

Hey, everyone,

As discussed earlier, free time away from the daily demands of life and work is increasingly difficult to come by—but it's vital to stimulate creativity and original thinking. Tech sabbaths and personal retreats are two strategies that I've found to be helpful, and that's what I'd like to talk about in this week's Play Tip.

A tech sabbath is a period of time where you disconnect almost entirely from your computer, smartphone, and other electronic devices. You'll sometimes hear this referred to as a "digital detox."

I often combine these with my free days, both my weekly free day (typically Sunday) and my vacations that join several free days together. During these periods I do not check email or social media, browse the web, or interact with technology beyond the basics (making phone calls, getting directions, making restaurant reservations, etc.).

Tech sabbaths give me time for daydreaming, doodling, brainstorming, or just being present with myself, my family, and my friends in a way that isn't possible when I am connected to digital devices.

Like free days, tech sabbaths can be a little challenging at first if you're not used to them. After all, as I mentioned in a previous video, email, social media, and other activities we do on electronic devices have addictive qualities. So stepping away completely isn't easy.

But in my experience, once I have stepped away, if anything, I tend to have the opposite problem: after several days of being unplugged, I don't want to plug back in! It often takes me a day or two to get back into the swing of things when I return from these sabbaths. I take this as a good sign ... an indication that my nervous system is truly settling down a few notches.

In addition to tech sabbaths, I recommend doing regular "personal retreats" where you take time away from work and create space for contemplation, reflection, visioning, and big-picture thinking. These are different from free days, where you are not thinking about work or working. They are times when you can think about work, but from a broader perspective.

I take a personal retreat once a year where I go on a surf trip. While there, I surf several times a day, but I also write in my journal, reflect upon my year, create a vision for the following year, and give myself the time and space to think about my life outside of its daily demands.

I also take a couple of shorter twenty-four- to forty-eight-hour personal retreats during the year, with a similar intention and set-up. Since I typically don't go far from home on these retreats, instead of surfing I might go camping or to a hot springs or something like that.

Like most of the other changes we've talked about, if this sounds intimidating, try starting small and building from there. For example, just schedule one day-long tech sabbath, or a half-day personal retreat. Once you start experiencing the benefits, it will be easier to stretch them out and make them more frequent.

Okay, that's it for now. See you next week!