

Introduction

It doesn't matter what phase of life you're living, you're busy. Whether you're taking care of babies, watching your teen's activities, working the job you love or caring for others, the fast pace of life, leaves you exhausted both mentally and physically. If there's added stress in family life due to work, finances, or problems with your marriage or children, rest is even more elusive.

I've been a stay-at-home mom and a working mom, and I know how important it is to find rest.

The ten principles in this booklet are designed to help you pause, refresh and find rest in the trenches of life or motherhood when you just need to breathe.

This booklet is a complement to my two parenting books, *Fledge: Launching Your Kids Without Losing Your Mind*, and *Balance, Busyness and Not Doing It All*. All are designed to complement each other and to help you be intentional about life during the busiest years of parenting or life.

Join me for all of life, faith, and family beyond the storybook image, including my new podcast, at Life Beyond the Picket Fence at www.brendayoder.com. Join me on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or Pinterest, too!

So, do you need some rest? Let's jump into ten ways to find rest when life is the busiest.

Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

He makes me lie down in green pastures,

he leads me beside quiet waters,

he refreshes my soul.

He guides me along the right paths

for his name's sake.

Even though I walk

through the darkest valley,

I will fear no evil,

for you are with me;

your rod and your staff,

they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me

in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil;

my cup overflows.

1

Give Yourself Permission To Rest

I don't know when it happens, but something in a woman's psyche says if you're not busy, you're lazy.

At least that's a lie I've believed. Have you?

But it's not God's truth. Psalm 23:1-3a says,

"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside quiet waters, He restores my soul." (NIV)

Women have a tendency to focus on the "to do's," the "have-to's" and the unending responsibilities motherhood brings. Busyness without rest can make you feel trapped and stressed. Though you know you need rest, it's hard to find it. You don't sleep well, and when you try to sleep your mind races with thoughts that won't stop.

You don't have to live this way.

The first step in finding rest in a busy life is giving yourself permission to rest. It's God's plan for you.

I like the picture in Psalm 23 of the Shepherd *making* you lie down and rest. Have you ever tried to make a toddler lie down and rest because you knew they needed it, but they fought sleep? We're the same way with God. God wants us to lie down and rest, but we fight Him because we think we can handle things. We resist His rest because there's just too much to do.

God makes you rest because He loves you. So avoid the struggle and give yourself

permission to rest.

Step One: Give yourself permission to rest.

2

Make Rest A Priority

Now that you've given yourself permission to rest, make it a priority. Unless you're intentional about rest in a fast-paced life, it won't happen.

So how do you make it a priority?

To make rest part of your life, you need to prioritize it like other activities demanding your time. In chapters to come, you'll learn practical ways to build rest into your life. Rest isn't just getting a few hours of haggard sleep each night. Quality rest is essential to your physical well-being and mental health.

Rest is a lifestyle quality you choose.

I've recently chosen rest over personal fitness as the priority for my stage of life and parenting. As an overcomer of an eating disorder, it's been a hard choice. In choosing a lifestyle of not "doing it all," rest has become a higher priority than exercise some days when I'm busy and can't get everything in. Finding life balance includes weighing the most important needs for your season of life. While I'm still physically active, I'm learning to value sitting down and resting over exercise when I know it's needed the most.

Rest won't just happen. You need to commit to make rest a priority.

Step Two: Make rest a priority

3

Take It When You Can

When your kids are small, you might think rest is elusive. As a first-time mom, I walked around the house while nursing my newborn the first week we were home from the hospital. I wanted to utilize each minute to get things done. Then someone told me, "*Rest when she rests.*"

I didn't feel like I could.

There's a tension between resting and using moments when kids are sleeping to get more done.

I eventually heeded the wisdom. When I was tired, I napped when she did. As I had more babies, nap-time became non-negotiable because I needed the rest as much as they did. Even when the preschoolers outgrew naps, they still played in their rooms while the younger ones slept. I used their nap-time for reading God's word or taking a catnap.

Don't be afraid to rest during nap-time.

If you're nursing, use feeding time to rest your body and mind. Read a book or do something soothing that gives you mental and emotional rest rather than filling your mind with more "to-do's." Spend time snuggling or resting with your other kids while nursing your baby.

Rest is essential when your kids are small. As they get older, rest is important for managing busy schedules and stress levels. How do you grab moments of rest when you're constantly on the go?

Add rest to your busyness by giving your body a chance to unwind. Use deep breathing and relaxation. Starting at your head, rest your muscles, moving from

each section of your body down to your toes. Clear your mind while you do this. Spend a few minutes deep breathing, inhaling and exhaling, which puts oxygen back in your bloodstream and calms your body and spirit.

If you're sitting in the car waiting to pick up a child, take a catnap.

Take opportunities for an earlier bedtime when you can instead of staying up to get more things done. Only a few things really need to be done today. You can often tackle things better in the morning when you've had a good night's rest. If you're a night-owl and feel rested on a few hours of sleep, just check yourself that you feel rested! If you are online before bedtime, try to shut off the device two to three hours before bed or use blue-light blocking glasses to calm your brain down from the stimulating light from devices.

Whatever strategies you use, make it a priority to rest either physically or mentally when you have the chance. You'll be more refreshed and feel better when you do.

Step Three: When you have a chance, rest.

4

Listen To Your Body

When life is chaotic, my mind races and my body follows suit. Does yours?

When I'm stressed and not getting adequate rest, I'm prone to headaches, tight shoulders, and have a mind that won't shut off.

When you're too busy and not getting rest, your body will tell you.

Your body might also respond with frequent colds or illness. You might eat poorly when you're not getting enough rest. If your body is getting your attention that something's not right, don't ignore it. If you're physically exhausted, listen to your body. Take time to sleep. If you're sleep-deprived because you haven't had a good night's sleep in weeks, be proactive to get away or have someone watch your kids so you can sleep for a few hours to get caught up.

God doesn't intend for women to be sleep-deprived martyrs. He cares about your health.

If I'm fighting sleep while I'm doing a task (typing, reading, even watching a sporting event), I've learned to let myself rest as long as it's appropriate. If I'm tired enough, I usually sleep for a few minutes. Resting your body even for ten to fifteen minutes gives you energy.

If your body doesn't feel rested, it's not. Listen to what your body says.

Honor your body. It's important.

Step Four: Listen to what your body's telling you.

5

Don't Ignore Poor Sleeping Habits

Having kids doesn't mean you'll never sleep again. Children should sleep through the night after infancy. If your kids aren't sleeping at night and it affects your daily functioning, get to the root of why they're not sleeping.

It's important to find out why your kids are experiencing long-term sleep deprivation, not only for their sake, but yours.

There are many reasons why young kids don't sleep beyond infancy. Consider these possibilities:

- Anxiety is a real factor for children and affects them in a variety of ways. School children, especially, might stay awake worrying about tests, social relationships, or other fears that drive their anxieties. Children also internalize worries about things in the adult world. When your child hears conversations between adults they don't fully understand, like financial troubles, arguments, or health issues, they may worry about things you're not even aware of. Don't underestimate anxiety a child may have. Ask them questions. Don't disregard their feelings. To them, their feelings are real.
- Fear is also a feeling that affects a child's sleep. Fears loom inside a child's mind and the dark of night is where those fears come alive. Help your child figure out their fear and bridge the gap between fear and reality. Give them hands-on ways to deal with their fears, especially young children.
- Physiological or emotional reasons should be considered if a child's not sleeping through the night consistently by preschool or school age. Check with your doctor, pediatrician or a mental health expert for possible physiological or emotional reasons if your child's lack of sleep is chronic.

- Take inventory of your family schedule or sleep routine. Each family approaches bedtime differently, and each child has different needs. A structured, rigid bedtime may not work well for a care-free child and a care-free sleep routine may not work well for a highly structured child. Also, stress of a particular school year might require a school age child to need more sleep than what they're getting. Being flexible and assessing the needs of a child who's not sleeping may require changing your family routine.
- Consider the role electronics or video games may have for your child who's not sleeping. A lot of students I work with confess they're on electronics when their parents think they're sleeping. The visual stimulation a child encounters from video games or electronics may cause problems at bedtime, especially for young and school-age children.

If you lack rest because your children don't sleep well, don't ignore it. There may be underlying reasons that are important to look into. It's worth it to both you and your child to figure out why.

But what if you're not sleeping well? The similar principles apply to you. Are you stress, anxious, or fearful of something? Has something in your life changed that's bothering you below the surface? Are you paying attention to your mental health?

Disconnect your phone and devices and leave them out of your bedroom. Try using blue light blocking glasses when you use the computer or read your phone in the evening. Pay attention to diet and exercise. Take care of yourself. Your lack of sleep means is important to your overall health.

Step Five: Make a commitment to find out why you or your child isn't sleeping well.

6

Be Strategic

My husband once told me about a bumper-sticker he saw. It said, "*If a wife's place is in the home, then why is she always in the car?*"

Being a busy woman involves taking care of multiple details, carpooling, managing a household and making appointments. You spend a majority of your time in the car running errands.

How can you even think about rest?

Time is the thing busy women chase after. Strategically planning how to use your time gives you moments for rest and manages a schedule that appears to control you. While you can't control particular activities, you can control certain kinds of busyness.

Start by coordinating activities with other things you're doing. Running errands or getting groceries while you're already transporting kids to practices or ballgames cuts down on time in the car and additional travel time.

Planning certain days of the week to run errands also is helpful. If you work, choose one or two days of the week to run errands after work to avoid getting home late each night. As a working mom, this has been essential in helping me have more time at home rather than rushing here and there.

Once you have a teen that drives, let them run some of your errands!

If you're a stay at home mom, choose one or two days of the week to run errands so you have more time at home throughout the week. When I had my fourth child, I hired a babysitter one morning a week so I could run errands without the kids. I needed a break from being with the kids, and those hours getting groceries

or at an appointment were therapeutic for me. Though we were on a tight budget, I sacrificed other things financially so I could pay a sitter for just a few hours.

There were some Monday mornings I had nothing to do, so I visited with a friend or sat in a coffee shop.

I rested.

When you're rested and have more energy because you're not running ragged, you're a better asset to your family. Don't be afraid to delegate.

Remember, planning your rest is strategic. You'll enjoy the pay-off.

Step Six: Be strategic about using the time you have.

7

Turn It Off

Simple pleasures I've learned to appreciate are moments when no one can reach me by phone or internet. Though technology, social media and smartphones make life easier, they also distract us from things like valuable rest.

I'll be honest. There are times I can rest but I'm on social media or texting. It's easy to steal peaceful moments by pulling out your phone when you're sitting in a car (as a passenger), in the waiting room, or in the bleachers at a ballgame. Without a phone, those minutes can be used to put your mind or body at rest. Screen time stimulates your brain even more, robbing you of quiet space in the midst of busyness.

Phones or internet aren't the only thing to turn off. Turn the radio off in the car. Breathe deeply, clear your thoughts. Pray. Though music is a good stress-reliever, it also adds to the noise of a busy life. When I turn off the radio while driving, my mind's more at rest. I don't feel as rushed in the busyness, even though my schedule is crazy.

Also, don't forget to turn off the TV and computer.

If your mind's still racing in the quiet, don't give up. This rest-thing takes practice!

If you're afraid of having quiet space, consider why. Are there thoughts, emotions or situations that busyness hides you from? If the answer's yes, there may be emotions, behavior or relationships you may need to tend to. Don't run to busyness, but have courage to face things hiding below the surface.

Don't be afraid of quiet - let God's peace enter the recesses of your heart. Let go of

your fear - God's got you in the stillness.

"Be still and know that I am God." Psalm 46:10

Step Seven: Turn off the noise and distractions around you.

8

Mark It Down

If it's not written down, it doesn't happen." That's a business and ethical principle, but it's also true of life. If you don't write things down, it's easy to forget about them or follow through with them.

Kids' activities can dictate your lives. Rest is just as important. When you know you or your family needs rest or leisure, put it in your planner. Mark it down.

Start by determining which activities or seasons you'll need rest and recuperation afterwards.

Are you planning a big event at work, school, or for your family? Are there weeks where activities and responsibilities are so full you're barely surviving? When busy weeks or big activities leave you drained, plan time for rest afterwards. Get a pedicure, plan an evening by yourself, with your husband or go out with friends. Ask your spouse to watch the kids for a few hours so you can read a book or sleep. Take care of yourself and assess your needs. Don't be afraid to say, "I need a break" after a busy season.

If your life consists of endless weeks that don't have time for respite, the next chapter's for you.

Rest isn't something you long for until retirement. You can have it now - but it depends on whether you'll make it happen.

Step Eight: Make rest an essential priority. Mark it down.

9

Mark It Down

Today's kids have unlimited opportunities for sports and activities at young ages. The options can overwhelm a family or child. To build a lifestyle of rest, you need to be intentional about what activities you and your kids commit to. This is also true for empty nest moms or women without kids. You can always be busy with something!

Having four kids with different interests, we've been mindful about what activities they're in. We decided when they were young to limit each of them to two sports during the school year, not only to manage their busyness and stress levels, but also to control the busyness of our family. Even with those limits, we've had weeks with twenty to thirty activities in one week.

It's overwhelming.

Though it's fun to have kids in sports when they're little, being involved in too many can rob them of opportunities to be a carefree kid. Kids get burned out at young ages and end up quitting a sport before they even get to middle or high school. I've seen it happen multiple times.

Kids can still be successful without engaging them in premature busyness.

Younger siblings get burned out, too, from attending events of their siblings year-round.

When looking at available opportunities for your kids, consider the best fit for each child and also the family. You're not only making decisions about immediate busyness, you're teaching your kids valuable life skills of rest, moderation and balance.

It's also important to consider your commitments. Do your activities add to or detract from your family or your need for rest? If you don't volunteer for something, someone else will. Really. As your kids get older, your time for different commitments will expand. You don't have to do everything now.

If your job or career path prevents rest by adding more stress to your life, don't feel trapped. Consider other options for employment. I did. My career was a contributing factor to ongoing stress in my life and negatively affected my family. I made a hard decision to leave that career. I went back to school for a degree allowing part-time or flexible employment. It was a hard decision, but it's been worth it.

No matter your season of life, be intentional about what you're involved in. Busyness isn't God's best.

Step Nine: Be intentional about the activities you and your children are involved in.

10

Don't Forget the Sabbath

God's already provided the perfect solution for rest - the Sabbath. He created life's order to meet our physical, emotional and mental needs. He set aside one day not only for worship, but to rest from our crazy lives.

Most of us are missing the mark on this one.

Sundays are often as busy as any other day of the week. How do you get rest from the Sabbath the way God intended?

- *Guard the time.* Are your kids in sporting events year-round on Sundays or is it an occasional Sunday ballgame for you? If your Sundays are spent as full as other days of the week, reconsider your commitments in relation to what's best for you, your family, and your kids. Though it's tempting to protect rest on the Sabbath by not going to church, that's not the answer.
- *Actually rest.* There's another temptation to use Sunday to get caught up on housework. Honor God and yourself by setting aside time to rest. Take a nap, watch a movie, or read a book. Give your mind empty space and your body the chance to catch up on sleep. It is God's perfect plan - follow His wisdom.
- *Do something relaxing* you don't normally do - long bike rides, family days at the park, roasting marshmallows over a fire pit. Find what's relaxing for you and give yourself permission to do it.
- *Turn off...*work, social media, answering emails, and other things you do during the week. Even if it's for a few hours, it's worth it.
- *Spend time with God.* In the retreat and my book *Balance, Busyness and Not Doing It All*, we identify time with God is essential for balance. But it's also important for rest. Whether through prayer, reading God's word, or journaling, seeking time with Him on Sundays brings rest to your soul.

Simply reading through Psalm 23 makes me calm as I visualize God leading me beside still waters and restoring my soul. What about you? Do you need Him to do that?

Sunday shouldn't be filled with legalistic do's and don'ts. It should be full of freedom to rest in the Lord, His presence, and His goodness for our body and spirit. If Sunday is just another busy day for you and your family, you're not experiencing God's best for you. Start protecting the Sabbath today. You'll be surprised at the results.

Step Ten: Don't forget the Sabbath as a day of rest.

Now that you've received some tools, implement them! No one will take care of you, but you. No matter what stage of life you're in, slow down and live in today.

For more help during the parenting years, get *Fledge: Launching Your Kids Without Losing Your Mind or Balance, Busyness and Not Doing It All*. Join me at brendayoder.com, at the podcast *Life Beyond the Picket Fence* (Feb. 2019) or let me work with you as a life coach, retreat, or keynote speaker! Or, if you want one on one services, contact me about life or parenting coaching!

Brenda

Brenda@brendayoder.com

Instagram @brendayoderspeaks

Facebook @brendayoderspeaker

Pinterest @brendayoderlmhc

Twitter @brendayoderlmhc

About The Author

Brenda Yoder is a national speaker, author, Licensed Mental Health Counselor, and life coach whose passion is encouraging others when life doesn't fit the storybook image. Authentic and humorous, Brenda connects with women and moms in a way that will have you laughing and crying all at the same time.

Her new book, *[Fledge: Launching Your Kids Without Losing Your Mind](#)* is a personal handbook for parents in the season of raising and releasing kids. It's been endorsed by Jim Daly of Focus on the Family and was Amazon's #1 new release in motherhood. Brenda's been featured in *Chicken Soup for the Soul* books: *Reboot Your Life* and *Confident and Curvy*; the *Washington Post*, and *For Every Mom*. Her first book for busy moms, *[Balance, Busyness, and Not Doing It All](#)* released in 2015.

Brenda is also former teacher and school counselor and was twice awarded the Touchstone Award for teachers. Her ministry, *[Life Beyond the Picket Fence](#)*, is found at brendayoder.com where she writes about faith, life, and family beyond the storybook image. Brenda is a wife and mom of four children, ranging from teens to adults, and lives on a farm in Indiana. You can connect with Brenda on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Pinterest](#), and [Instagram](#). Join her [Facebook page](#) to follow the Fledge Parent Forum for moms releasing their kids.