our daughter with high acuity medical needs, work, and in the midst of all that finding time to be a wife, mother, grandmother, friend, homemaker and contributing member of our small community, all without a break or significant downtime, could be counted as contributing factors. Toss in the Holidays and all the fuss and holler they require, and yep, I've created the *Grumpmeister*.

Every single one of these tasks and commitments is important and on my priority list. After reviewing the list I realized there is nothing on that list that I can completely delete without negative consequences at some point. What I can do is take some time to prioritize my duties. Choose what is important and has to be done this week, what can be set aside for a short time, and then add one more item to my list of priorities. It's time to cure the beast which means making some break time for myself and my poor spouse!

Burn out is not a condition to be taken lightly and for those of us providing long term care 24 hours a day, 7 days a week it is imperative to be on our guard against it. Making time to take a break for some much needed rest and relaxation must be at the top our weekly list of priorities. When I got to thinking about it I realized I haven't had a good break in a while. In fact, I don't think I've taken a good break since before Thanksgiving or was that Halloween? It's no wonder I am the *Grumpmeister*. If I can't remember I am way overdue!

Breaks don't need to be long and involved activities or involve fancy arrangements but they do need to be quality time. A short 15 minutes spent reading a book totally uninterrupted can be just as restful as a short nap.

There are three types of breaks.

1. Short, in the moment, work stoppages.
2. Longer, out of the house and away from the daily grind getaways.
3. Vacations

Short Breaks

Disengaging from day to day care periodically is important. Taking off for a day at the ski resort or the beach may not be possible but short mental health breaks at home are great. But taking a break at home can be a bit problematic. You're still in the house and everyone knows it. This makes taking 15 minutes for uninterrupted quiet a bit of a challenge. What happens if you fill a tub full of hot water for a short soak? The family will be knocking on the door every 3 minutes the entire time you're in there. For many it's much easier to find a corner, designate it as "Your Spot" and declare it "Off Limits" to the Wild 'n Woolleys. At my house I have a small leather club chair sitting in a corner in my bedroom. I can lock the door. After making sure everyone is in a safe spot for a few minutes I hang a "Do Not Disturb" sign on the doorknob and lock the door. Next to my chair is a small lamp table with a couple of small handwork pieces in progress, a novel (totally unrelated to anything disability), a box of tissues (just in case), and a timer. I set the timer for 15 minutes and unless the house is on fire or someone is choking, that time is mine.

In good weather I am also known to take 15 minutes for a short walk, to weed my tomato patch, pull dandelions out of the lawn (a great exercise after talking to bureaucrats all morning. You can safely behead all the weeds you want), or simply lie on my back in the grass and watch clouds float by. DO NOT think about household chores that need doing or anything disability related. It will all be waiting for you when you're done. You're taking a break.

The Longer Break

This involves a bit more planning. Pick a time when your children are at school, your spouse is at home to ride roughshod over the Wild 'n Woolleys or you can line up a reliable care person to keep track of the household kid chaos. Red pencil it into your calendar and do your own thing whether it's reading, window shopping or a hobby. Indulge yourself with a haircut or a manicure. Don't run errands unless you've run out of milk. This is YOUR time. Make your break time sacred-don't schedule anything else during that time or cancel it without a very good reason. Taking a break at your favorite local destination can help recharge your battery.

The Long Weekend Vacation!

This is something my husband and I like to do together. We both need the time out occasionally. For most parents this is the toughest of all the breaks to take. It requires time, thought and plenty of prior planning. This is also where having a really good Break Provider comes in to play. The logistics of leaving the Wild 'n Woolleys home for a long weekend can be daunting but well worth the end result. Be sure you have a reliable Break Provider who is capable of running your household and handling anything that comes their way while you're gone. Set your getaway date, choose a destination and make your reservations.

Then prep the household. Some parents have to work around nursing and aide care schedules, which can be a problem. Plan ahead and work with your home health company's scheduler to ensure you have the needed nursing and home health care coverage while you're gone. Help your Break Provider by planning ahead for meals in advance or shop with a list of approved meals for your Break Provider to make. Keep them simple. Make sure all your medical supplies are available and stocked up and a household routine for everyone is written up and posted. Emergency contact information should be posted by the phone. Then it's time to get packing!

The first time is always the hardest but once you've gone through the process once it will be easier to do it again. Be sure to go as often as you can. We try for at least one three-day weekend every ten to twelve weeks.

Taking a break periodically really is important. So, if you're like me and slowly turning into the *Grumpmeister Extraordinaire* schedule in some quality break time for you. You'll be more cheerful and able to function with a clearer focus and a smile on your face. Trust me. No one will miss *The Grumpmeister*.

