

# Why You Need to Learn to Disengage

You've heard the conversations:

"Hey man, what's going on?"

*"Busier than ever! You?"*

"Me, too. Busy, busy, busy! I can't remember the last time I took a vacation."

*"Me either!"*

Now, this would be unusual:

"Hey, man, what's going on?"

*"Not a whole lot. Just enjoying the day. You?"*

The thought would be, "That guy's a loser!" That's because men are action figures. What we do is an integral part of our identity. That's not all bad until it gets twisted to where we define ourselves by what we do and measure ourselves by our accomplishments.

One man was so busy that he had a hard time disengaging when he came in the door after his typical long days at work. His five- and six-year-olds were naturally excited to see their daddy when he came home, but his wife could tell that he was always distracted and even seemed a little irritated by his children wanting his attention.

His wife was a smart woman. When the kids would try and get his attention, she would say, "Kids, Daddy's not home yet."

They would look at her, and look at him, and say, "Sure he is, Mommy. He's right over there!"

Then she would whisper to them, "*We* know that, but *he* doesn't know it yet. Go outside and play for a while. He'll be home in about 20 minutes." She created the margin he needed to

disengage from work and reengage with his family. He couldn't do it, so she did it for him.

Maybe that's the kind of stuff God had in mind when he created a "helper" for man. To be so strong, sometimes we as men can be so helpless.

One of my bad habits, which seemed like a good idea, was to use the drive time home to catch up on leftover calls from work. After all, Ephesians 5:15-16 (MEV) says, "See then that you walk carefully, not as fools, but as wise men, making the most of the time because the days are evil." In my mind I was making the most of the time.

Sometimes I would be on the phone when I pulled into the garage and stay on the phone another five minutes while I finished the call. One day my little girl came out to greet me, excited about telling me something that happened in her world that day. I kind of waved her off and said I was on an important call and would be done in a minute. No big deal to a 6-year-old. But as she went about her way what I said bounced around in my head. I had just communicated that my phone call was more important than her. Maybe she didn't get that, but I sure did.

Here's what I started doing. I designated a safe zone on my way home. The first one I set was the entrance to my neighborhood. I would tell whomever I was talking with that I had just entered the safe zone and needed to get off the phone so I could get ready to be with my family. But the distance from the entrance to my neighborhood down the street to my house didn't allow me enough time to *mentally* disengage. So, I backed up my boundary a few blocks. Then I backed it up about a mile. The three-mile boundary finally worked. It helps me be intentional about creating margin. For those three miles I start thinking about my wife's schedule that day, wondering what my daughter's day was like, so when I pull in the driveway and walk through the door I'm all there.

A lot of guys who know me are fine when I interrupt our drive-time conversation and tell them I have to go. Most will say, "You must have entered the safe zone!" It's called creating margin and it's catching on with some of our men.

I wish I could say I've mastered this, but I haven't. It's a constant struggle because I like to accomplish things. I'm a project guy and I can tune everything out when I'm engaged in a project, especially one I really like. But knowing when to disengage makes me a better man. I actually create a better project. It makes me a better husband, a better Dad, a better neighbor ... a better ... oh, you get the idea.

Adapted from *Fight Club – Some Things Are Worth Fighting For* by Tierce Green.

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