

Nourishing Ourselves as Leaders

What does it mean to be a leader? It is an inquiry I have grappled with for myself and with our clients for a decade. In looking at the research and in our own work environments we all see that many of our colleagues and family members are over stressed and over tired and can't seem to ever feel renewed. What does it mean to be renewed? Richard Boyatzis, co-author of, among other things, *Resonant Leadership*, says that rest is *not* renewal. Rest is, well, just rest. So when we sleep and relax on the weekends, we are not renewing ourselves. We are not nourishing our brains to return to work on Monday for us to be at our highest and most useful self.

That begs for the obvious question: How do we renew? It is simple and yet specific. Here are the things *known* to foster renewal:

- Meditation: Any type is fine—Theravada, metta, transcendental—it is all good
- Yoga: Any yoga that is restorative and moderate
- Tai Chi
- Prayer: However, studies show that prayer to a *loving* God fosters renewal
- Exercise at a moderate pace fosters renewal
- Volunteering: If you are not already in a helping profession
- Pets: To be specific, a pet that you can pet, i.e., horses, cats, dogs
- Being hopeful about the future
- Laughter, play and joyfulness

All of this will help us invoke the parasympathetic nervous system, which is the part of our brain that needs stimulation in order for us to experience renewal.

We need three to five renewal moments for every stress moment we experience in order to experience balance. In other words, it is key for a *daily* experience of some of these renewal practices. In addition we need at least seven hours of sleep each night.

We don't set out to be ineffective leaders and yet studies show that 70–80% of us are ineffective in our current roles. Let us all take the time and assess our effectiveness by looking at our stress/renewal cycle and see where we can nourish ourselves as leaders.

Author's note: All statistics sourced from Resonant Leadership, Emotional Intelligence, and Inspiring Development in Others, a course by Richard Boyatzis at the Cape Cod Institute

ABOUT SEVEN STONES

Seven Stones is a leadership journeys company founded by Gina LaRoche and Jennifer Cohen in 2009. Our learning programs, coaching practice, organizational consulting engagements and groundbreaking thought leadership work are all designed to help bring about a world that is loving, courageous and just. We pursue this vision primarily by shifting the paradigm from one of scarcity to one of Sustainable Abundance® in the individuals, organizations and communities with whom we work.

