# Do You Need a 'Hard Reset'?

Have you ever called the IT department only to have them say "try a hard reset?" Just like electronic devices, humans also need a hard reset on a routine basis.

Whether it's a short break during the day or a long sabbatical, studies have consistently shown that taking the time to recharge improves well-being (Sianoja, 2017, Krajewski 2011).  It helps your body and brain recover and helps you to be more creative. While medicine is not touted as a field full of creative expression, to be effective we *do* need to come up with creative solutions.

Taking breaks has also been proven to prevent "decision fatigue." In a well-illustrated study, Israeli judges were found to be more likely to grant parole to prisoners after their two daily breaks than after they had been working continuously. As decision fatigue set in, the rate of granting parole gradually dropped to near 0% because judges resorted to the easiest option. (Danziger, 2011). There is also literature that shows that surgeons who take microbreaks during surgery report less post-procedural pain, improved performance, and increased mental focus without extending operative time. (Park, 2017). As a consequence, I have been giving myself permission to pause and step away from the operating table to stretch for a couple of minutes if the surgery is more than two hours. It always surprises me that when I return, I see things from a new angle.

Studies have shown that if you don't recharge, it could be detrimental to your health. According to the Framingham Heart Study, "men who don't take vacations were 30% more likely to have a heart attack, and for women it went up to 50%." Those numbers hold true even after researchers took into account other health factors such as diabetes, cigarette smoking, income level and obesity. It has also been proven that employees who take vacation also have lower levels of burnout. (Etzion, 2003).

While clear evidence points to the benefits of recharging, the bigger mystery is, why we don't we do it regularly? The majority of Americans (52%) did not use all their vacation time in 2017 (down from 54% in 2016) (projecttimeoff). Further, nearly a quarter (24%) of Americans have not taken a vacation in more than a year. Many of us here at Northwest Permanente also do not take full advantage of our vacation benefits. In 2017, 88% of our employees did not use all their vacation time, and 6% of employees did not take any vacation at all. In 2018, 89% of NWP employees did not use all their vacation time, and 8% did not take any time off.

So, maybe it is time for us to hit a hard reset and recharge. Could you find time in your day, week or year to really power down? During your next day (or week!) off, consider a digital detox from work.

Here is a checklist:
1. Write an out-of-office reply in Outlook: give yourself and others permission to unplug.
2. Switch Cortext to unavailable
3. Turn pagers off

4. In HealthConnect, assign yourself as "out" and sign out with clear communication of what you would like others to do while you are gone.

As physicians and clinicians, we are wired to take care of others. But just like on an airplane, if you don't take care of yourself first, you are unable to care for those who depend on you. Please, this year take some time to plan a fun vacation (or staycation).
— Norma Steiner, MD, Co-Director, NWP Physician Wellness