

Sabbath Rest in a 24/7 City Month 2: Your Life



Practices

Each month of the Sabbath Rest journey will feature weekly practices that you can incorporate into your daily rhythms. We have intentionally made these practices simple and focused, hoping you will take time with each one during the course of the month. Note that these exercises can be done alone, but work well with a partner or group.

☐ Week One

In their landmark book *Boundaries: When to Say Yes, When to Say No to Take Control of Your Life*, Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend recognize that “we need to set mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual boundaries for our lives to help us distinguish what is our responsibility and what isn’t.”¹ So as urban youth workers, how do we love our God, our neighbors, and *ourselves* in the ways we take care of ourselves physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually? In order to understand how this looks for urban youth workers, we asked youth workers April Diaz and Carla LaFayette to share some of their own rhythms.

April Diaz has been doing youth ministry for a dozen years, and currently is the Next Generation pastor (birth-high school) at Newsong Church in Irvine, California. Here are some of her tips for finding balance and health in ministry:

Physical: I am loving myself best when I have a regular rhythm of working out (yoga, strength training, cardio). When I’m not in that flow, I know that my boundaries are weak. Turning off my cell phone and not checking email during evenings, my Sabbath, and day of rest also helps me disengage from ministry and love myself and my family better.

Mental: Turning off my ministry brain is the greatest asset to recovery for me. Intentionally choosing to cease thinking about ministry problems when I leave an event or the office helps me care for myself in ways I never have before.

Spiritual: I think everyone has to find a pattern of silence and solitude. For me, I’ve found that I need a few hours every Monday morning and one day a month away to stay deeply connected to God. Brennan Manning’s challenge to be very wary of the person who cannot be alone with God has really changed me.

Carla LaFayette has been in youth-related ministry full time for just under 25 years. Currently she serves as the Vice President of Strategic Programs at the Urban Youth Workers Institute (uywi.org). Here are her reflections on personal health in ministry:

Physical: I’ve always found it helpful to tell others what my physical struggles and goals are so that it’s “out there” for them to see. Otherwise, I can cheat and cut corners all I want in public secrecy. In my latest attempt to stay healthy I joined an eating program with a close friend who allows me to stay accountable while traveling by bugging her with texts and phone calls. It does my ministry no good if I keep the scales tipped toward busyness while my body takes the toll of neglect.

¹ Henry Cloud & John Townsend, *Boundaries: When to Say Yes, When to Say No to Take Control of Your Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 25.

Emotional: Because of a heavy travel schedule, I find that my “emotional tank” gets drained pretty quickly while on the road. One very practical thing I do weekly is call my dad on Sunday afternoons – no matter what city or time zone I happen to be in. This keeps me grounded to the family community I so desperately need and allows for continuing bonding time with my dad.

Spiritual: The single most helpful element in my spiritual journey is mentoring relationships. Without these relationships I easily lose focus and find myself wandering far and wide. I recently committed to pray daily about a particular life issue and invited a coworker to join me. At the end of each work day we meet for 15 minutes to pray together and it has transformed both my prayer life and our relationship. It has been liberating to learn that one of my divine pathways to God is through relationships.

Making it Personal:

1. What aspect of your life (physical, mental, spiritual, emotional) is most in need of some new rhythms?
2. What ideas from April and Carla would you like to try?
3. What other ideas do you have? When can you try those ideas this week?

Week Two

This week check out the Professional Quality of Life (ProQOL) Screening that can be found at: http://www.proqol.org/ProQol_Test.html. This is an assessment that looks at your Compassion Satisfaction, Burnout, and Trauma/Compassion Fatigue.² On this website you will be able to find the test, how to score and evaluate the test, as well as many other resources. There is even a pocket card on caring for yourself that you can print out and keep in your wallet!

Week Three

The podcasts for our series this month come from Wiley Scott, a regional vice president for Young Life, and Leroy Barber, author of the book *New Neighbor* and president of the urban ministry Mission Year. Both share from their experiences of creating sustainable lives as urban youth workers.

Week Four

In her book, *God's Joyful Surprises*, Sue Monk Kidd challenges us to “Consider how carefully God has designed space into the world.” According to Kidd, “It’s the spaces that shape and define creation.”³ Space defines non-space. Without space between notes, music would just be noise. Without the space from stoplights we would constantly have accidents. For this week carve out between two and six hours of space. During this time turn off your cell phone, shut off your computer, leave your house, and set your work aside. This is a time of embracing your role as the *beloved*.

² According to the ProQOL Manual: *Compassion Satisfaction* is about the pleasure you derive from being able to do your work well. *Burnout* is associated with feelings of hopelessness and difficulties in dealing with work or in doing your job effectively. *Compassion fatigue/Secondary Trauma* is about your work-related, secondary exposure to extremely stressful events (pg 5 of the ProQOL Manual). B. Hudnall Stamm, Ph.D. *The Professional Quality of Life Scale: Compassion Satisfaction, Burnout & Compassion Fatigue/Secondary Trauma Scales*, Published by the Institute of Rural Health Idaho State University and Sidran Press. <http://www.isu.edu/~bhstamm>, 2005.

³ Sue Monk Kidd, *God's Joyful Surprise*, San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, 1987, 161.