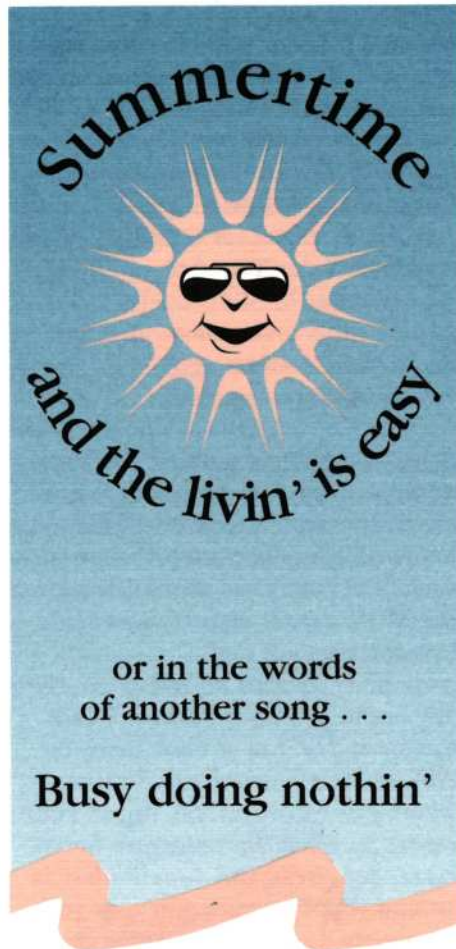


Follow-up

JANE DURANT

MAKING A DIFFERENCE THROUGH PEOPLE SINCE 1987



There is something really special about summertime, those pleasant evenings when the daylight extends into the evening. Sitting on the deck, eating outside, dipping your toes in the pool and chatting with friends—a feeling of how good it is to be alive.

Being able to sit and do nothing is, for some of us, a behaviour that needs to be learned and practised. Many of us grew up with criticism directed at us for doing nothing. “Satan finds work for idle hands to do” or even “*Don’t You Have Anything Better To Do?*” (have you bought your copy yet?) These were well-honed phrases from our

elders—some would say based on a time when life was hard and no gain came without pain. These views of life have influenced much of what we do and think. This can be interpreted as, “If I want to be successful, then I will only be successful through diligence, sweat and toil.” As I see it, this adds up to a veritable army of folks out there who don’t dare try anything new because they don’t have the education/training/intelligence or merely because it’s *too easy* and that can’t be right, can it? In fact, some of the simplest things we do are highly valued by others—just ask.

Summer is often the time we try to sit around and do nothing. When we are connected to children and the school schedule (this does pass eventually), we may take a vacation. Webster’s dictionary defines vacation as “freedom, exemption, a respite or time away from something . . .”

Stress management experts tell us that vacations and Christmas are two of the most stressful times for most people. While I am not suggesting you give them up, you might want to review your experience in these two areas and check in on whether they are high stress times for you too. Often they are fraught with trying to please a variety of other people, resulting in pleasing no one, especially not oneself.

Let’s take a look at that annual vacation—you know, the one you start planning for on those cold winter evenings. Here is the scenario. See what you think might have worked better.

For the past six years your family has gone to the same lakeside cottage for a two-week vacation. This year, you feel it’s time for a change. You’ve

secretly put aside a little money each payday and a month before the vacation, you say at dinner, “Surprise! I’ve been saving all year and this year our vacation’s going to be special. We’ll not only have the lakes but also the mountains and the ocean.” You pull out a fabulous full-colour brochure describing the fantastic resort spots your family can choose from this year rather than the “same, old place”.

To your dismay, the plan is greeted quite unenthusiastically. No one seems to want to make a decision. Finally someone suggests that you just go back up to the lake and use the extra money to buy a new camcorder. Now it’s your turn to feel upset and dismayed. All your sacrifice—and it’s not even appreciated.

- Why do you think your family is acting this way?
- Are they resisting the different vacation spot or perhaps that you didn’t let them have a hand in the planning?
- What could you have done to smooth the way for a favourable decision and enjoyable vacation?

Continued on next page . . .

In this issue

- Client Profile: Greater Vancouver Regional District
- Happenings!
- Good Eats
- Summer Quiz
- Good Reading

This is the 8th issue of *Follow-up*. An article in the *San Francisco Examiner* indicates that there are hundreds of thousands of newsletters being produced—a veritable newsletter mania. However, the writer also goes on to say that few last more than two issues. I guess *Follow-up* is here to stay, or I'm stuck in a rut.

This issue sees about 1,300 copies going out from Vancouver to the United Kingdom, the United States, Spain and Indonesia. We've selected a few of you for our "hit list." That means you think you might be considering us on a par with your junk mail, and we don't want that to happen. You'll find a little poem addressed to you if you are part of our special list. We hope you'll speak up, fax or call to stay on our mailing list.

The theme of the lead article is summer and vacations. My work creates some wonderful travelling opportunities for me—so much so that, in terms of vacations, life has become just one long one. Since the April issue, I have worked with clients in Orlando, Florida; Midway, Utah; Pleasanton, near San Francisco; and in England. While in England I had the opportunity to stay with Eunice, one of my university friends who owns a dream house in France in the Lot Valley, not far from Provence. Next year, eight or so of us who went to Southampton University more years ago than we care to remember will be getting together at her home for Lot4, otherwise known as a lot of the lot on a lot in the Lot. (This title beat out the suggested "Old Crones Week" for obvious reasons.)

To date I have not been up any mountains. Maybe my Mum will while she's visiting us from her home in Spain . . .

Jane

SUMMERTIME

Continued from front cover

- Is it right to try to persuade people to do something, because you would like to—and you feel they would too if they got into the spirit of things?
- How's your stress level right now?
- Is this anything like the discussions you have with those you live with about vacation and other group activities, or is it also like the meetings you have in your other life?



What techniques can we use to handle these situations better? Gloria Steinem is a person I greatly admire; she has the ability to take

what she does seriously but herself less so. Our ability to rise about the forest to see the trees and see the humour in many of our situations is one of the great gifts we have as humans. As good ol' ANON says "Allow NON-SENSE and SENSE is not far behind." John F. Kennedy commented, "There are three things that are real: God, human folly and laughter. The first two are beyond our comprehension, so we must do what we can with the third."

Understanding what drives us crazy is an important part of our personal growth. As we are (fortunately) all different from one another, each of us deals with stressful situations in different ways. We can do it physically by not sleeping, overeating, overexercising; we can do it emotionally by being anxious, playing the victim, losing our temper; we can do it mentally by being confused, having a whirling mind, telling ourselves we're stupid; we can do it in relationships by feeling resentful, alone and using others; or we can do it to ourselves spiritually through a sense of meaninglessness, martyrdom, or a search for "magic" solutions to our problems. As you read the above, you probably recognised a couple ways

that you prefer to deal with your own stress. However, areas that you don't tend to gravitate to may well hold some keys to helping you manage your stress. If you don't tend to react physically, then some type of physical exercise may be the best remedy for you. If you don't choose to react emotionally, then maybe this is an appropriate time to show some anger. Think about the category you don't tend to visit when stressed. Be it physical, emotional, mental, relational or spiritual, within it lies some ideas for you. Try it, you'll be surprised. To give you some ideas, fill in the blanks below:

- Maybe I don't need to _____ anymore
- Maybe I need to _____ sometimes

Being "Busy doing nothing" is a wonderful activity anytime but even more so in the summertime when fish are jumpin! Or in the words of another song "I'm busy doin' nothin", working the whole day through, trying to find lots of things not to do."

Try not to be a Busy Backson (a.k.a. Rabbit in *The Tao of Pooh* based on A.A. Milne's famous bear). Sit somewhere you enjoy, be still, use all your senses to relish the moment. Smell, taste, see, hear and touch what is around you. Feel strong in your wish to simply do nothing and enjoy the moment, being alive, taking it easy and enjoying that vacation.



Do you have a strategy for positively handling the negative impact stress can have in your life? Let us know—we'll print some of your ideas in a future issue of Follow-up.

*By the way, you can read all about Busy Backson in *The Tao of Pooh* by Benjamin Hoff. We'll award a copy of it to the person who best tells us how they take managing their stress seriously but themselves less so.*