

TAKE A TWO-MINUTE RETREAT

©Pat McHenry Sullivan, 1995

originally published for the Brobeck, Phleger & Harrison newsletter

You need a break. Your co-workers wish you would take that break. But you don't have the money or time for a proper break.

Fortunately, using nothing but your imagination, you can obtain some benefits of an extended break without leaving your desk.

There's probably no better stressbuster than imagination. It's free, fun and easy to use, and it's something you always have with you. It can help lower blood pressure, enhance your immune system, reverse heart disease and cancer, and relax computer-fogged eyes.

As Allied European commander in World War II and as President of the United States, Dwight D. Eisenhower encountered at least as much stress as the average worker today. Ike reportedly liked to imagine himself on his favorite hole of his favorite golf course. That simple imaginary retreat gave him the perspective and focus he needed to think more clearly during stressful times.

In your imaginary retreat, reality is not an issue. The only thing that matters is that you design a setting that's perfect for you. If you wish, you can have a room with a view high in the Alps next to an ocean beach. You can have a relaxing massage from Denzel Washington followed by a vigorous workout led by Tina Turner. You can have total quiet or a private concert by Ludwig von Beethoven.

In your retreat, you don't have to be nice or positive. That's why you can have a Virtual Reality Room where you can slowly roast a troublesome adversary over a blue flame, without the slightest actual consequences to you or said adversary.

Imagine staying in your retreat long enough for the tension to drain out of your bones. Imagine watching your zombie-like stare turn to alertness. Imagine hearing your voice change from crabby to cheerful, your muscles becoming alive and strong again. Imagine compassion for yourself and others flowing through your body, mind and spirit.

Imagine that, in your relaxed state, you see your job from a fresh perspective. Imagine how you can tackle your work with more efficiency and resourcefulness.

Imagine seeing your former adversaries through the eyes of compassion and creativity. Let yourself see how to bless and release them in a way that also respects you and lets you go about your business with integrity.

Come back to the present reality and go to work. You'll probably be more relaxed and focused, therefore more efficient.

Don't use this fantasy for the first time in the midst of a tight deadline! Also, don't use it while driving or otherwise engaged in something that needs your full attention. Instead, practice first during relaxed down time.

With practice, it's possible to feel as if you've had an extended retreat yet actually be away from work for no more than two minutes. It's also possible that, while imagining your perfect retreat, you'll discover simple ways to create more retreat time in your real life.

Pat McHenry Sullivan is an expert in spirit and work and author of many books and articles on the subject. To contact her, call 510-530-0284, or see www.workwithmeaningandjoy.com.