

Take a Box of Colors and Call Me in the Morning

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There is a good leadership lesson in the adult coloring book trend.

Adult coloring books have been around for many years, but recently the sales of sophisticated coloring books have skyrocketed. *Secret Garden: An Inky Treasure Hunt and Coloring Book* has sold over 2 million copies since its release in 2013.

Social media has stimulated the trend as people share their “artwork” on Facebook, Pinterest, and Instagram. Pins are chock-full of tips and tricks to better coloring.

Where were these Pinsters when I was failing coloring in kindergarten?

It’s fascinating to see the attention given to pen and pencil media. I’ve long been a lover of pens. The new Prismacolor and Sharpie varieties make simple note taking more colorful. Coloring my notes is a creative enhancement of the mundane.

So what is driving this trend to regress to childhood playtime?

I rarely miss an opportunity to bash the overuse of smart technology, which I love so dearly, but the onset of the coloring book trend cannot be blamed on Jobs and his stuff. (It shouldn’t surprise anyone to learn that there’s an app for that as well. SUDUKO is being challenged by Colorfy, Recolor, and several others. “I’m not playing solitaire, boss; I’m coloring!”)

The trend points to a desire to lighten up.

Coloring book marketers use words such as “therapy,” “escape,” and “play.”

Perhaps it's as simple as a tension release. Email reading is hazardous to peace. Read an email; color a flower. Get a punch via text? Quest for ink.

Leaders must recognize when the organization is operating on elevated and perhaps contrived intensity. Our teams need opportunities to breathe productively. White heat burns coals faster than simmering heat.

I may be late for my next meeting. I'm coloring the moon ... red.

“Then He said to them, ‘Come away by yourselves to a remote place and rest a while,’ for many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat” (Mark 6:31).

Dr. Steve Greene is the publisher executive vice president—Media Group, Charisma Media. Here's a link to where you can sign up for Dr. Greene's leadership e-newsletter.

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