



Permission To Pause™

By Patricia Katz, MCE CHRP

You're climbing a mountain. It's a tough, dirty, exhausting challenge. The higher you climb, the quicker you tire. Still, you plod on. Never stopping. Swiping the sweat from your brow. Eyes fixed firmly on the path ahead. Focused. Determined. Single mindedly on task.

You finally reach the summit only to find there's yet another higher peak beyond. It makes this one look tiny in comparison. You scramble back down and immediately set out in the direction of the bigger challenge on the horizon.

When asked about the view from the top, you have to admit, you never noticed. When asked about the experience, you note how disappointed you are that you haven't yet reached the highest point of land.

Recognize any patterns here? Does your life sometimes feel like one demanding mountain trek after another? If so, you could be missing the depth of experience, the satisfaction of progress, and the opportunity to learn along the way. Life without pause can be one big hollow empty echo. One footstep... then another...and another...and another.

What can pausing do for you?

Pausing restores perspective.
An elementary school principal has

learned that, to regain her equilibrium after a challenging or upsetting experience, she needs to "...go and sit in the grade three classroom for a while and just see the goodness of kids and get rid of the bad scene that just happened."

Pausing brings insight. Pausing gives access to answers buried in the noise and commotion of everyday life. I recently quizzed a handful of colleagues about the pros and cons of a contract offer. One finally counseled, "You've got all the information there is to be had. If you'll just be quiet with yourself, you'll know what to do." I was, and I did.

Pausing makes room for learning. Learning leads to improvement. The U.S. Army follows each maneuver with a pause for an After Action Review. In the break from the action, they address three questions. What went well? Where did we mess up? What did we learn for next time? If you find yourself making the same mistakes over and over, a pause for an AAR could break the cycle.

Pausing sustains spirit, productivity and quality. "You can't just burn people out," says a dot.com marketing vice president. "When you have a high priority, sprint as fast as you can. When it's not urgent or critical, take a pause. If you work 20 hours a day, your product will be crap."

Pausing carves out space for relationship. If the only way I can get your attention is to scramble along beside you as you run your next race, I may not be there long. Relationships are neither built nor maintained on schedule at high speed. They take time and space to evolve and mature.

(continued)



Patricia Katz, MCE CHRP, guides the overloaded and overwhelmed to get things done and have a life, too. Based in Western Canada, this speaker and author of three books specializes in productivity and perspective. To bring Patricia's expertise to your organization, call toll free (877-728-5289) or connect through the web (www.patkatz.com).

Pausing minimizes regret. If your tongue is razor sharp and fast, words spoken in haste could cut another to the core. A pause between a thought and a comment, could mean the difference between keeping friends and making amends.

Pausing promotes creative thought. A writer observes, "Creative people have a talent for doing nothing. Sir Isaac Newton wasn't running around with a clipboard and beeper when he discovered the law of gravity, but sitting under a tree, watching an apple fall."

Pausing conserves energy. A professional tennis coach counsels his players to give it their all when the ball is in play. However, as soon as the ball goes dead, during that walk back to their starting positions, they are to slow their breathing, quiet their movements, and still their minds. This conserves and rebuilds energy for the next demanding exchange.

Pauses come in all shapes and sizes. A two minute break in the midst of a task. A short walk at lunch. An afternoon of 'do nothing' puttering. A long weekend at the cabin.

A three week vacation in the mountains. A six month sabbatical.

What do pauses have in common? A break in the action. A change of pace. A change of focus. A distance from the commotion of the moment.

To develop the habit of pause, start small. In the midst of a frenzied day, stop. Step back. Take a moment. Take your pulse. Take a breath. Take a look. Tune in to yourself and tune in to your surroundings. It's a small first step in a deeply satisfying direction.

© 2001: Patricia Katz, Optimus Consulting

Request your **free** copy of Patricia's tip sheet, "Ten Tips For Making The Most Of Your Time & Your Life" by fax (306-242-0795) or email (info@patkatz.com).

Interested In More Articles? Check Out These Series

Work Wise Series: Success & Survival Strategies For The Non-Stop Workplace

A series of twelve articles, authored by Patricia Katz of Optimus Consulting, that offer fresh insights on productivity challenges in the non-stop workplace. From time use to technology choices to workplace learning, you will be challenged to rethink your habits and fine-tune your practice.

Second Thoughts Series: Make Peace - Not War - With Time

A second series of twelve articles is geared to those feeling swamped by the crazymaking fallout of a 'haste at all costs' approach to life and work. Patricia Katz beams a spotlight at the roots of our love-hate relationship with the clock and offers strategies for building a more satisfying relationship with time.

Both series of articles make superb inserts in employee or client newsletters and add great value to company or industry magazines. The articles are available in print or electronic format.



To order either or both series, contact Patricia Katz, Optimus Consulting
Post: 315 O'Brien Pl, Saskatoon, SK, S7K 6S9. Phone: (877)-728-5289.
Email: info@patkatz.com. Web: www.patkatz.com.