

It's Okay to Rest

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In our stressful high-demand world, it is often **difficult for clients to give themselves permission to take time off, to rejuvenate, to rest.** So they often ignore any kind of body sensations and thoughts that suggest not only what is needed, but required, for health and well-being.

Clients often have some kind of resistance to the idea of resting, time off, rejuvenation...something like there's not enough time, there's too much to do, I'm responsible for this and that, it's not okay to put myself first, others are counting on me...you get the idea.

As clients ignore the body sensations like sweaty palms, stomach trouble, shoulder tension, the body will often send stronger signals which can end up being a more serious health issue or diagnosis, an accident, a situation.

Our work as coaches needs to include ways to assist clients to become not only more mindful of body sensation, but more conscientious of making meaning of the symptoms and taking action on their own behalf. Clients are the only ones who can decide to give themselves permission.

Here is one way that I work with clients who come to the call with **symptoms of stress or fatigue**...clients who on the surface are unwilling to entertain anything other than doing one more thing before they take charge of their body, their thoughts and their health.

After listening and getting a sense of what is going on for the client, acknowledging the impact a situation or life style is having on them, I invite them into a process that looks something like this.

- **offer an invitation** to close their eyes, become aware of their breath, mindful of any body sensation they are experiencing
- **ask for permission** to say something positive to them and invite them to notice any thoughts, feelings, body sensations, memories that come up when they hear my words
- being mindful myself, in a neutral voice, I say **“Notice what happens, when you hear me say, It's okay to rest.”** or some variation of that that comes out of the coaching conversation.
- with the client, **study anything that gets noticed**...being **non-judgmental** and welcoming of everything that gets noticed.

In this mindful state, clients may notice the **cause of any resistance** to resting, slowing down. They may notice a phrase from the past like don't be lazy, you never do enough for others, don't be so selfish. They may notice a strong body sensation like a tightening in their shoulders, their stomach, their locked knees.

Or, they **may notice a relax response** from their body, an invitation to breathe more deeply, let go of tension, surrender. The purpose of this is to bring self-awareness to internal signals, to what needs and wants to happen.

The form of resting, relaxing, rejuvenation is up to the client of course. It could look like taking time off (an afternoon, a week, a month), going for a walk, going to the gym.

The point is to pay attention; become mindful and insightful of what is happening in the body, mind and spirit and giving them a much needed gift.

My personal story:

In the spring, I was supported by a healing massage therapist, a shaman and a psychic to take a couple of months off. I have to admit that I had a really hard time deciding to do so. My mind kept trying to convince me that the timing wasn't right, there was work to be done, blah, blah, blah – you get the idea. Yet, I made the decision to follow through and pay attention to the body signals I was experiencing and the outside information I was receiving.

My fatigue had begun to feel 'normal' because it happened over a span of time.

For the first couple of weeks I wasn't sure what to do with myself. I wasn't used to laying on the couch with a good book, hiking in the hills in the middle of the day, taking off kayaking for a couple of days mid-week. Yet I coach clients to do just that!

I had to practice giving myself permission to chill out and walk my talk. After a couple of weeks, the permission practice got easier and I began to relax and settle into my being at a deeper level: a level that really allowed my spirit to experience life differently. I began to experience joy more tangibly.

I feel fortunate that I listened to my body before something happened that made me take time off – like an injury, a health issue, a diagnosis.

The beauty of the experience is that I became rejuvenated and re-energized in a way that felt new, exciting and different. Now I am jazzed to rock and roll into the fall season.

How are you at listening to your body's wisdom?
What stories have you made up about taking time off?
What would it take to give yourself permission to listen to your body signals before the minor ones become major ones?
What body signals do you need to listen to NOW?

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