

The practice of welcoming the Sabbath appears in the Talmud and was very popular in Jewish mystical circles in the 1600s. On Friday night, at sunset, The Kabbalists, robed in white, would stand in a sacred field facing West and pray: “Come bride, Come bride.”

Lecha Dodi: Come with Me, My Love

Interpreted by Rabbi Naomi Levy

You aren't just a holy day,
You are a presence.
A spirit. A mood. A state of mind.

You are a light.
Shine through Sabbath candles
And enter my home, my body, my soul.
I long for you
I wait for you all week long.

You are peace. When you arrive
I breathe with ease.
I release all the worries of my week
Tension and anxiety melt away.

You are comfort.
Wipe away my tears
Touch my soul and heal it
Wake me out of my rut
Open my well protected heart.

You are with me for just one day,
But I pray for the time
When you will spread your peace
over the whole world.
Enter my soul, fill me with your light
Come bride, come bride.

SABBATH MOMENTS

I've been thinking a lot about sabbath rest. Mostly because I don't get enough rest of any kind. I'm either worried about something, some new body part is hurting, I'm trying to meet a deadline, or something is awry for someone I care about.

When I speak of sabbath, I'm not speaking of the Judeo-Christian Sabbath Day, but the idea of sabbath rest, and sabbath moments. Sabbath as an interruption of ordinary time, with sacred time. The Sabbath is Spirit in the form of time. Sabbath rest is allowing Spirit to rest within us. Spirit is that which connects us to all there is that which calls out the best of ourselves. Spirit is the ineffable Mystery.

There's an old story about a woodcutter; some of you may have read it in one of Steven Covey's books. I think the first time I heard it was in the 80s.

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At the end of the day, the veteran woodcutter didn't cut down as many trees as he often did, and was expected to do. "What happened?" his colleagues asked. "I didn't take time to sharpen my saw," the woodcutter replied. – Another way of thinking about sabbath rest is Saw Sharpening Time

In the Hebrew Scriptures, The Talmud, The Old Testament, we read

Genesis 1: On the seventh day God had completed the work of his creation. God blessed the seventh day and made it holy. Days One through Six were very good. Day Seven is Holy.

Exodus 31: ¹⁴ You shall keep the sabbath, because it is holy; everyone who profanes it shall be put to death; ¹⁵ Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a sabbath of solemn rest,

If you drive through a Jewish neighborhood on the Sabbath, you will see families walking to Shabbos services. If you visit an observant Jewish home on Friday night, you will light the Shabbos candles, sit with the family to eat, and lift a glass of wine as you offer a blessing for the Sabbath. *Baruch ata adonai, elehenu melech haolam.* Blessed are you, Lord, our God, ruler of the universe Who has sanctified us with Your commandments and commanded us to light the Sabbath candles. Amen

The greeting on the sabbath is Shabbat Shalom. May you feel the peace of this holy time. Shabbat Shalom. Nice concept. Regardless of your religious inclination. And yet, most of us are too busy to take a whole day off to rest. We will take time off once or twice a year to go to deBenneville Pines or some other restful place. But most of us don't consciously put margins of rest around our busyness--on a regular basis.

When I work with spiritual direction clients, many of whom are overworked seminarians, who don't have enough time for anything extra, I suggest that they spend the time between our sessions noticing sabbath moments. This moves the idea from the unknown to the consciousness. They don't have to stop their busyness; they just have to notice.

For some people, Sabbath keeping is a spiritual discipline that requires the same routine mindfulness required in most things important to us---music, art, handwork, dancing, cooking. You do the thing, but much of the time is spent preparing for it, cleaning up, and caring for the tools. And so, taking care of the tools may become a spiritual, meditative practice. The story of the old woodcutter reminds us you can't do the thing well, if the tools are not in good condition. Slowing down, putting margins on the pages of our days, keeping a rhythm of life that includes rest, gives us a chance to restore, renew and sharpen our best tool – ourselves.

Good Health = Nutrition + exercise + rest. Think of a nine-cell grid with *Nutrition Rest Exercise* across the top, and *Mind Body Spirit* down the side. The goal is doing well in two out of three cells in any row or column. This morning, the focus is on the cell for Rest for the Spirit. Sabbath Rest is rest and renewal for your soul. Sabbath creates space to breathe. It is a time

to stop working and worrying and planning and responding. It is a time to notice and appreciate; a time to be authentically, integrally, wholly you. Those times may just be moments, and those are Sabbath moments. Whenever and however you can get to that place, that is your sabbath time--when you turn off the noises in your head and let your heart lead and let your spirit rest.

In the book, **South of Broad** by Pat Conroy, Twins, Sheba and Trevor, had an imperfect childhood and were consequently seeking one perfect day. Throughout the book, when something good happened, they would ask each other, "Is this it? Is this the perfect day?" I'm too old and cynical to seek a perfect day; I do still seek to identify and appreciate perfect moments—sabbath moments.

My last perfect moment was when I was working on a quilt. I don't have the brain cells, the patience, or the manual dexterity to work with those tiny pieces of cloth to make a fabric mosaic. So my quilts re-combine colors to make something surprising and extraordinary.

Well, I had pieced some squares together and laid them out on the floor. I could see that it wasn't happening. What I was making wasn't even good enough for Goodwill. So, I talked about it with an artist friend, and then I decided to work on the other side. And unexpectedly, it all came together. That moment...a whoosh of beauty and satisfaction and peace. That was a perfect moment. That was a sabbath moment. I stopped worrying, planning, working, fussing. I just breathed...I breathed in the beauty. I breathed in the peace.

Once you start thinking about it. Sabbath moments become easier to identify.

- I baked a cake for my dying friend, Jackie. She called me an angel.
- A ten-year-old child, who has been indifferent to me for most of her life greeted me with a huge smile and a hug.

Those have been sabbath moments for me. What do I do with them? I notice. Then I appreciate. Then I pause. And then...I save them. And during my sabbath times I reflect on my sabbath moments. And sometimes during my un-sabbath times I pull out those sabbath moments, so I can breathe.

After you have learned to recognize and appreciate your own Sabbath Moments you can learn to create Sabbath Time for yourself.

- Awake without the radio or the alarm.
- Listen to the whispers of the Universe in the space between sleeping and being fully awake.
- Start or end your day at the gym.
- Refuse to take early morning calls.
- Set aside time to create: Gardening, sewing, cooking, preparing for guests
- Open yourself to unplanned enchantment:
- Have a spontaneous meal with a friend
- Sit at your computer playing games, shopping, following Google trails to obscure knowledge
- Allow yourself to dream

- Write in your journal
- Meditate
- Play with the children in your life.
- Borrow someone's children. Declare a child-free day.
- Watch a loved one sleep
- Notice the butterfly hover over a flower
- Drive along PCH while the sun is setting
- There are lots of opportunities for sabbath moments—on coffee breaks, on a walk, as you wait on hold, or stand in line.

When I was younger I scheduled one day a month to stay in bed. All day. My sabbath time. I have a friend who calendars spontaneity: An occasional, unstructured, unscheduled day. Her sabbath time. Sabbath time opens you up to accidental splendor: moonlight spilling through your bedroom window. A rainbow. The hushed quiet after the spontaneous song of a child.

Sabbath moments are the secret, subversive, surprising, serendipitous moments when your outer self, connects to your inner self. When your heart takes a deep breath, and your soul says, YES!

You can enjoy them one at a time or you can collect your sabbath moments until you have had a sabbath rest. The goal is to slow down – to appreciate, to pause and then to notice the difference.

Still need help? Read Wayne Muller's **SABBATH, Finding rest, renewal, and delight in our busy lives**. It's a long book, but don't let that deter you. Just open a page and see what is there. Dance with your book. Find a rhythm that works for you. Gather ideas for sabbath keeping.

Amy Lowell ~A sabbath poem

Hold your soul open for my welcoming.
Let the quiet of your spirit bathe me
With its clear and rippled coolness,
That, loose-limbed and weary, I find rest,
Outstretched upon your peace, as on a bed of ivory.

Let the flickering flame of your soul play all about me,
That into my limbs may come the keenness of fire,
The life and joy of tongues of flame,
And, going out from you, tightly strung and in tune,
I may rouse the bleary-eyed world,
And pour into it the beauty which you have begotten.

Shabbat Shalom

How are you doing? **WHAT** are you doing?

	REST	EXERCISE	NUTRITION
MIND			
BODY			
SPIRIT			