



I wonder what you do to relax. I am usually quite good at relaxing, in fact the family will tell you I am so relaxed I can fall asleep anywhere, even doing puzzles at my computer! However, recently I have realised that I am struggling to relax. I have given this some thought and recognised that there are a number of factors involved. My knees are very painful which means things I might do to relax such as a walk or photography are not as enjoyable; I cannot lose myself in the way I need to for relaxation to happen.

Just before I started training in Cambridge, we went on a family holiday, touring part of Europe staying in caravans. We did Paris and Disneyland, Lake Garda and Venice, Chamonix, Geneva and Lausanne, and the Jura mountains. It was wonderful, but I was doing all the driving and I had been working very hard at Yardley Hastings. I could not stop, whilst the rest of the family were happy relaxing by the pool, I had to be doing something, until we went up Monte Baldo a mountain higher than I had even been, higher than Ben Nevis. As I walked along the pasture on the top, listening to cow bells, I suddenly felt myself relax, it was amazing, and I remember that moment to this day. After that I really enjoyed the holiday.



Another factor is the change in work pattern. Ministers often find themselves engaging in planning and reflection at anytime of the day, or night, and worship is always a main focus, however there are usually meetings and engagements that break the pattern. At the moment it does feel rather like a treadmill that won't stop which is definitely not relaxing. There are meetings but they are on zoom and don't provide the change that normally happens, I am still in my study in front of my computer.



The final major factor is one many of you may identify with, boredom born of frustration. Every day is the same and even when I have some time, I don't know what to do. This is really strange because I have so many hobbies, but I find I cannot really settle to any of them. I have experienced this once before during a time of mild depression and I suspect that is at play here. Lockdown has been long and hard, and we all need a break.

I do still read, and I can lose myself in a book given time, but there is not always time for it to be truly relaxing. I am doing some crochet but I have struggled to find a project that I can become absorbed in and so it is a series of little things. I have always found Japanese Logic puzzles relaxing but I tend to do them on the computer and so it is all part of the treadmill. The one practice that does still work is Zentangle, the art of creating black and white patterns within a network of spaces. The associated ZIA or Zentangle inspired art uses the same techniques but in a free form. I use the ends of paper left after cutting Zentangle tiles to create bookmarks.



I know I need to find time to relax, and something to help me use that time to the best. I think it will be making time during each day to Zentangle, or to read. I wonder what you are doing. Relaxation is important, it is generally when we are relaxed that we can best connect with God in a fruitful way. It is also important for our wellbeing, both physical and mental. Too much cortisol for a sustained time is detrimental to health, so I am really going to change the pattern of my days to create a release from tension.

What do you do to relax?