What If One Can Be at Peace from Technology?
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I think we all have those moments when our heads start to spin with everything we have to do, so much so that we are practically at a standstill, not knowing what direction to turn or what to start next. Pondering upon this for quite awhile, running through various work task scenarios in my head while jogging on the treadmill, I thought, should I share my dilemma with everyone else, is there a possible solution?

What if we could let go of the constant bombardment of technology for a few weeks and return to the days of business through phone calls and face-to-face conversations? Could we return to a time when work projects could be scheduled and actually completed as expected without constant interruptions? I know we need email and I do rely upon it for its convenience, but what if we create times during the day when we turn off that constant nagging and the demand for instant answers? We already know about the dangers associated with texting and driving; that communication temptation seems to be always present. I am as connected to technology as most people, maybe more so. I carry my smart phone with me everywhere, and it sleeps in the same room I do. Of course, I also have my iPad handy, and for substantial typing there is the laptop and the desktop computer. I believe we (or at least I!) need to set up specific times to check those messages so there are also specific periods of complete disconnect from the constant chirp of the cell phone and the email messages. For me, it is the only way to be able to concentrate on and enjoy the pleasures or tasks of the moment.

I have been thinking about this because this past summer I was able to disconnect from email and almost all technology for 20 days while traveling in South Africa. I had only a few opportunities to use Wi-Fi during the trip, which I utilized purposefully to connect with family, post some photos, and clean out emails to which I did not have to respond. There was no pressure to respond to emails from the office, or join in the general daily routine workplace decisions that take up so much time because I simply wasn't able to do so. It was a pleasure to be able to get to know the individuals with whom I traveled; we had great conversations and no cell phone interruptions. What if it was possible to disconnect for a few hours a day to have the chance to relax and not stress out about the constant flow of messages? Letting go of technology could help us all to create a balance and better enjoy our lives.

It would be great to be a role model to our students and colleagues, holding meetings without constantly looking at or playing with our phones? Does that message need to be answered the moment it enters even while in a meeting or during a conversation with a colleague? No wonder many of our colleagues come out of meetings with only a half notion of what was actually said or decided upon. On another level, professionally we need to discuss with our colleagues the "what ifs" of the programs we are planning and coordinating, our advising styles and our support of our students. To do so, we need to pay attention.

I also wonder what it would be like if we live our lives like our Pinterest boards? You know, the ones many of us have created with the locations we would like to visit, the things we want to try, and the lives we want. What if we did those things? We may be happier with our career choices and where our lives have taken us. However, there are also always those moments of "what if I had zigged" instead of zagged?" To balance things out we have to try more of those "what ifs" and give ourselves a break. If you look at my Pinterest boards, they are filled with travel plans such as going to South Africa, going to the Great Wall of China, and learning to surf or to ski, to name a few. Of course we end up putting off many

of these plans because we do not have the time or the cash or our jobs are too demanding, but I know I need to have my mini-escapes in order to be more productive and to grow as a person, which in turn makes me a better advisor. We need to be intentional with our time off, do things we enjoy, and not feel guilty about having everything scheduled, as well as fitting our schedules to comply with everyone's notion of what we should be doing.

I realize this may sound a little preachy but the "what ifs" need to be part of our internal conversation to be better individuals. Finding our balance in the day might mean taking a brisk walk regularly around campus to decompress, taking a break from the computer screen and resulting eye strain, and maybe even getting fit. Many times we give up lunch hours, arrive in the office early and stay late. There is always another email to write, another roster to update, a program to plan, and a student activity to supervise. Maybe we need to act upon more of those "what ifs." I believe letting go of technology, if only for short periods of time, can help us find our balance.