

Refresh Your Spirit with a Staycation, and Maybe a Profitable Garage Sale As Well

(It worked for Barbara)

Barbara's Rules for a Beneficial Staycation * Suggestions for Dealing with Burnout
* Practical Tips for Disconnecting from the Internet * A Mega Garage Sale

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Barbara's Rules for a Beneficial Staycation

Many of my readers can't afford a traditional vacation these days, either for financial reasons or because the nature of their home business makes getting away from home for any length of time difficult or even impossible.

You don't have to spend a lot of money, or even ANY money, when you give yourself a "staycation" from work. This word, which became very popular in 2008, is simply a coined word for a vacation taken at home. And this kind of break can be beneficial at any time of the year, even if it's only for a couple of days. During those years when my husband and I were so involved in our mail order and publishing business that even a week's vacation was almost impossible, we would often take four or five days off over a weekend, totally ignoring business for that period of time. We always shipped orders so fast anyway that our customers never knew the mail had sat unopened for a few days.

On those relaxing days, we might take a day trip somewhere, check out a couple of new restaurants, or order in Chinese or ribs so I didn't have to cook. If we elected to stay at home, we would work on a personal project in the same room, just to be together. (Note that working together at home with your loved one is not the same thing as "being together.") We might bring our scrapbooks up to date, do a jigsaw puzzle, or get involved in some other project we seldom had time for. Because music was so essential to both our lives, we always had great music playing in the background. After only a few days like that, we always felt ready to take on the world again and deal with the stress of our deadline-oriented business.

For a staycation to work for you, you have to stop doing what you normally do every day. You must break the pattern that's causing you stress or worry. For many of you, that means you need to totally disconnect from the Internet for awhile. Forget about reading your email (it will keep), and stay off your social networking sites and blog, if you have one. You may protest by saying you just love to be constantly online checking for orders, doing your email, posting or reading tweets on Twitter, communicating with friends on Facebook and other social networking sites, or making posts to your blog, but contrary to what some experts say, you do NOT have to make a blog post every day. (Do we really think that all anyone else has to do is read our blog posts? That we'll even be missed if we're not there for awhile?)

You may think you're connecting with the world by doing this sort of thing, but in truth, you are actually distancing yourself from both your family and the real world – the one God created for our pleasure and enjoyment. Being an electronic junkie means you probably never have time to just ponder nature, which can be a great stress reliever and emotional healer.

Suggestions for Dealing with Burnout

As Lupe, one of my regular readers puts it, “Sometimes we all need to put a ‘Gone Fishin’ sign on our door.” In a creative funk because of disturbing economic news and changes, stressors at work, and dealing with everyone’s life schedules, Lupe told me how she was spending her summer staycation this particular year:



“I’ve planned several one-day trips in different directions. I love quiet woods, lakes, rivers and isolation to disconnect from life’s madness and reconnect with who I am. During this time I’m going to write, study Navajo language CDs, embroider, weave, read books that lift my spirit and feed my entrepreneurial soul. I’ll study for ministry, improve my health with new habits, and generally invest in myself for a change. I have three weeks of

vacation and each week I will have a main theme of activities. Ultimately, I know I will come out refreshed, refilled, and ready for the direction my life has been taking since last fall.”

What a wonderful plan! In my books, I’ve often written about how most home business owners rarely take vacations, and how they often burn out as a result. I know from four decades of self-employment that it is often virtually impossible to stop and take a vacation for more than a few days because of the very nature of a business or the fact that we’ve locked ourselves into a lifestyle of business deadlines and appointments. Sometimes, though, we just don’t want to admit that we’re workaholics. That’s what I am, and always have been, and I can’t count the number of times this has caused me to burn out through the years.

When I was once again feeling burned out in the spring of 2009, I decided to give myself a long staycation by not taking any client work, staying away from the computer and email as much as possible, and off my websites. I can’t tell you how much good it did me to allow myself time to focus on personal projects for a change instead of spending twelve hours a day working in my office as I had been doing since my husband died in 2005. (“After I’m gone, you’ll probably work all the time,” he once said. Alas, he was right.)

I am and always have been a workaholic, but working all the time on personal projects that give us enormous pleasure is not the same thing as working all the time on a business that causes us stress. Without exception, we all need to periodically find a way to refresh and refill ourselves so we can continue our work with a renewed spirit.

Practical Tips for Disconnecting From the Internet

I'll bet some of you are at burnout stage now and don't even realize how much being glued to the Internet may be contributing to the problem. Trust me when I say that the world will keep if you just "disconnect" from the Internet and all your other techie time killers for awhile.

If you're an Amazon Marketplace seller like me, or an eBay or Etsy seller, either temporarily close your listings or make checking for sales the only computer-oriented thing you do that day, and *then get offline*.

Set up an automatic reply for incoming emails, change your voice mail message advising business prospects that you'll contact them when you return from vacation, and stop posting to all your social networking sites. If you have a following of customers, clients, or readers, they will still be there when you get back. If you have a blog, you can always write several posts and schedule them to publish over a two-week period of time so no one will know you're even gone.

Let me emphasize again that, from time to time, we all must carve out some time to quietly ponder our life and goals; otherwise, we'll be like a hamster in a cage, constantly running round and round in our little wheel of life, never getting anywhere.

Consider these motivational thoughts from Ralph Marston, publisher of [The Daily Motivator](#).

"When was the last time you spent a quiet moment just doing nothing – just sitting and looking at the sea, or watching the wind blowing the tree limbs, or waves rippling on a pond, a flickering candle or children playing in the park?"

"Rest when you're weary. Refresh and renew yourself, your body, your mind, your spirit. Then get back to work."

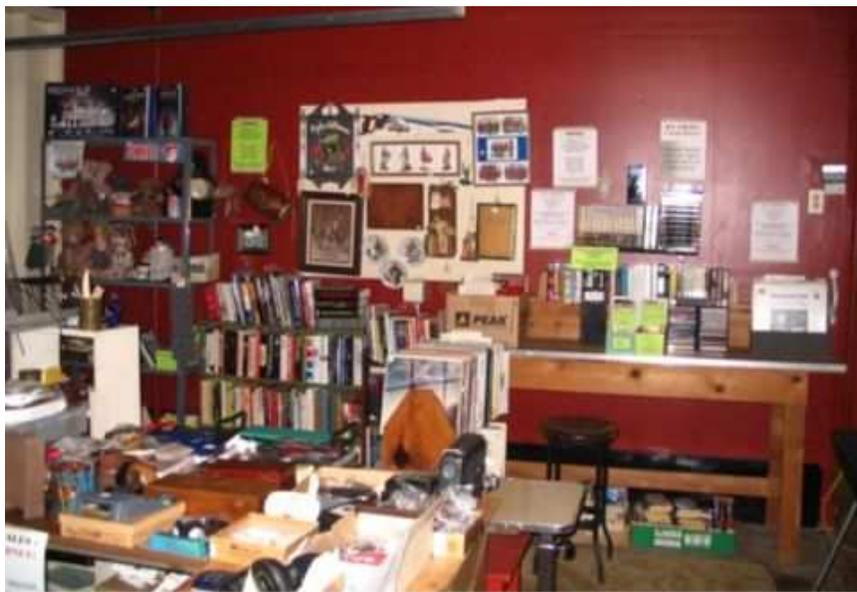
A Mega Garage Sale: Good Therapy for Me

I began my spring staycation by asking a friend to help me paint the garage. Then, seeing how pretty and clean it was, I decide to present a mega garage/estate sale to try to get rid of many of the possessions that were weighing me down. Harry died in 2005, but now, four years later, I hadn't begun to get rid of all the things he used that I had no need for or desire to keep. These things included 90 percent of his workshop tools and equipment, hundreds of books and records, Radio Shack "gadgets," medical equipment, artwork, dozens of jigsaw puzzles, games, and many household items—basically a huge collection of "stuff." Sorting through all these items to determine what actually had value, what I should give to others, or simply haul out for garbage pickup took several days. Then setting prices, hauling everything up from the basement to the garage, and then figuring out how to display them took another week's time and a great deal of

physical effort. But tasking my body proved to be restful for my weary soul, and it was fun as well because it reminded me of my days as a beginning crafts seller when I was getting ready to display my wares at a crafts fair. Of course I always had uplifting music playing in the background.

I didn't sell everything I put out for sale (any more than crafters sell all of their wares), but I generated a tidy sum of cash I later spent with great pleasure by applying it to my newest hobby as a widow, which is perennial gardening and landscaping projects. I worked a lot in the yard that summer, gained physical strength, and had many hours of time in which to ponder my life and goals.

Below, a couple of pictures of my garage sale displays:



After the huge two-day garage sale was over, I decided my kitchen also needed to be painted (I was sick of yellow!). Before I knew it, I had carried my staycation into May, still working as little as possible on the computer and my websites and now looking forward to a week-long visit with my two sisters who were coming in from California.



My kitchen wall features handmade utensils and artwork made by artists and craftspeople Harry and I knew and worked with through the years.

My sisters and I spent a soul-refreshing laughter-filled week together cooking up gourmet meals for ourselves and friends, recovering the seats of my dining room chairs and making a matching table runner and new pillows for my newly reupholstered couch. We also caught a big band concert in the park and made a trip to Old Mill Creek, Illinois to see the famous Tempel Lipizzans at [Tempel Farms](#).

After my sisters left, I went back to work with renewed enthusiasm, but I also treated myself to a couple of day trips offered by the Naperville Park District, and finally got to ride the Navy Pier Ferris Wheel and visit the Shedd Aquarium again after nearly 50 years. In September, I took another day trip to see the Chicago Botanic Gardens and also enjoyed a third trip to the Adler Planetarium in October, another place I hadn't visited since the 1980s.

Each of us knows what our spirit yearns for; the challenge is actually *doing* something about that yearning. My idea of getting away from it all isn't likely to be yours, but it illustrates how I broke the stress and monotony of my business life one year and refreshed my soul. I was so refreshed, in fact, that in November of that year I began to write with a passion I'd never had before, working on my first memoir, a biography of my

musical life with a drummer named Harry. In April, I published [*The Drummer Drives! Everybody Else Rides*](#)—*The Musical Life and Times of Harry Brabec, Legendary Chicago Symphony Percussionist and Humorist* to glowing reviews on Amazon.

When the harshness of winter settled in that year, my feet may have been cold, but my heart was warmed by the memories of 2009, which proved to be one of my happiest and most contented years as a widow.

READER COMMENTS TO THIS POST:

- “I so enjoyed reading about your Staycation and seeing your beautiful pictures. Reminded me of how much fun it was to share in sewing, cooking and just enjoying life. Instead of just remembering the “good old days,” you are taking them and weaving them into good new days. Gave me some fresh ideas as well. Thanks for sharing and continuing to inspire us along life’s journey.” Rainbow blessings, Joanne
- “Thanks again for the wise words and inspiration. In these challenging times it’s even more important than ever to keep perspective and remember the important things in life are not bought with \$\$\$.” – AJ



Barbara Brabec

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