

By Marilyn Sharpe

In a world addicted to busyness, people are frazzled, stressed, burned out, and exhausted. We are out of breath, panting to catch up, racing to do, do, do. Our society seems to be experiencing an epidemic of “too busy.”

So often, when we ask a friend or acquaintance, “How are you?” the response is, “Oh, I am so busy!” Can you remember a time when you heard, “I am not quite busy enough. I’ve got some spare time, and I am trying to figure out how to fill it.”

Why this addition to busyness? If I am overly busy, it really isn’t a complaint, but bragging rights. It declares, “I am really important. The earth probably would not rotate on its axis if I slowed down or stopped.” And so we work too many hours, work out, volunteer, take classes, help others, enhance our resumes. All good things, but too much. And, there is a price to be paid.

What’s the price and who pays it? In my life, three pay big time. First, it is my family, the ones I love most in the world. They get me, depleted by all that busyness, exhausted, impatient, and crabby. Second, it is my body – I don’t feed it well enough or rest it well enough or move it enough. I am perpetually flirting with getting sick - physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Third, it is my relationship with God. I race past the God who created, redeems, and loves me, without pausing for those still, replenishing times that fill me up to serve God’s world. I have forgotten God’s example, God’s commandment, and God’s invitation to re-creation in observing the Sabbath – resting in God’s presence, recapturing the natural, healing, restoring rhythms of a life well lived. I don’t even say, “thank you” for all God’s goodness. I don’t listen for God’s living Word for me today.

Perhaps worst of all, I am modeling this crazy busyness to the children and grandchildren I love. It is contagious, and I don’t want those beloveds to “catch” it. We trade busyness for knowing one another, for time to daydream and create, to be present with one another. Family time is often the first casualty of busyness.

With our children, we often make them busy to keep them amused and entertained, to enrich their learning, and to build a college resume. But, they are losing relational skills, the sense of belonging and connection with others who know and love them.

If you, like most of the rest of us, are already overly busy, what is to be done?

- Take a look at what currently fills your time.
- Decide what you will continue to do.
- Decide what you will no longer do, and bow out as gracefully as possible.
- Do this “time audit” regularly.
- Talk as a family about what you value and how what you do with your time reflects those values. Teach your children to budget and spend their time as carefully as their money.
- Place family time and Sabbath time on your calendar ... and protect it.

Now, prepare to enjoy and savor your time together. It is God’s good gift to you.

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

1. Create a regular family time (daily, weekly, annually) and put it on the calendar.
2. As a family, decide what are your very favorite times together ... and put them on the calendar.
3. Take a look at the calendar and at all the things that are already on it. What are the items that routinely interfere with family time? Make a list. Evaluate. Are they worth it? If not, how will you bow out?
4. Thinking about how your family lives the Four Keys – caring conversations, devotions, rituals and traditions, and service. Which one is the hardest one to fit into your schedule? What could you do to build in time for that key faith practice for your family?
5. Plan Sabbath time, time just to be still, to be present with God, to be present with one another, with no agenda, other than savoring life together.