

Redefining Rest: 7 Ways to Find Balance

Interview with Lorrene McClymont

Jo: *How often do you have time to rest?*

Lorrene: *I take on more things, I'm so overwhelmed, I will end up sick or have some leave or take some time off. And then I have a little bit of respite and then I do the same thing again.*

We have this societal set up where we work all week and then we earn our weekend. I think we need to flip it on its head, and we need to be working from a place of rest.

Jo: Choosing to spend time resting is often the last of our priorities in what, for many of us, is a dizzying, fast paced and busy life. But have you ever considered that maybe the solution to all our stress and constantly feeling overwhelmed is to intentionally put rest first?

This is *Messages of hope* and I'm Jo Chamberlain. Today I'm talking to Lorrene, who, like many of us, has lived an extremely busy life. But she began to notice that even a good night's sleep couldn't fix her constant tiredness. So, she decided to do something about it.

Lorrene discovered there are, in fact, seven types of rest. And so today she's going to share how each type of rest can contribute to finding a better sense of peace and balance in our lives.

So, Lorrene, tell me a little bit about yourself.

Lorrene: I have been working since I was 14. I've always been someone who takes on a lot of things. No matter how busy I am, I think, 'I'll just say yes to that,' and I add another thing to my plate. I'm a bit of a workaholic, a bit of a perfectionist and I like to continue to add my list of things to do. And I've always been that type of person in my work. I've always taken on intense jobs. I've been in management roles for as long as I can remember. I was a Maccas manager when I was 18 and since that job, I've worked in the transport industry, I currently work in media, I've worked in all sorts of places. But I've always taken on high intensity roles that require a lot of hours and a lot of work.

I am a person who feels good when I know I'm achieving things, getting things done. That's how I get my validation.

I'm not a person who likes to sit around and just go, 'yeah, feet up. That can wait till later.' I'm not that person. So, I like to always be doing something different. I get bored easily and I like to pull new things onto my plate.

Jo: So even from an early age, I can see how busy your life really has been. So, what is it that caused you to start properly thinking about rest and resting well?

Lorrene: A couple of years ago, I was filling in for my boss at work. I'm the second in charge there; when he's away, I run the station. I have a problem with my back - I have a bulging disc in my back. It's an ongoing problem that comes and goes. The only thing to do when it's playing up is to rest.

I decided that I was going to ignore that, even though it had flared up. I knew it was flaring up and I ignored it. I thought that I had it all under control. If I just ignored it and just kept going, it would be fine. I was very wrong, and I actually herniated the disc and caused permanent injury to my back.

So, from doing that, from ignoring what my body was telling me, and actually the fact that I had probably not rested properly for quite a while up to that point so my mental capacity was not in a good place to make sensible decisions - look what I've done to myself from thinking that I am too important and too busy and there's too much going on for me to stop.

Jo: I think one of the greatest risks is that whole indispensable concept that, 'but if I stop, then the world's going to fall to pieces!' And so having that sense of responsibility on yourself builds a great sense of self-importance that is not healthy at all whatsoever.

Lorrene: Yeah, that's right.

This cycle of continuing to do these tasks, go into these jobs, be a high achiever, be an overachiever - I end up overwhelmed. I take on more things. I'm so overwhelmed, I will end up sick or have some leave or take some time off. A job will finish or a task will finish and then I have a little bit of respite and then I do the same thing again. And I identified this cycle in myself, and I thought this is not working for me. It's just not working. I just get so overwhelmed and then I forget things. The plate is so full, it's overflowing and I'm not keeping up. And I think, this, this cannot be right. This cannot be the way to live.

So I started to look bit more into rest and look into what could I do that was different? What could I do to change this cycle?

And I came across this idea of the seven types of rest. And they are:

1. Physical
2. Mental
3. Emotional
4. Sensory
5. Spiritual
6. Creative
7. Social

Jo: Wow, there's a few in there. I'd love to go through each one with you. Can you tell me a little bit more about the first one, physical rest? What does that mean?

Lorrene: Physical rest can be sleep - sleep is physical rest. But it can also be stretching, it can be massage, it can be anything that is actually taking care of your body.

So, for me, hydrotherapy and Pilates are actually physical rest because they help my back become stronger.

It can be anything in that line that actually helps you to rest physically so that you're able to continue on.

Jo: And what about mental rest? What does that mean?

Lorrene: So mental rest is, when you just feel that your brain is getting so tired that you're making mistakes or just doing the same thing over and over, where you just need that little step away from it. You can do that in lots of ways: You can take a little walk, you can close your eyes, you can take a few deep breaths. There's lots of ways to get mental rest; you can read a book that has nothing to do with your computer work, whatever.

Jo: I know with school children, they talk about brain breaks. Is that part of that mental rest as well?

Lorrene: Yeah, that's mental rest for sure.

Jo: And sensory rest. Now this is a good one. You're essentially talking about breaking from technology, right?

Lorrene: Yes, because we're so, so connected. Now everything is on your phones. *Everything* is a device now. So, sensory rest is so important. And people find it so incredibly hard to do. But if you are finding that your phone is the first thing you look at when you get up, the last thing you look at before you go to sleep, that you pick it up constantly through the day just to scroll and see what's going on, you probably need some sensory rest.

And something I found really helpful is to use the 'Do Not Disturb' function on my phone. I only have my family able to come through to me during the day when I'm at work. Or certain times, if I'm on a day off, I often only have my family able to come through to me.

And the first few times I did that, the amount of times I just picked up my phone to see what notifications I had, it's actually quite embarrassing.

Jo: I know it's something that just happens naturally. Even that concept of mental rest, as you were referring to before, I'm thinking, 'yeah, so what do I do?' I walk away from my screen, and I go look at my phone or my socials or I go to watch a movie or something like that, but I'm still doing screen time. And so I get that it actually has to be a complete removal of these things to recalibrate the brain and to recalibrate our mental processing and to just have that blank space.

So, Lorrene, now can you tell me a little bit more about creative rest? That sounds interesting.

Lorrene: Often when we're in creative jobs, or when you're at home even, or when you're teaching kids, or when you're doing things where you're having to think of

things that are a bit imaginative, you really do drain your creative side. So creative rest is anything that inspires you.

For me, I always go outside in the mornings with a cup of tea, even if it's only for a couple of minutes because I've got to leave for work or whatever, and I'll just go for a little walk around outside. We live out in the country, so I go for a little walk, look at all the beautiful things that are out there, look for some kangaroos, and it really starts my day off well.

Often when I'm out there, I'm like, 'oh, I could write this,' or 'this is so beautiful, it makes me think of this.' It's a great time for me to pray, to be grateful, to just have a moment where I'm not actually being drained of anything, and it's so lovely.

Jo: And then we go into emotional rest. Ooh, that sounds tough. Tell me more about that.

Lorrene: We have to stuff down so much all the time to keep going, to keep going, to keep going, to keep going.

And really with emotional rest, you need to deal with, deal with, deal with. And it's not always fun to deal with and it doesn't seem restful. But ultimately, it's restful to deal with those things. So, whether that's to talk to a friend or a trusted pastor, or a counsellor. And I say trusted, I don't say just pick a random person. Talk to someone that you trust, use your wisdom and who you speak to about these things. But we need to actually process the things that are happening around us, the things that happen to us. We can't just stuff them all down and hope that they go away because they don't. They come up and they boil up and they create other problems. So that's what emotional rest is about.

Jo: Yeah, absolutely. And, you know, there's no harm in asking for help either because to actually feel like we have to handle on our own is really detrimental to our health too. To know that we have people around us is really important.

Lorrene: Yeah.

Jo: Lorrene, you've also put social rest on the list. Tell me a bit more about that one.

Lorrene: Sometimes you can have relationships that can be a little bit draining or people that can really drain the life out of you in a work sense. You can have meeting after meeting after meeting that you just are so drained by. Social rest is actually actively spending time with people that refresh you in those relationships that refresh you.

You're making time for those friendships that actually fill you up. Going out for coffee with that friend that you keep putting off. Spending five minutes having a chat with that person at church or Mum's group or whatever. Just making those friendships and making time.

We're created for community. So, it's about making those communities and having those people that you can actually just build that time with.

Jo: And so we come to the final stage of rest (not that they are chronological or anything like that), but something that you've identified as important is spiritual rest. Tell me more about that.

Lorrene: For me as a Christian, spiritual rest is prayer, it's meditation on the word of God, it's spending time with God, it's spending time in devotions.

There are many different ways that you can meditate on the Word of God, but there are also many different ways that you can practice spiritual disciplines. There's so many of them. You can have a Sabbath or a 24 hours of rest. You can go to a community group or go to a church, or you can go and spend some time outside and just be thankful for what you have.

I think our lives are so depleted in every area. We are pulled and pushed and dragged in every area from all the demands on our lives. And it depletes every area of our life. And if we're not purposefully, intentionally trying to revive those areas and doing things that actually replenish those areas by rest and intentionally taking the time to find little pockets where we can replenish those areas, then eventually you run into a wall.

You have to recognise that there is a need in your life to rest. And there's a need in your life to rest and rest well so that you can work well, so that you can be functional for your family, for yourself, and be the best version of yourself that you can.

Jo: When you are in that situation of stress and really needing to take time out, sometimes it's just so far beyond your own understanding that it's hard to acknowledge.

So as an onlooker, as somebody who cares about somebody who is in a state of stress, how do we approach that? How do we gently encourage a person to take rest?

Lorrene: I think it can be really hard. Like my husband told me to take time off with my back. He said to me, 'you need to rest it.' And I was like, 'I don't have time. I'm so busy. I'm sorry. I don't have time for that.' So, I think sometimes we need to be aware that even if we just try and gently say to someone, 'Hey, do you think you might have a bit much on your plate?' Or 'do you think maybe you should just have half an hour out at a cafe or just go to the beach for half an hour and just have a little bit of a walk? Do you think you just need some time out?' They might not be receptive to that. But all you can do is just keep an eye out for them. Try and suggest it gently if you have that relationship with them and just make sure they know that you're actually there for them, or even ask if there's anything that you can do to help.

Sometimes you can't even see outside yourself enough to see that you actually need to be handing some things off.

Jo: So, I want to share with you Matthew 11:28-30, that really speaks to rest, where Jesus is saying:

'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.'

Sounds beautiful, but what does it mean?

Lorrene: I love those verses because it's an invitation. It's an invitation to rest. It's an invitation to bring everything that is bothering you, everything you're so stressed about, everything that you think that you can't give to anyone because you're so important and everything is so urgent. It's an invitation to bring it to him and share it.

I think for me, verse 29 where he says, 'learn from me,' it suggests that it's a process. You don't go and learn something and just go, 'That's it. I've got it. I know it all. I know everything overnight.' It doesn't say that. It says *learn*.

We walk with him, and we learn and we rest in him as we learn.

As a perfectionist, I don't have to have it all figured out. That's what discipleship and learning from Jesus is about. And reading the Bible and learning more about him is about, it's becoming more like him as you learn more.

Jo: As you're speaking, I'm picturing a walk along the beach with Jesus by my side. Just that refreshing learning as you go. I really find that comforting, that you don't have to have it all together. It's a process of actually walking alongside Jesus, you know, sharing with him, offloading to him, and then he can speak into that space.

Lorrene: In the Bible, Jesus advocated solitude.

It's in the Bible multiple times where he advocated solitude and getting away. But for some of us, if we were actually told to go and do that, and go and take some time in solitude, we can't do it. You sit there for two minutes and you're like, 'Waaaaaah!'

Jo: 'I'm bored of this!'

Lorrene: 'I'm bored, I don't know what to do!'

Solitude is actually really good for us. But we can't do it because we're so used to devices and constant stimulation.

Jo: Yeah. Well, if Jesus endorsed it, if Jesus did it, if he went off and prayed on his own and he actually stepped away from the crowd went to find rest - I know there were moments where the people kept following him - but the model is that that's what he intentionally did.

If Jesus can do it, so can we.

Jo: So, I know for me, I am incredibly busy. I have a family, I have work, I have a lot of commitments. The concept of rest is good, but when I'm so busy and I just have to answer to things on the fly, it's very hard for me to map out rest.

So, what words of encouragement have you got for somebody like me who might be just so busy all the time that rest seems a foreign concept?

Lorrene: Don't think of rest as this overarching, encompassing thing that you have to fit into your calendar. You can think of it as something that you can start small. Like, 'I am going to commit to taking a minute every hour to back off of my computer, close my eyes and take a deep breath.' You're starting somewhere that you weren't yesterday.

Or 'I'm going to go for a walk for a minute in the morning, outside, take a deep breath, listen to the birds.' You're committing to a small step, that is something probably seemingly insignificant, but it's something that you're committing to that you weren't doing yesterday, that's adding to your rest. Try and think about it that way. What are small things that you can incorporate into your day to add rest into what you're already doing?

As a society, I think that we work to earn our rest. And we have this societal set up where we work all week and then we earn our weekend.

And we think 'oh my gosh, the weekend's coming and I can earn my rest!' I think we need to flip it on its head, and we need to be working from a place of rest. We need to be coming at our work from a place of being rested rather than the other way around. Because when you're working to earn your rest, you're never fully rested because you're so exhausted by the time you get to the weekend that you just crash and then you start again on Monday and the whole process starts again. But when you come at your work from a place of being rested, wherever your work is, whether it's inside the home or outside the home, then you're never so depleted that you're just starting a cycle again every week.

Jo: Yes, because even with the societal value of performance based achievement, where you have to be doing something or achieving something in order to feel a sense of worth, that is more about the doing than the being. And I think, like you said, it needs to be flipped. It needs to be more about the being, and the doing comes out of it.

Lorrene: It does, because when you are *doing* from that place of being rested, you do your best work anyway. You are your best self when you come from that place of rest.

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