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REFLECTION:

One of the cool things about writing and speaking on a particular topic (like I have with Pause for almost a decade now), is that others who are working in related areas seek you out. In the last few months, I've been privy to advance drafts of two new books on stress and renewal. Today, I want to highlight for you one of those offerings.

Julia James, a life coach based in Vancouver, has just released her book called, 'The Mini-Retreat Solution - How to Relax & Refresh Anytime, Anywhere'. In addition to reinforcing the case for taking time out in the midst of busy lives, Julia offers 80 specific suggestions for mini retreats (small bits of time out that you incorporate throughout the day). For easy reference, the mini-retreats are grouped by time of day (morning, lunch, evening) and situation (in transit, at the office, in the community).

ACTION:

It's a helpful collection of possibilities. While many of the suggestions in the book will be familiar, here's one of the more unusual ideas: Take A Spell Walk.

Julia observes that minds tend to get stuck grinding away on the problem du jour. Sometimes a mental break or mini-retreat is in order. She prescribes a 5-10 minute urban ramble in which you focus on signs - street signs, billboards, advertising - whatever shows up in your environment.

Engage your mind in word associations, backwards spelling, playing with the sounds, creating rhymes - anything that will take your mind far away from the problem at hand.

You could even try an indoor version of the ramble. Let your eyes dance around the colors and shapes you find in artwork and illustrations. Move through the office letting your mind play with words you find on book spines and magazine covers.

Julia predicts that after a mind break like this you'll return to your challenging task with renewed energy and focus. I expect she's right. Give it a try next time your brain sets to whirring away with little to show for it.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK:

For any of you with an allergic reaction to the concept of retreat, consider these words by Oliver Prince Smith: "Retreat, hell! We're not retreating, we're just advancing in a different direction."

RESOURCE OF THE WEEK:

The Mini-Retreat Solution by Julia James. Spark Publishing, 2010. For a bit more on the book, check out this article in the Vancouver Observer: <http://tiny.cc/Rl1ks> or dip into the sneak preview excerpts on Julia's site: <http://tiny.cc/peZOo>