



What I Learned from My Sick Day in Bed

A few days ago I was driving to my kids' preschool, and I was overcome with this really, odd weak feeling throughout my entire body. As I drove, I kept asking myself "*Why do I feel sick?*" Amazingly (in retrospect) it took me another several hours to figure out the ridiculously obvious reason – I *was* sick! It's amazing how your mind can be so strong that it will almost ignore your body. I'd been feeling quite run down, literally weak for most of the day, and I'd had a sore throat for a few days (and of course my toddler was already on antibiotics for pink eye, ear infection, and an upper respiratory infection), but somehow it NEVER occurred to me that I might *actually* be sick. I think I'd acknowledged the symptoms but subconsciously decided that illness was terribly inconvenient for me at the moment and wouldn't be an option. My body decided otherwise. Once I realized just how bad I felt, I decided to do nothing else but take care of myself. I alerted my husband that he would be on "kid duty" and I'd be going to bed. Overnight, something amazing happened – I rested. I really, really rested. Having a 3.5 and 1 year old (neither being good sleepers), I've been somewhat sleep deprived for almost 4 years. This evening I slept for about 10 hours (uninterrupted), and my body responded interestingly enough by seeming to heal itself quite a bit overnight. When I awoke the next morning, I felt much stronger and more stable (although many of my symptoms remained). The next day I'd already decided to spend the entire day in bed and simply try to get well. I turned on morning news shows (as background noise really) and slept as long as I could. When I awoke to a ringing home phone, I could tell that the additional rest was exactly what my body required to begin the healing process. It's interesting, we seem to react instinctively to other physiological cues – when we're hungry, we eat...when we're thirsty, we drink, but for some reason, when we're tired, worn down, or fatigued, we too often feel that we have the luxury of ignoring it (almost certainly exacerbating the problem).

After I awoke, I continued to focus on caring for myself – drinking tea in bed and casually watching TV. After eating lunch, I decided to pull out my laptop and respond to some emails (while still in bed). Before I knew it, my inbox was empty (imagine that!) so I decided to do some writing and work on a few other "deep" tasks that I never seemed to have time for because they really required concentrated time (who really has that?). After just a couple hours, I'd actually completed an article and a proposal – lickety split, I couldn't believe it! Furthermore, the day seemed to be so much longer because I wasn't driving from here to there. I was just sitting in one spot all day, first resting, then concentrating on a few tasks that I selected and it was a slice of heaven!



Suddenly, I had an epiphany, I need a sick day more often!!! Why did I have to get sick to realize that I needed this type day to not only recharge my body and mind but also completely focus on a few tasks? I began to ask myself why was this day so different from other days on my calendar that were fairly open and meeting free (as a self employed person I'm working from home anyway)? There were a few differences:

1. I started off with pure rest in bed with no timetable for getting up. I firmly believe now that that rest for me was the equivalent of giving IV fluids to a dehydrated patient. I simply needed it, and it put me in a rejuvenated and refreshed state both physically and mentally. I've always heard "mind/body" connection and I certainly believe there's a lot to it.
2. I didn't plan ANY activities at all. My intention instead was to stay in bed ALL day. Typically, when I have a "free day" without major appointments, it's still filled with errands, trips to the gym, picking up little ones from school – running here and there, back and forth. Even though it's not "work" per say, all the back and forth eats up so much critical time during the day that once I subtract time for meals and showering, I'm left with one or two 45 minute spurts of uninterrupted time throughout the day. Usually, with that little time available, I won't tackle a "deep task" like writing an article, developing new content for my workshops, or writing a proposal. Instead, I'll make a couple phone calls or send some quick emails, but those "deeper tasks" will still loom in my guilty subconscious taunting me until I've either given up on them or forgotten about them.
3. My mentality was completely different. Previously, if I found myself with an hour or two of "free time", I immediately started trying to figure out what I should be doing. I would run through my mental rolodex at lightning speed trying to match my most important "to do list" task with the time available. I even remember one time sitting on my bed and relaxing a few minutes, then jumping up feeling so guilty for "doing nothing" (because there's always so much to be done, right?). During my sick day, I wasn't doing "nothing", I was doing "something" – resting and taking care of myself which later turned into some work admittedly, but my intention for the entire day was to stay in bed and relax – not because I couldn't do anything else but because that was my choice and intention. This mental shift made me feel good about lying in bed and later feel great about focusing on writing an article I'd been wanting to write for months.

I remember seeing an interview with Kathy Ireland where she said that her first meeting of the day was with God because she made an appointment with herself to pray each morning. As a corporate trainer who teaches Time Management, I know first hand that anything that's important to you must be scheduled if you really want it to happen. Of course, we too often schedule appointments with others and never think to put "our stuff" on our calendar.. After my sick day experience I decided that I need a monthly "restoration day" – no appointments, errands, exercise, carpool, conference calls, meetings, etc.



Here are my rules for my monthly “restoration day” – make your own to suit your needs:

1. Sleep in with no predetermined wake time
2. Must stay in PJs until after lunch (helps you keep the feel of a true day of restoration)
3. No phone calls
4. No exercise (I believe in exercise, but it truly takes a huge chunk of my day when I include time for dressing, driving to/from, and showering after so I make a point not to exercise this day).
5. Catch up on emails before working on any tasks (I just feel better when I’m caught up on email so I enjoy this.)
6. Only work on tasks that I truly enjoy
7. No interaction with the outside world

As women in particular, we’re the engine that keeps everything going. Intellectually, we know that we must keep ourselves in top condition in order to give to everyone else but we rarely live a life that reflects that. We often lament that we need a “me day” (at least I did), but we rarely make it happen. Of course, we justify by saying that we have too much going on to take that time, but if and when we get sick of course, everything comes to a screeching halt because there’s no longer a choice. I’m now opting to take my “sick days” proactively by choice – for me a key to “real health”.

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