

With the arrival of the colder weather last week, suddenly it feels like winter. January and February are normally cold months, so this weather certainly is not a surprise, but our last year has been anything but “normal.” I have heard so many people say how wonderful and thankful they have been for the warmer winter weather because it has made the strict regulations and lockdowns that much easier to handle. When we are being asked to stay home it is nice not having to remain physically in our homes 24/7, but rather we have the option of being out in our yards or walking, snowshoeing, skiing, skating, you name it this warmer winter weather has really been a blessing.

Yet with the weather a little bit cooler, we can still go for walks and do the outside activities, but it becomes something that we need to plan a little better and make ourselves ready for, rather than just heading out the door as we have become accustomed to doing. What this has led to is a resurgence of our “normal” winter pastimes. For example, I have been reading a lot of social media posts about the television shows people are streaming, or the movies they are watching, or the books they are reading, or the puzzles they are working on. I think the fact that so many people are engaging these activities with renewed vigor is a positive thing. Do not get me wrong, I do not want my kids, or even myself, to spend hours and hours each day staring at screen, but I think there is value in doing some of these activities like watching a television series, reading a book, or working on puzzle. The value is that gives us a rest.

Now you might be thinking to yourself, “I get lots of sleep, I do not need a rest,” and that may be true, but what about a rest for your mind, your heart and Spirit? The reality is that binge watching *The Big Bang Theory*, is not going to do much for your physical body, we all still need to get up and move around, but what it does do is allow us all to take a break from the mental and spiritual strain that we have experienced over this last year. It allows us to laugh, maybe even to cry and to just disconnect and let our mind, heart and soul have a bit of break.

The other night I was watching show in our living room and Stephanie was reading book next to me. I was watching a crime drama and so it was not the type of show that led to many laughs, but all sudden Stephanie just start laughing. Stephanie’s laughter is quite contagious and so I found myself smiling, not because I knew what she was laughing at, but rather because in that moment I was not worrying about anything, I was not concerned about what tomorrow would bring; I had disconnected from everything other than that moment and all that was left was the joy.

Mental Health professionals will often note that January and February can be tough times of the year for all our mental health. Add to that toughness of having lived through a worldwide pandemic and this period of our lives can feel downright overwhelming. Its for that reason that I think its okay to shut down our deep reflecting and just laugh to an episode of our favourite TV show. I think its okay to disconnect from the responsibilities that we have and just melt into a good book. I think its okay to say to yourself, “You know what, the work I need to do can wait, I want to finish this puzzle.” We need to be aware that many of us are feeling mentally and spiritually drained right now and that its okay to just sit and simply be. Please still go for the walks, work out and do the physical things that gets your blood

flowing, those actions are just as important to our mental health as anything else, but also give yourself the permission to engage in activities that does not burden your mental and spiritual well being, but rather give your heart, mind and soul a break. For we all certainly know that this past year has taxed every part of who we are and friends every part of who we are needs a rest.

I hope whatever book is sitting on your shelf waiting to be read will be opened. I hope that the puzzle you are working on challenges you in way that is different than the challenges of the outside world. I hope that the TV show you watch makes you laugh out loud. I hope the movie grips you and makes you forget just for awhile everything else that has filled your mind. I hope you can give yourself the permission to rest and let the coolness of these winter days force us to do what the rest of God's wonderful creation is already doing, simply taking a break.

I hope you can find some time to rest your mind, heart and soul; for those pieces of you are just as important as the physical body that holds them.

Sincerely,

Rev. Adam Hall