

Play dates

By Beverly Denver

Perhaps it's the business I'm in, but I've always appreciated really good advertising - no matter the medium. Advertisements that get their message across clearly and cleverly are the best.

There's a television commercial running now that has become one of my favorites. Perhaps you've seen it. Three attractive young women are sitting on a living room sofa, chatting away and munching happily on chips and salsa. They laugh a lot and, eventually, re-assure each other what a good idea "these play dates are for their children." Then the camera moves around the room to show the viewers three sleeping babies. Three very tiny sleeping babies!

I've seen this commercial frequently of late, and each time I do, it brings a big smile to my face and then an involuntary chuckle. I end up nodding my head and thinking, "Gosh, that commercial's copywriter knows us women!"

The commercial is a strong reminder that we women think we need a good excuse to get away, visit with our girlfriends and have a good time. And, for many of us, the only really good excuse for play is when "it benefits someone else." Taking time for ourselves simply because it's good for us, rarely qualifies as justification!

So, what do we do? We work too much and play too little and wonder why it is so easy to let our lives become unbalanced.

A 2007 survey by the National Women's Health Resource Center found that 94 percent of women believe they need to do a better job of caring for themselves and that doing so would be empowering. No argument here!

August is perhaps a good time to take stock and answer (honestly) several relevant questions:

Do I take the vacation days I promise myself? Do I spend as much time with my family and friends as I could? Do I get the exercise I need? Do I meditate or write in my journal routinely? Do I nurture myself? Do I take care of my body and soul as well as I do my hair and nails? Do I even take care of my hair and nails?

When I can answer "yes" to these questions, it shows. I'm cheerful; I smile and laugh often. I sleep better at night and am eager to take on new projects during the day. I feel less stressed. Work becomes more meaningful; time with loved ones is more rewarding. Life is good!

When I have to answer "no" to those take-stock questions, it shows. My serious side dominates; I become intense and less patient. I feel exhausted or overwhelmed or both. My stress level goes off the chart. The uncolored roots of my hair show! Yikes! For sure, life could be a whole lot better!

We can't control everything in our worlds, but we can re-examine priorities. Scheduling some of those all-important "play dates for ourselves" is a good way to begin the process.

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