

## A Morning for Mom

It was a crisp and cold Saturday morning. After a typical weekend morning of bustling activity, including cleaning and re-cleaning the kitchen, doing several loads of laundry, cooking breakfast for two shifts, figuring out who was taking who where and when, I suddenly found myself alone in the house---well, as alone as you can be with two dogs, two noisy birds, and a guinea pig.

Our oldest was gone kayaking with friends, the youngest went to his grandparents, and my husband took the girls Christmas shopping. My first instinct was to grab the vacuum cleaner and a dust mop and get busy.

Because of the cold outside, the house had a distinct chill. I started to turn the heat on, but spotted a bundle of the firewood next to the fireplace. I built a fire and soon I was smiling as the roaring flames warmed the chill in the room. My mind raced back to my mental list of things that needed doing. Instead, I did something uncharacteristic of myself.

First, I put on the tea kettle. Next, I rummaged through our Christmas CD collection until I found what I was looking for: Handel's Messiah. Since my crew is more likely to be listening to their favorite rock bands latest rendition of Silent Night, than the true classics, I had not listened to the CD in awhile. I turned the stereo up loud. Is there anything more inspirational to listen to than Handel's Messiah? Did you know Handel wrote the masterpiece in only 21 days and never thought it would be performed again after its debut in 1742?

I curled up on the couch with my poodle in my lap and our lab at my feet. While enjoying the beautiful music, I had to wonder at just how difficult "not doing anything" is for people—women in particular. Say what you want, but when was the last time a man "gave himself permission" to watch a football game? Women, on the other hand, are driven by the need to get all of their do-list items accomplished, as well as a hefty dose of guilt for letting the things fall off the list.

I sat there looking at the Christmas decorations strewn all over the family room and felt a tinge of guilt. After all, it would only take me a few hours to finish decorating, and get a good head start on the mammoth pile of laundry that was waiting for me. But what a peace I had just sitting there basking in the music and the feeling of solitude. Nobody was arguing with me, or asking me to do something. There were no demands, except for the ones I kept thrusting on myself.

Why is relaxing so difficult for us mother-types? I suppose it is because we live in a society that frowns upon those who are unproductive. Everything is about being more efficient and multi-tasking whenever possible. Lying on the couch drinking hot tea and listening to classical music certainly does not qualify as productive.

And yet, it was as if my body was paralyzed. I could not get up and ruin my moment.

After an hour and a half of complete solace, the silence was broken. I heard the garage door opening and both dogs began barking and running to the door. When my husband and the girls came in, they all stared at me. "Are you sick?" my husband wanted to know. I explained that I was simply relaxing and enjoying the music, and the fire. He shrugged

and said he was going downstairs to watch a football game. He did not ask himself permission.

They say that you should be cognizant of how you “spend” every minute, because you can never get that time back. While that is true, I suppose, I find myself remembering those moments spent doing “nothing” and thinking they were more valuable to my sense of well-being than most of my busy moments.

During this season of hustling and bustling, try to remember to take a few minutes here and there for yourself—especially you busy mothers.