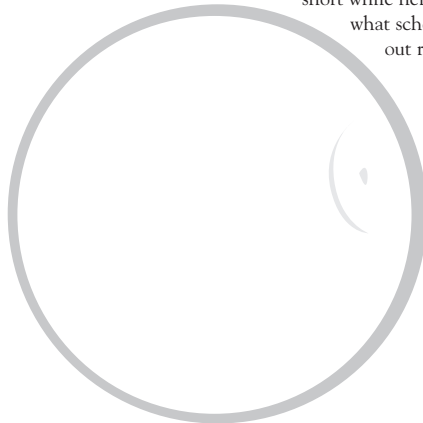


recess

Recess. I'm pretty sure eight out of ten young grade school kids name it as their favorite class. They just can't wait for that great little break from the daily grind of school. Don't get me wrong. You may have loved school, but without recess, all the information you spent hours trying to process was about as clear as bathwater after a mud ball fight. Fifteen minutes out of the classroom and into a quick game of dodge ball was all it took to clear up your mental fog and get your blood pumping again. You came back to math class re-energized and able to pay attention. Teachers know what they're doing when they hold recess faithfully every day. It helps kids get more out of their lessons, and more importantly, knowing that a break is coming in a short while helps kids stay focused. Imagine what school would have been like without recess. Perish the thought!



I think bosses should schedule recess like teachers do because I think it would have the same terrific impact on workers that it does on kids. It seems so obvious to me.

You sit in front of your terminal, work on the shop floor, or man your post on the

sales floor for hours. If you do take a break, you probably grab a quick cup of coffee or a soda and head back. The only people outside are the smokers, and they're down on the loading dock! Does this seem like a good plan to you? I didn't think so. Where did our beloved "nap time" go?

I have a suggestion. If you are a supervisor, why don't you schedule recess for your team. A short break in the middle of the morning, and again in the afternoon. Make it a rule that no one is allowed to eat at their desk on Wednesdays and Fridays. Get a few inexpensive umbrella tables if your company doesn't have outside seating. Encourage people to go outside (tell them the office is being fumigated if you have to).

Some will actually grumble at first, especially if the weather isn't great. Tough noogies.

A shot of cold air can be invigorating and a run through the rain can feel like child's play again. You might even keep a jump rope or Nerf ball handy for the people that *really* want to relive their childhood.



vocational health

If you're not the boss, schedule your own recess. Put it on your calendar so you have it to look forward to. Call a coworker you enjoy and have her join you. I see some people walking at lunch. That's good. But I'm envisioning activities that are a little more fun. Hop Scotch. Get that big fat colorful driveway chalk the preschoolers use. It washes off the blacktop. Bring your roller skates and zoom around the parking lot. No damage done. Bring bubble gum for everyone and have a bubble-blowing contest. The winner gets to pick something out of someone else's lunch. (Never underestimate the power of snacks.)

If the weather is truly nasty, get up a game of darts in the employee lounge. Write down the biggest thorn in your side at work that day on a slip of paper and tack it to the dartboard. It feels so good to stick it dead center. I was a department head in a hospital for lots of years. We used to go out and play on the kid's swings. We also had Boggle tournaments after lunch. (Boggle is a game you can buy in toy stores.) You and a coworker may keep a running chess game going for a week. I brought my stilts to work once. (My patients were very impressed.)

If you need a break FROM your coworkers, plan to do something you enjoy alone—just try to get away from your desk if possible. Go out on the lawn and practice casting with your new fishing rod. Keep a great book handy. Keep scrapbook pages in your desk and work on your photos on your break. Sit under a tree and write a letter to an old friend. It stimulates your brain, because unlike e-mail, you have to use capital letters, punctuation, and proper spelling. Send it snail mail. As

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often as you can, get outdoors in the fresh air and sunshine. Bundle up if you have to. You may come in red cheeked and windblown, but you'll be wide awake and ready to get back to work.

The next time the boss asks for suggestions, raise your hand and yell with all the vivacity of a ten-year-old, "Ooo, ooo, I've got a great one! How about recess?!"