

## That Summer Feeling

**RIDE MY BICYCLE** through the flooded Twickenham riverside path today. The water submerged my sandalled feet and splashed onto my skirt. But I don't care: it's summer. It's sunny and my sandals will dry quickly enough in the warm breeze. And I am enjoying the coolness of the river on my skin.

This is what the summer can bring, a welcome chance to re-connect with that childhood feeling of 'school's-out'. Long, lazy, light days, freedom from schedules, playful outdoor explorations and summer holiday adventures.

Sadly, I find we can easily lose that summer feeling in adult life. Holidays are shorter, work doesn't stop, families need to be looked after, and commitments don't go away. Yet, while the sun is at its strongest and nature's growth at its most exuberant, we can connect to a feeling of slowing, stopping, breathing, and simply being. There is a good reason why schools and many businesses take a break in this period. Research proves that sunshine and warmth lower our productivity and motivation for work, as we're feeling the pull to be outside. Our attention, energy and critical thinking also diminish. It's as if our brains wilt in the summer – the warmer it is, the more so.

So, whether you're just back from holidays, staying put, or are overwhelmed by a busy life – if you've lost that summer feeling, here are some ideas to help you re-connect with it, and make the most of this precious season.

### DISCONNECT AND DO NOTHING

Consciously disconnect from work or other obligations – at least for part of your day. Keep your evenings free, take an afternoon off, or plan a long week-end away. And stay away from computer, email and smartphone. This can be a challenge, as the many things we feel we 'need' to get done tug at our mental strings. Just let them be. Allow yourself to slow down. Calming and centring practices like walking, yoga, deep

breathing and meditating can help here.

Then discover the pleasures of doing nothing – again with the blessing of research we know that giving our brains a rest from our fast-paced modern lives is crucial for our health.

Clearing out unnecessary 'noise' strengthens our memory, encourages creativity, and improves decision-making. When we do return to work, we find our focus, attention and motivation restored, and our productivity and satisfaction significantly boosted.

**Favour aimless, unfocused activities:**  
*Daydreaming, pottering about house and garden, watch your children play or the river flow by.*

### LET YOUR SENSES FEAST

There is no time like summer for this when the outdoors is calling us to come and enjoy it. Take in the explosion of colours in nature, feel the warmth of the sun on your skin. Catch those summer evening scents of jasmine and pine. Savour the abundance of fresh foods available. Listen to the water lapping on the river banks. If you have to work, have your breakfast in the garden or write that presentation with a cool drink outside your favourite café. Have that business conversation while walking in the park. And make the most of the long, light hours. Take an evening walk or cycle ride or have a leisurely al fresco dinner (barbecue, picnic) with friends and family.

**Favour activities that connect you to nature.**  
*Dance under the blue sky. Sing on your roof terrace. Take photographs. Swim in natural waters. Gaze at the stars. And let your senses drink in every detail.*



**PLAY, HAVE FUN!**  
This is about joy, lightness, feeling alive and connected to the life force in you. Again, you can be guilt-free in the knowledge of neurology demonstrating that a certain amount of unbridled enjoyment is good for us.

Find your own ways into a sense of fun and adventure. Take a day trip to a place you've never been to before. Be a tourist in your home town. Romance your partner – or, if you're single, have a summer flirt (be safe, of course!). Grill sausages over a campfire. Learn something new. String up a hammock. And by all means take that river-rafting trip, if that is your cup of tea!

**Favour activities you enjoy, which maybe involve a bit of risk and excitement.**  
*Let yourself be completely and happily absorbed!*

Creating space and time in these ways will not

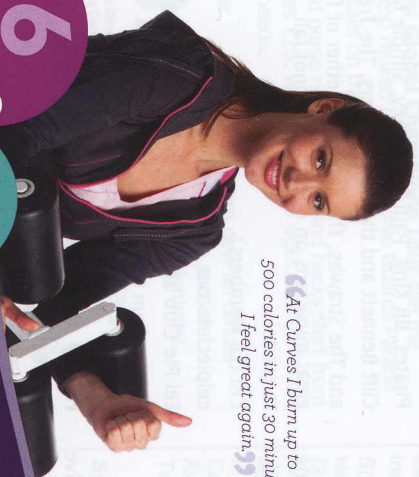
only help you tap into that (perhaps long-lost) summer feeling. It will also help you progress anything you've been stuck on, or unhappy with in your life. You'll gain perspective and see things more clearly. You'll be able to take stock and reflect on things. Systematically working things through isn't always the solution, but by allowing things to mature is just what nature does in summer.



Wishing you a brilliant August!

Monica Castenetto, Life Coach  
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