

of good just by doing nothing—except that we've forgotten how!

what I have read of great men throughout history, I know that the capacity to relax and let go is an indispensable part of achievement. To an infinite capacity for work, then, you should also add the ability to get away from work and to let the leisure phase of the creative process assert itself.

Sin Six—The Search for Novelty

You may think that you're wasting your leisure time when you're not doing something new, something different. You may, in your leisure moments, be bent on the violently different, the exaggerated, the macabre, the bizarre, or the unnatural. But why are you seeking this novelty?

The answer is that you have become jaded. As a defense, you have developed a stiff upper lip; you have kept busy and you have allowed yourself, or perhaps even forced yourself, to become insensitive. Only through overstimulation can you come alive at all.

Or perhaps you misuse leisure time to escape from life and responsibilities. As long as the television set, for instance, is going full blast, the entire family is silent and absorbed. But the moment the show is over, the return to reality comes hard and the family may begin to fuss and quarrel. Had they been at work, or at true leisure, they could have avoided this painful return to reality because then they never would have lost reality in the first place.

Sin Seven—Leisure is Wicked

You may abuse your leisure hours because of a puritanical fear that leisure is indeed the last of

the medieval seven deadly sins—sloth.

Thinking this, you agree with the words of a popular hymn that "Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do."

If you feel this way, you fear unearned enjoyment. For you, all the give and take of life has a string attached to it. All living and working become a means of getting a claim on God, fate, fortune, or some material end.

The outright gift becomes impossible, and there can be no gracious giving or receiving because the old phrase, "By the grace of God," has no meaning for you whatsoever.

This reward-and-punishment attitude toward work and leisure overlooks the important truth that nothing creative comes by work alone. All the diligence and skill that we bring to bear will, in and of themselves, avail us nothing unless we also add an infinite capacity for relaxation.

In this relaxation, we need beauty and graciousness—style in all we do, whether it be in setting a table or in savoring conversation. For, as Einstein said, "The enjoyment of impractical pleasures is necessary for a balanced life."

The National Recreation Association, a nonprofit organization that tries to help everyone make the best use of his free time, says the age of leisure is at our doorstep. It is all so accepted: the 30-hour work week is around the corner; the 24-hour work week is around the next corner. You face a future with time—and lots of it—on your hands.

It is fortunate that we have such organizations to help our communities plan more recreation facilities and programs for us to enjoy if we will.

(Continued)

Family Weekly / November 27, 1960

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With more leisure time than ever, too many Americans forget the best way to enjoy it is just to stop work, lie back, and relax.

against leisure

By ALEXANDER REID MARTIN, M. D. as told to Flora Rheta Schreiber

Chairman, National Committee on Leisure, American Psychiatric Association

