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**Want More Success? Be Lazy!**  
 By Kerul Kassel

Hard to imagine, but I've discovered that I have to be ambitious about being "lazy." As a professional coach, I work with high- achieving professionals, executives, and entrepreneurs, and I'm no slouch myself. If you're like me, and most of my clients, you take pride in the number of tasks and projects you can juggle, and the sheer number of initiatives you're involved in on a given day.



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You may feel, however, that some of your personal priorities need more time and focus than you presently have in your packed schedule. My client Connor, for example, had an extremely profitable software business, but he felt like a slave to it. He wanted to pursue real estate investment, and spend more time with his family and friends, but how? Finding a solution can be especially challenging because sometimes what you need to give up seems to have equal value. So does this mean, that instead of paring down, you need to be even more productive? Not necessarily. Very busy people like us often have a tendency to push ourselves hard toward our goals, to go and go until we're at least a bit (if not a lot) frazzled, exhausted, or frustrated. And some goals require enormous effort and take forever to materialize. In such cases, because we've learned in the past that hard work can pay off, we can't help wondering why some of our efforts seem so

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ineffective.

In fact, research shows that taking a breather helps improve achievement in any endeavor. In their book *The Breakout Principle: How to activate the natural trigger than maximizes creativity, athletic performance, productivity, and personal wellbeing*, Dr. Herbert Benson of Harvard Medical School and co-author William Proctor document that leaving the room, going for a walk in the woods, or even taking a bath can help solve the seemingly unsolvable problem. It turns out that taking time out is a powerful biological trigger than can convert conflict and confusion into clarity and extraordinary performance.

How? Well, you may have noticed that when you are clear about your goal and your strategy, you get there a lot faster. However, that lucidity can sometimes be elusive, especially with more important objectives. Benson and Proctor say that we can best develop that crystal clarity if we relax and "do nothing" for at least a few minutes a day, and in my experience, they're right. Beth, a consultant for Oxfam, was worried that the organization wouldn't extend her contract, or implement her new ideas for improvements. However, after she devoted 10 minutes a day over two months meditating and journaling about her goals, the regional director called with good news and praised Beth's clear and thoughtful presentations.

How ironic: what we would have called "laziness" a couple of years ago is now a wise business and personal investment. Whether it's being absorbed in watching or playing a sporting event, just sitting quietly for ten minutes, lying in bed for an extra 10 minutes in the morning, reading a book for pleasure, or petting the dog, it takes a bit of courage to step back and have faith that doing "nothing" will help you achieve your objectives. For most of us, it's a new paradigm. However, it works...and quickly! Tom, a sports medicine specialist, was overwhelmed with patient charts and paperwork. He needed organization, a more lucrative business and a better lifestyle. His "lazy break" became a daily half-hour game of basketball. Within four months of incorporating this time out, he'd gotten his office systems largely under control and had reworked his practice to allow him to move to a more upscale community.

There seems to be a powerful contradiction at work here. Yet, practicing the laziness habit increases your full engagement, and generates a more productive and optimally functioning state. You learn how to better allot your energy, your time, and your resources. I tell my clients to schedule a break into the calendar, just like a business appointment.

If you're feeling resistant and nervous about giving laziness a try, here are a few suggestions:

1. Consider it an experiment and stick to it until you get results. You didn't get to be a high net-worth individual by

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giving up, and being lazy is no exception! Try different types of time-outs, and don't worry that you'll get addicted to putting your feet up, that's not your style!

2. Five or ten minutes are all you need to start with, and maybe all you need on a regular basis. This practice is different for everyone, so see what works best for you. Some days call for more laziness than others. Be flexible.

3. Don't make relaxing burdensome; you don't have to do it every day in the beginning, and you want to make sure you're having fun. If it helps, get a time-out buddy and hold each other accountable.

4. Have a choice of activities, and pick whatever feels most appealing in the moment. Remember what you loved doing as a kid, or what you have always wanted to do. Choice is key.

5. Pay attention to your results, otherwise you might be inclined to discount its effectiveness. For those of us who are workaholic high-achievers, it's a big step to accept that "doing nothing" can be even more productive than constant effort. It's counterintuitive, but brilliantly so.

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