

Sermon from Saltspring

About 8 months ago, it became apparent to just about everyone sharing my DNA, their mother, my office staff, and numerous colleagues, friends, and neighbors that “the old guy” needed to take some time off.

It seems that around the time I became an object of interest to the water-cooler debating club I was starting to evidence something a little sideways from my usual hypomanic, preoccupied, narcissistic self. I was successfully dealing with my usual professional/personal commitment load but had begun to wonder why I was so tired every morning. I was doing everything I usually did, including some occasional aerobic exercise, and had managed to bulk-up by about

30 pounds of hard-earned adiposity. However, I wasn't feeling very gratified at the end of my very full workdays. Many of my regular daily contacts found that I was unusually short (and sometimes more than a little sharp), which left some wishing for a return of my more recognizable, biting sarcasm. My long-suffering wife noted that I did little other than sit in front of the TV and veg until bedtime, whereupon I went immediately into a hypo-erotic, Sildenafil-resistant coma.

I was rapidly approaching another birthday without any firm plans for the summer months, and I was wondering why I felt so disconnected most of the time. That is, until my family took me aside and pointed out that I was looking like I was going to have the “big one” or some other health-related catastrophe if I didn't start looking after myself.

I agreed with the interventionists and made plans to take a long summer holiday. I let my partners know that if they wanted to have me around for a few more useful years that I needed a prolonged vacation. They quickly agreed, which made me think they had been in on the whole thing from the start. In July I began a 10-week vacation. My longest vacation prior to this—dating back to age 14—was 3 weeks.

I have spent the whole time at my place on Saltspring Island, and as I get close to the end of my extended vacation I'm wondering why it took me so long to do something so important. I have power walked 1 1/2 hours every day, worked hard physically virtually every day, looked closely at the prudence of my nutritional decision-making (including my daily intake of cardio-protective red wine), and spent numerous enjoyable hours reading good literature. I have lost about 25

pounds, feel fantastic, and wonder why on earth I would go back to working the way I did before.

I plan to work 3 days a week when I return and take a long holiday every year. I plan to get rid of the things in my life that make my shoulders elevate to the level of my ears (being the editor, by the way is a nice thing, not a stressful thing). Additionally, I have designed a bombproof plan for retirement and I am absolutely committed to carrying it out (my wife will believe it when she sees it).

If what I describe above strikes a chord with you, I hope you decide to take some time off and look after yourself (I know how hard you work). Believe me, it can be not only life altering, but quite possibly, lifesaving.

Okay, so I suppose this is what happens when someone like me spends prolonged time on Saltspring Island. You start to preach good spiritual health in addition to good physical health, endorse the Green Party, and start to grow a ponytail (a tad unlikely in my case). So, where do I buy a VW van with a peace sign painted on the side?

—JAW

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