

## Why I Took Time Out of My Day to Write this Article

There is hardly anything comparable to strolling through the trees on a bright summer day, the sun beating down on your shoulders as the breeze takes the leaves on a dance in the heat. Growing up, my family would travel and hike often, whether it was to Yosemite National Park or a small reservoir nearby. While my Dad used to joke that we hated the outdoors as kids, I guess you could say it grew on me! Now it's me begging to go for a hike! But just as my love for the serenity of nature grew as I got older, so did the amount of other responsibilities on my plate. Recently, I've struggled to balance a new job with a relationship and a summer class. And then where do friends and family come in? And what about those summer strolls under the dancing leaves?

Right from the start, I was frustrated with the amount of work I had given myself. I spent a decent amount of time applying for jobs, looking into a summer class, buying a new camera, all in the hopes that I wouldn't just be sitting around all summer. But suddenly, I was putting work before everything else, forgetting about the camera sitting in the box in a corner that would at least provide a little bit of fun (and some practice for the future career I hope to have). And as the days went on where I put first the class and the job, I wondered what it was that made me feel so pressed to fill my time? The more I thought about it, the more I realized it seems like there is an inner voice inside us all telling us to use our time wisely. But when did wisely become work?

Whether it is seeing everyone else around us juggling busy lives, or hearing stories of our parents' lives when they were young, or the pressure put on us from our teachers or even ourselves to build a good resume, somewhere along the line America became defined as a

country that lives to work rather than a country that works to live. Somewhere along the line, it seems as though we developed this innate idea that time is wasted unless spent productively. While this could be arguably true for many reasons, the problem lies in what we define as productive.

When did having a picnic in the park with some friends become unproductive? When did reading a book become a past time left on the shelves? When did needing time to yourself become antisocial rather than simply a desire for a break from the chaos of everyday life? Everybody has a different way of spending time, but the common denominator is work. When I went to college last fall, I brought a few books with me, thinking I would set aside time to read. As the semester went by, I noticed my friends also had a stack of books on their desks that had been untouched since move in day. We get so bogged down by the statistics problems and the philosophy readings, convincing ourselves it's fine and that we'll just read later. But I have been reading the same book since January.

Like I said, I have been struggling to balance the time. But I don't believe for a second that I am the only one. And I also don't believe that putting a few minutes aside to catch up with some friends or read a book would have made my grades suffer. Instead, it would have given me the break I needed. It would have still been productive, just in a different way. Work is not the only way to be productive, and I think we have all lost sight of the benefits of putting work aside. I saw something the other day that compared a forest to an office, suggesting relief and clarity in the forest, and stress and anxiety in the office. While I know working is a necessity to live a comfortable life and I am not suggesting we all throw the work papers up in the air and cross off

the deadlines, I think we could all benefit from taking a few minutes to grab some coffee, take a walk in the park, or do whatever we need to refresh ourselves. Because after all, when you look back on life, will you wish you had spent more time working?

(Hint: if the answer is no, then make some time to go do whatever else it is that I just made you think about instead).