

SACRED REST

RECOVER YOUR LIFE,
RENEW YOUR ENERGY,
RESTORE YOUR SANITY



SAUNDRA
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New York Nashville

“In SACRED REST, Dr. Dalton-Smith takes readers on a restorative journey. It’s a roadmap to healing that you never knew you needed...and a pathway to the serenity you’ve been longing for.”

—Marsha DuCille, editorial director, *CALLED Magazine*

“The fusion of eternal truth and the latest research yields a book that will reset your understanding of what it really means to rest. Dr. Saundra communicates with depth and clarity to challenge and encourage readers to find sacred rest.”

—Jennifer Kennedy Dean, executive director of the
Praying Life Foundation; author of *Live a Praying Life*®
and numerous books and Bible studies

“I couldn’t be more proud of Dr. Dalton-Smith, a member of my Guild. But even more impressive than Saundra’s writing accomplishment is the content of SACRED REST. Everybody I know seems to be busier than ever, sleep-deprived, and in desperate need of rest. I’m guilty too. But Saundra takes a unique approach to the problem, offering eye-opening areas of our lives that need as much rest as our bodies and minds. I learned a ton from it, and you will too.”

—Jerry Jenkins, *New York Times* bestselling novelist, biographer,
and owner of the Jerry Jenkins Writers Guild

“Dr. Dalton-Smith has redefined the word *REST*! In a world with constant ‘Cerebral Background Noise’ you need this book to learn how to set up rest boundaries for you and your family. I love her assessments for the reader to see where there might be a need for more rest, not just in sleep but in the area of mental, spiritual, and CREATIVE rest! I learned so much in this book, I look forward to sharing it with ALL my patients.”

—Dr. Angie Welikala, CEO, founder of Healing Agents
International. HealingAgents.org

“As a board-certified clinical neuropsychologist, not a day goes by that I don’t have to address the importance of rest with my patients struggling from medical and mental health disorders ranging from attention deficit hyperactivity disorder to post-concussion syndrome. As a society that is now driven by better and faster technology, rest has become a lost art, but no less fundamentally important to our physical, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual well-being. God granted us both time and the model of rest for our good, yet we’ve come to treat it as a weakness or a punishment. Dr. Dalton-Smith empathizes with the reader’s struggle to maintain a lifestyle that includes rest, educates regarding the different types of rest deficit, and passionately shares the gifts and benefits of rest. She weaves her own story and the struggles of others throughout SACRED REST so the reader can relate with the real-life challenge to balance doing with being. SACRED REST should be a mainstay in every clinician’s library, and a gift for every friend you care about.”

—Dr. Michelle L. Bengtson, board-certified clinical neuropsychologist
and author of *Hope Prevails: Insights From a Doctor’s
Personal Journey Through Depression*

“Dr. Saundra Dalton-Smith exhibits the rare combination of physician-inspired medical insights with her faith-driven love for people, which she uses to impart life-enhancing principles and suggestions for living intentionally. Dr. Saundra’s passion for seeing women at peace from the inside out is contagious, and Christ followers will discover fresh insights into transforming themselves from mere survivors into women who thrive. Women, whether young or middle-aged or in their senior years will find lots of encouragement and sustenance for their souls.”

—Michele Howe, author of 19 books for women, including *Empty Nest*,
What’s Next? and *Caring for Our Aging Parents*

“I found myself pausing to breathe deeply just reading through the table of contents for SACRED REST. The pages that followed offered the ‘why’ and ‘how’ we can slow down. Dr. Saundra helps us to see rest as the gift it is intended to be. I will find myself coming back to her words again and again.”

—Esther Fleece, speaker and author of *No More Faking Fine*

Foreword

Is rest elusive or obtainable? Over eight million people in the United States struggle to fall asleep or stay asleep each and every night. According to the National Sleep Foundation, 45 percent of Americans say that poor or insufficient sleep affected their daily activities at least once a week. This epidemic has led to poor job performance, depression, and overall dissatisfaction with quality of life and productivity. *Sacred Rest* by Dr. Saundra Dalton-Smith offers hope and answers through proven solutions found in spiritual renewal.

For some, sleep deprivation is only a brief problem. But finding genuine “rest” is more than overcoming insomnia. *Sacred Rest* discusses, wrestles with, and answers the “how” question and more. Rest for the body, mind, and spirit may appear to be hard to find because hurry is outside of us and inside of us. Daily we are left to wonder, *Is rest possible?*

Sacred Rest is born from a place of personal experience. Dr. Dalton-Smith, an internal medicine physician, practices full-time and is also a wife and mother of two elementary-age boys. The author slipping off the edge of burnout, risks sharing her own story, becoming raw and real in the process. It’s in this place of vulnerability and personal growth that she invites the reader to share her journey.

This essential book is divided into three parts: “Why Rest?” discussing the practical aspects of rest; “The Gifts of Rest,” discussing

the spiritual aspects of rest; and “The Promises of Rest,” in which the author presents the reader a challenge to go deeper into rest. There are biblical solutions backed with thorough medical research and practical applications throughout.

Rest is obtainable, Dr. Dalton-Smith reminds us. “Inertia is a healing place, where stillness leads to recovery of the body’s natural ability to heal itself. Sleeping and napping are the two most common types of passive rest. Sleep is not an option. Whether or not you choose to lay your body down, eventually your body will shut down. Sleep is required for health. It is not the foundation of rest, but the by-product of rest.”

Are you weak, weary, or worn out? What are you waiting for? *Sacred Rest* is entirely available and obtainable. The choice is yours. Join the community and commit the next 30 days to seek and find *Sacred Rest*. I will see you there.

—Dr. Sheryl Giesbrecht, author of *Get Back Up: Trusting God*

When Life Knocks You Down, speaker, radio and television personality, global influencer. www.FromAshesToBeauty.com

www.HSBN.tv

How to Use This Book

Welcome, Friend,

I want to take a few minutes before you begin to give you a quick peek at what you will find inside this book. Think of *Sacred Rest* as a lavish buffet, not a Happy Meal. It has been purposely written in short chapters to make it easy to fit into your busy schedule, but don't rush through it. Rushing has overwhelmed us with the things of life, and in the process, we miss opportunities to enjoy life. My desire in writing this book is to see you cherishing each bite of the good things daily placed before you.

Think of me as your Sunday school-teaching girlfriend who just happens to be board certified in internal medicine. If we were chatting over coffee, one minute I might share with you a great article I read in a medical journal and the next I'm raving over the sticky pastry we just devoured as we open our Bibles to study Ephesians together. That's real life. It's messy and complicated yet filled with moments of goodness, togetherness, and truth. I've found rest to be the compass directing me to all three and much more.

In part I, "Why Rest?," I discuss the practical aspects of rest. Each chapter in this section will help you understand different types of rest through the use of stories, research, reflection, and application. In part II, "The Gifts of Rest," I discuss the spiritual aspects of rest. These chapters have biblical insight on how rest, or the lack thereof,

affects every area of your life. In part III, “The Promises of Rest,” I end our time together with a challenge to go deeper into rest and witness its effect in your life.

I don’t know where you stand physically, emotionally, or spiritually today. If you are most in need of encouragement, before you dive into the practical application of rest, I welcome you to begin with part II. Yes, you heard me right. You get to choose. *Sacred Rest* isn’t a generic four-step system to guarantee sweet sleep and even sweeter days. The process to recover your life, renew your energy, and regain your sanity is uniquely different for every person. Enjoy the journey as you unwrap what rest means for you.

—Dr. Saundra

PART I



WHY REST?

“When I am resting because my body is weak, I need to remember that I’m not wasting the day doing nothing. I am doing exactly what I need to do. I’m recovering.”

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Chapter 1

Living the Burned-Out Life

There should be a “Get Out of Your Responsibilities” card you can play on those days when life is just too difficult, days when everything within you wants a moment simply to be still. That thought flittered through my mind as I lay stretched out on the foyer floor.

The weight of an unexamined life lies heavy against the heart of the weary. Pushing and pushing until it nudges you right past sanity into the pits. Thankfully, lying supine on a hardwood floor can be therapeutic for the soul.

I never knew how hauntingly healing cold wooden planks could be for the body. I never realized the many facets of peace and rest available when you lay yourself down on purpose. Peace comes in many forms. On this day it came in a ten-minute reprieve in the middle of the chaos that had become my life. There was no time to break away and do it right. No time for any long, drawn-out me-time ritualistic activities. No mani-pedi. No hot tea and biscuits. No caramel macchiato. No Dead Sea salt-infused bath.

No, on this day, time would not allow me to bury my exhaustion in any of my normal vices. So, I did what any sane burned-out human

would do after picking up the kids from day care. I set them in front of the TV with a snack, and I lay on the floor. I stretched out my back against the boards, palms down, and closed my eyes. In that moment of focused ceasing, I felt the beginning of peace stir within my body.

Peace came slowly. It was as if God himself breathed a divine exhalation, releasing new strength into me. I inhaled it. I clung to the moment, needing it to last just a little longer. I needed even more to satisfy my *longing* for rest. Not a desire for more sleep, but a yearning to be soul-free. Come to think of it, maybe it wasn't that I needed to be filled, but rather, I needed to pour out. Regardless of which direction the energy was flowing, something powerful was happening on that floor.

The voices of my children rang out with laughter as they delighted over the antics of the cartoon they watched. Inwardly I laughed along with them. The smile creeping on my lips was only mildly disturbed by the dog licking my face and the toddler crawling over my leg. It was sloppy peace, but it was mine. It was peace in the middle of a mental storm.

I could complain, but it would be futile. If I'm completely honest, I'm to blame for this storm. I created it. I fueled it. I continually recruit and pull others into it with me. I didn't mean to do it. It is just a reality of the life I created.

You see, I'm a doer. If I'm not doing something, I'm wasting my time. At least that is what I thought, until a few years ago when I found myself looking up from a compromising position into the face of my smug husband asking, "What in the world are you doing on the floor?"

Only one answer came to mind—*burning*. A single thought that, at the time, seemed so misplaced and irrelevant I almost didn't say it out loud. At times I wish I hadn't.

His smirk faltered when the first tear fell. I came undone. He kneeled by my side when the floodgates broke. Me. The strong one. The one with the to-do list for her to-do list. The organizer. The planner. When my husband asked what I was doing there on the floor, the image that came to mind was that of kindling being consumed by fire. I was the kindling.

I was burned out, and the life I had created was consuming all I held valuable. But on this day, I was kindling being consumed by an eternal fire. A fire with the power to destroy the heaviness of busyness and ignite a hunger to tap into the source of this strange, sloppy rest I found. Hunger to draw nearer to the sacred sanctuary of rest. I desperately needed to find that place.

Let's be honest; we are all just too busy. I'm too busy to write this book, and you are probably too busy to read this book. Both of us are being pulled by our busy lives when all we want is to have a good life. And so we find ourselves in the inevitable predicament of much activity and little enjoyment. Our wheels spin as we shove more to do in a day with no available daylight hours left, only to find ourselves wanting in the end. Not wanting more to do. No, we have plenty to do. We find ourselves wanting more time to do the things we enjoy doing.

We want time to enjoy our kids. We want time to make love to our spouses. We want time to linger over a good meal. We want time to use the bathroom without interruptions. We want more time.

But there is no more time. Time is. It is both infinite and finite. It goes on and on. With or without us it will continue. Our number of days are known by God alone. Time chimes in loudly over the roar of our anxious minds, initiating a battle between warring fears and courageous rest.

Aborting rest empties me of everything holy. It strips me of the ability to treasure life and peels away the value of being. I feel I'm

nothing if I'm doing nothing. My worth is wrapped tight around my endless activity. So I keep going round and round, each time becoming more short-tempered, more disgruntled, and more discontented.

A life without periods of rest will not endure the daily grind.

Rest is not for weaklings. Hollowing out space for rest is work. Finding time for rest is the hands and feet of the promises we long to claim. It means saying no. It means having limits with ourselves. It means having limits with others. It takes courage to rest in the midst of an outcome-driven society. It takes strength to walk away from good in the pursuit of better.

The people-pleaser in me would rather say yes and omit the rest. I've found through the years that I can't please anyone including myself when I'm burned out. Funny how everyone can smell the char of your slow burn except the one standing in the fire.

Sleep Is Not Rest

Have you ever tried to fix your chronically tired self by purposely sleeping a few extra hours on the weekend, only to wake up feeling like you've never rested at all? You had great intentions, but missed one vital piece of the puzzle: Sleep is not rest. As different parts of an intricate system, sleep and rest are designed to work together to ensure every part of you has a way to regenerate and be restored.

If I were sitting across from you right now, our conversation might go something like the one I had with a friend many years ago. It was early one morning, and we were preparing to start a long shift as interns at the hospital: "I'm so tired," lamented my red-eyed friend. Her hair was in a messy ponytail, and her scrubs were wrinkled in all

the wrong places. It looked like she had rolled out of bed and stumbled into work on accident.

“What time did you turn in last night?” I asked.

“That’s the thing!” she exclaimed. “It’s pointless! It doesn’t matter if I sleep five hours or ten. I always wake up exhausted. I need a double espresso latte. You want anything?”

Twenty minutes later she returned with two steaming cups of java goodness. I’m convinced heaven must smell like hazelnut coffee. We sipped and reenergized as we discussed each patient’s case. I don’t know what she had the barista put in those cups, but it was more like liquid octane than percolated ground beans. My heart skipped a beat trying to catch the rhythm of this potent brew. We tackled our hospital rounds that day as if our life soundtrack were shouting, “This girl is on fire!”

A few hours later, we crashed hard, and I do mean hard. I’m pretty sure I was drooling on the student-lounge couch when I awoke. I slept but woke even more drained.

“We need more coffee,” my friend declared.

I wasn’t sure I could handle another round of her coffee, so I opted to chat.

“Why do you think sleep isn’t helping our fatigue? I’m more tired now than I was before we fell asleep.”

“I wish I knew. When I was in college, I could sleep like a baby. The second my head hit the pillow I’d be out. In medical school, I started having trouble falling asleep. At first, it took five to ten minutes before I could go to sleep. Now it can take up to an hour when I lie down at night.”

“Wow, an hour. As tired as you are at the end of a shift, I would have thought you’d fall asleep quickly,” I mused.

"I know, right? But that's the thing; good sleep is gentle. It comes in quietly, descends upon you, and replenishes you. Bad sleep comes in like a flood, overtakes you, and leaves you feeling spent. It's the good I'm missing."

Sleep is a biological necessity. Trying to omit it will slow your productivity and eventually kill you. In an attempt to check this life function off our to-do list every night, many of us have settled for sleep at any cost and of any quality. Our problem isn't simply a need for more sleep. Our problem is that we are missing the good.

Sleep is different from rest, but good-quality sleep trickles down from a life well rested. We may sleep in response to rest, but resting doesn't require us to be in a state of sleep. Sometimes as my friend confessed, sleep is not restful at all. Then there are also those times when even with a lack of sleep, we surprisingly feel rested and ready to tackle the day. The deciding factor is the difference between good sleep and bad sleep.

Nightly we attempt to enter into the five stages of sleep, non-REM stages one to four and stage-five REM. High-quality sleep begins in stage three of non-REM sleep when your brain ceases active processing. You lose your conscious awareness about your surroundings. Your brain and body both enter a quiet state. Bad sleep is fitful and devoid of calm. The mind may wander sporadically over the events of the day, and you may find your legs restlessly moving in response to the pent-up tension in your muscles.

There has to be a bridge between good and bad sleep, and that bridge is rest. Sleep is solely a physical activity. Rest, however, penetrates into the spiritual. Rest speaks peace into the daily storms your mind, body, and spirit encounter. Rest is what makes sleep sweet.

You may pride yourself on your ability to accomplish much each day, but when your natural strengths are taken to the extreme, they

can become a liability. Sadly, many of us spend too much of our days doing and not enough of our days being. We have decided rest is not necessary and replaced it with even more activity. I don't have a problem with productive people. I have a problem with worn-out productive people. These are the majority of the faces that grace my medical office, including homeschooling moms, business executives, shift workers, and young professionals. They present me with a list of symptoms, demanding answers and wanting quick fixes to problems that require slowing down.

It may sound like I'm judging, but be assured I am not. I'm part of the same tribe. I've burned the candle at both ends enough for us both and have seen its destructive effects in my life as well as that of thousands of others.

Can you be 100 percent honest with me? With yourself? How is your maxed-out, stressed-out, multitasking life working for you? Is all your activity getting the results you desire?

Since you picked up this book, I would guess your answer to my last question is a resounding no. Let me share a little medical secret with you. The most underused chemical-free, safe, effective, alternative medicine is spelled R-E-S-T: **R**ecognize your risk, **E**valuate your current position, **S**cience and research, **T**oday's application. I'll explain the R-E-S-T method further in chapter 3.

Chapter 2

The Secret Life of the Well Rested

“Sometimes it’s important to work for that pot of gold. But other times it’s essential to take time off and make sure your most important decision in the day simply consists of choosing which color to slide down on the rainbow.”¹

DOUGLAS PAGELS

Karen was a new patient who came to my office with a list of complaints so long I thought she was a hypochondriac. No human could have a list of ails that complex. However, she most certainly did, and she was convinced there was a medical reason for her problems. I think she would have been thankful if I had diagnosed her with something horrible. Nothing is scarier than the unknown. At least with a definitive diagnosis, she would know what she was up against. She was a woman desperate for answers. The lack of understanding had become debilitating. She needed to know why her body ached and why she struggled to concentrate. She needed to know it wasn’t all in her head. She was a simmering pot of anxiety with a dash of insomnia

stirred by relentless daily stress. Her discontentment was consuming her, and it seeped into her relationship with her husband and her children. Her life failed to live up to the claims of what marriage, family, and career are supposed to offer. All she had strived to achieve, all that she had fought to have, was betraying her, or so it seemed.

Karen's list of complaints included the following:

- feeling tired and exhausted all the time
- feeling like nothing she did at home or work made a difference or was appreciated
- catching colds and getting sick more than others
- feeling detached from her family and friends
- having a negative outlook on life
- experiencing frequent headaches, neck pain, and muscle soreness
- moving easily to anger and irritation with those she interacted
- growing dependent on food, pills, and wine to help her feel better
- feeling depressed and stressed out

I listened as she rattled off her list, and I gave her the benefit of the doubt. There are many chronic diseases and chronic medical disorders capable of making you tired all the time. Unfortunately, there are just as many people with a chronic rest deficit, and the symptoms can look the same. But unlike many chronic illnesses, a chronic rest deficit can be cured.

The question is, what kind of tired are you?

Fatigue can result from our overindulgent schedules, lack of quality sleep, an unhealthy diet, thyroid and hormone imbalances, adrenal failure, medication side effects, anxiety or depression, or feeling a lack

of purpose and lack of motivation. The list of fatigue boosters is endless. Determining the cause is the challenging part of health care.

Nevertheless, I examined Karen and ordered tests to check for the most common causes of fatigue. Every test came back within the proper range and declared all was well medically.

“You are perfectly healthy,” I announced.

Karen was furious. Her face flushed hot, and her breathing came in short, frantic bursts. Her eyes pierced through me. My happy declaration of health had wounded her. Her behavior reminded me of a show I’d seen called *When Animals Attack!* I debated yelling for my nurse to bring in a sedative shot. Before I could make up my mind to yell or to run, her rant began.

“Why can’t you doctors figure out what’s wrong with me?”

She said more than that, much of which I refuse to repeat in a book my kids or parents may choose to read. Sometimes people want to hear the truth, and sometimes they just want to hear what they want to hear. In medicine, it’s helpful to determine when someone’s ready to confront their inner issues. I’m often contemplating when is the right time to bring up smoking cessation with my chain-smokers or weight loss with my Krispy Kreme lovers. It is even more difficult to confront someone dealing with a lack of rest. No cigarette or donut can satisfy a body hungry for rest. Add a whopping dose of rage to the tiredness, and you’ve got a person who is in no mood to listen to anything you have to say. The only way to break through is to let the weary diagnose themselves. I needed Karen to start looking at her list in a new way.

“Karen, I think your problem is not solely a medical one. I think you are suffering from a chronic rest deficit. In your list, you named multiple areas of your life under attack by chronic fatigue, chronic

hopelessness, and a chronic lack of joy. This is not just a medical issue; it's a mind-body-spirit issue. Your healing has to come from the inside out. Once you restore the needed rest in your life, you will see the changes you desire."

"It can't be a lack of rest!" she protested. "I've tried massages. I've taken vacations. I have even been working with a spiritual counselor. I should be the most restful woman in town."

Karen was aware of how rest affected every area of her life. She had made attempts to improve but to no avail. It was during this same time I too was going through my own personal revelation about how different types of rest affected me. Like Karen, I had attempted all the common recommendations of the self-help gurus. Either we were both too broken for repair or their theory of rest was missing something. The optimist in me refused to accept brokenness as a resting place.

I needed to open Karen's mind to the likelihood of rest, or more accurately her lack of rest, as the underlying cause of her life crisis. Her answers to the following questions helped illuminate the possibility of a rest imbalance. Take a minute to answer these questions for yourself.

- Do you often feel tired when you wake up in the morning?
- Do you find yourself having difficulty concentrating?
- Are your emotions easily affected by the actions of others?
- Do you suffer from headaches, muscle aches, or generalized fatigue with no known medical diagnosis?
- Are your relationships with others strained because of your inability to stay connected?
- Do you find yourself spending more time doing things you *have* to do rather than things you *want* to do?

- Has your view of life lost its expectation of excitement and adventure?
- Do you struggle to stay awake and focused when reading or watching TV?
- Do you depend on quick energy fixes like caffeine or sugar to help you get through the day?
- Do you find yourself craving comfort items at night like ice cream or wine to help you wind down?
- Are you prone to abrupt moments of anger or unexplainable fits of crying?
- Do you often feel like your life is out of control?

Karen's answers pointed toward a life in danger of drowning in responsibilities with no lifesaver in sight. She had tried many things to correct and improve her situation, all to no avail. She was aware of her impending burnout but had dismissed her restlessness as a possible cause for her symptoms. Karen had given up on rest and placed it in the same pile as the unread books sitting on the nightstand. Rest was waiting around for her to get to it, and she never did.

My research and observations on rest revealed a gaping hole in our definition of rest. Rest had become synonymous with sleep or a cessation of all activity. But what if rest is in itself a vital activity required to tend to the garden of our lives? What if rest is the water that replenishes the dryness? What if rest is fertilizer awakening us to growth and greatness? What if rest is the hands of the gardener pulling up the weeds threatening to edge out beauty?

All rest is not created equal. Much of what we consider rest fails to work because it is not restful. Shifting our activities or changing the location of where we are active is no more restful than doing those same activities at home. The most effective rest occurs when we are

purposefully reviving the parts of our life we regularly deplete. Any so-called rest that does not meet this goal isn't rest; it's just more work adding to the busyness.

Rest Solutions That Don't Work

Vacations

Karen's dream vacation sounded like a luxury hospital stay. Her desired activities were to sleep in, eat room service, and enjoy the scenery of a nice room away from home. She planned each family vacation trip with the hope of leaving happier and more rested than when she arrived. Her visions were filled with days of sitting on the beach with the sun warming her body, listening to the ocean serenade her. Unfortunately, her schedule was usually overshadowed by fun activities she knew her kids and her husband would enjoy. Instead of going to bed rested each night, she fell into bed spent from the day's activities. She had a wonderful time on vacation, but vacations were not restful. Vacations were work. She was more exhausted after her vacations than when she left. She needed a vacation to recover from her vacations. In addition to the physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion she already felt before each trip, she now had a week of emails and papers to deal with when she returned to her office.

Vacations are great opportunities to experience new things and explore new places, but they often fail to pour back into our restless lives to the degree needed to resuscitate them. What is the one souvenir every vacationer would love to take home? Time. The gift of being at rest, free from schedules and agendas. Even if Karen succeeded in spending one week focusing on meeting her needs, it would be insufficient to sustain the fifty-one remaining weeks in her year. It would

be like giving a starving child one bowl of rice and saying, “Now that you’re temporarily satiated you should be good.” Consistent goodness is needed to truly satisfy, nourish, and restore.

Downsizing

Downsizing an overwhelming life sounds like a good idea. If there are too many activities, then scaling them down should alleviate the congestion. Karen placed limits on the number of activities her kids could participate in. She limited her involvement with volunteer work and social engagement. She created extra margin in her life and anticipated using that time for the things she loved. Unfortunately, the human default mechanism is to do what’s easy rather than what’s beneficial. It’s easy to flick on the TV and recline on the sofa with a bowl of Ben & Jerry’s. It would be heavenly if somewhere between the spoon, our mouth, and a great sitcom story line, we could find everything we need for happiness. But escapism is not rest; there are not enough spoonfuls of Chunky Monkey to propel us toward the life we desire. Downsizing your life without a restful plan for filling the gaps only opens the door for other enemies like laziness and apathy.

Medications

Karen was dependent on sleeping pills. They succeeded in giving her six to eight hours of sleep but failed to leave her feeling rested. She could not fall asleep without taking them. Each night she would go through her routine of lying in the bed attempting to fall asleep, hoping that this night she would not have to take anything. She would toss and turn for hours only to relent to her need for sleep. Other nights her mind would keep her up mulling over thoughts, conversations, and emotions from the day. Medicated sleep was better than no sleep, even if it left her mentally handicapped the next day. The

drugs lingered in her system, forcing her to push through a drugged fog the following morning. Sleeping pills are not successful at providing quality rest. Their goal is simply to get you to sleep. Rest will still be required, and it does not respond to medications.

Sleep Marathons

For those capable of sleeping, you may be tempted to participate in weekly sleep marathons. Weekdays are spent staying up late to fit in a great movie you've wanted to see or that drama everyone's talking about at work. You crash hard at night and easily fall asleep, but you struggle to get up each morning. The weekends are your time to play catch-up. You trade your normal six hours for ten hours on Saturday and Sunday. You sleep until your body hurts from having been in bed for so long. You wake up with a sleep hangover. Head pounding and mouth dry, you wonder why you feel so horrible. You got extra sleep, but it left you more depleted than the days you wake up on schedule. These sleep marathons are more harmful than helpful. The prolonged time without food sends your body into a fasting state. Since the body isn't getting the energy it desires, it begins breaking down muscle and fat for energy. It's like being in a marathon with no medal at the end. Sleep marathons are destructive to your health. Rest never destroys.

Multitasking

If you can get more done faster, maybe you can have more time for yourself. That is the lie of multitasking. It assumes your brain can focus efficiently on numerous tasks at one time and do each optimally. Multitasking fatigues your mental resources. It splits your attention between activities and increases the potential for errors, impairs your judgment, and reduces performance. Multitasking does not lead to more time for rest. If you allocate time to complete each task before

moving to the next, you will find you finish faster than you would multitasking. Well-rested people do not exponentially multiply their activities; they divide and conquer.

Complaints

Karen spent a lot of energy complaining about how she felt rather than using that energy in a more productive way. She chose to idolize her fatigue and lack of mental clarity rather than do the necessary work to change it. As she sat before me with her list of complaints, I began to wonder if she was unwilling to change or just didn't know what to change.

At one point in the conversation, I'd heard all I cared to hear. I closed my laptop and turned on my stool to face Karen. I could see she was unsure what was happening. She continued to ramble on, looking between me and my computer. I was no longer typing in any of the information she was sharing. Eventually, she stopped talking. I couldn't help smiling at the bewilderment on her face. My mind juggled an idea I quickly dismissed. It was crazy, but sometimes the unusual opens the door to the miraculous. I figured *Why not?* and jumped right in.

"Karen, what you need I can't provide in a fifteen-minute office visit. Since we both have cell phones, I'm willing for the next thirty days to send you a text. All I ask is that you read each text and do what it says daily."

"No. I don't have time for that. I need help! Are you going to help me?" she jabbed.

"Are you going to help yourself?" I countered. "If you can't give yourself the few minutes to do what I'm suggesting, then no one can help you."

In the weeks leading up to Karen's visit, I had been applying my

findings on rest to my life. It was the hardest easy work I'd ever done. People-pleasing, workaholic go-getters don't excel at rest without an internal battle. Rest requires submission of the soul, and the soul wants what the soul wants. It fights back against rest by holding up all the pretty fruit busyness is producing. It never gives you time to cut inside that same fruit to see the rot and decay at the core, decay that will inevitably surface when you're ready to take a bite into the busy life you've created.

Karen was no longer satisfied possessing a life that looked good on the surface. She wanted a life dripping with sweet nectar and daily opportunities to taste its pleasure. As much as she doubted rest as the answer, she was sick and tired of being sick and tired. She agreed to join me in a Sacred Rest Challenge. For thirty days I would send her a daily rest prompt. What she didn't know was that each prompt focused on restoring a specific type of rest in her life.

Rest is not a one-size-fits-all commodity. In this book, I am not attempting to give you an XYZ approach to an instantly happy life. For one reason, it does not exist. For another, your personal rest prescription is as individualized as your DNA. What I am promising is that as you begin to understand the role rest plays in your life you will do the following:

- replace the stress of intense living with the peace of intentional rest
- identify your rest deficit and discover which types of rest you need most
- recover your life from the effects of a chronic rest deficit
- renew your energy and experience the benefits of a well-rested life
- restore your sanity by claiming the gifts of rest

- exchange the guilt of your unfinished to-do list for the freedom to choose best
- overcome being overwhelmed by the life you've worked so hard to create

A Well-Rested Life

A few months later Karen returned to see me. In her arms, she carried a pink leather-bound journal. The toughness she had displayed in her first visit was now softened by the deep watering of a well-rested life. Her strength was reinforced and made even more lovely in the sacredness of rest.

OCTOBER 15

Light shone through my sheer curtains announcing the dawn. Its presence inviting a transition out of the darkness. I rolled over to look at the alarm clock. For the second week this month, I had awoken minutes before it chimed. Instead of hitting snooze two to three times, today I turned the alarm off. Its shrill plea for me to greet the day was no longer needed. Time has ceased being my enemy. I am amazed. My only regret was not listening to the cry of my heart earlier and surrendering to rest.

OCTOBER 18

It's Saturday, and normally I would be up trying to do all the things I don't have time to do during the week. A pot of dark roast and I'm good for a least 3 hours. Rest is now my drug of choice. It both awakens and relaxes me. Today I spent 20 minutes outside my home walking and praying. Amber and ruby leaves lined my path.

The fall wind blew heavy against my back, pushing me forward. I declared it all good. It quenched my hunger for more and silenced the lie of busy. Years of busy have kept me in a constant state of slumber. I stand awake physically, mentally, spiritually and emotionally. In the still of the morning, I contemplate the day. Expectations without the burden of guilt. I need today more than today needs me.

OCTOBER 23

Gratitude floods me. I see qualities in my kids I've hoped for. Their independence equally frightens and thrills me. They have proven to be capable of doing much more than I had given them credit. I'm laying down responsibilities that were no longer mine to carry. If only I had stepped back to observe their growth sooner, but I won't bemoan the lost time. I'm taking them ice skating after school. Falling and getting back up, that's what we've been doing as a family. Thankful for the bumps and bruises leading us to better balance.

Karen's journal entries reflected the rhythm of rest she was now enjoying. Thankfully she was desperate enough to try something different, and her life was made better for it. She recovered her life from her addiction to busy and found the secret to living well rested. It isn't in the number of hours slept. It isn't in the number of meditations, prayers, or mental exercises completed. It isn't in quitting your job or blowing off obligations. The secret life of the well rested is found in answering one key question.

What type of rest have you been missing?

Personal Rest Deficit Assessment Tool

This brief assessment tool is designed to help you quickly see which types of rest you are prone to be deficient in. For a more in-depth assessment, please visit RestQuiz.com, where you will find my comprehensive rest profile quiz. Upon completion of the online quiz, you will receive your personalized rest recommendations.

Place a check beside each statement that reflects how you feel:

Physical Rest

- ___ You lack the energy needed to do all of the physical tasks on your to-do list.
- ___ You feel tired but have difficulty falling asleep.
- ___ You have a weak immune system with frequent colds and illnesses.
- ___ You experience frequent muscle pain and soreness.
- ___ You depend on substances to give you more energy (caffeine, energy bars, sugar).
- ___ You depend on substances to give you more rest (alcohol, pills, comfort foods).

Mental Rest

- ___ You feel as if you can't keep up mentally with your to-do list.
- ___ You experience irritation or frustration when thinking about your day.
- ___ You avoid some activities because you fear you will make an error or mess it up.
- ___ You feel drowsy or as if you are in a mental fog during the day.
- ___ You snap at your family and coworkers about insignificant things.
- ___ You spend most of your day on tasks you find overwhelming.

Emotional Rest

- ___ You have a tendency to focus on your failures and flaws.
- ___ You experience self-doubt and insecurity, which prevent you from trying new things.
- ___ You constantly compensate for who you are with apologies or clarifications.
- ___ You beat yourself up when you make even the slightest mistake.
- ___ You feel depressed or angry when you think about your life.
- ___ You exhibit excessive worrying or display feelings of anxiety about situations.

Spiritual Rest

- ___ You feel decreased satisfaction and sense of accomplishment.
- ___ You feel helpless, hopeless, trapped, or defeated.
- ___ You feel like life is a total waste of energy and have no motivation.

- ___ You feel distant from God.
- ___ You experience suicidal thoughts and depression.
- ___ You feel numb and apathetic.

Social Rest

- ___ You feel alone in the world.
- ___ You feel detached from family and friends.
- ___ You are attracted to people who mistreat you or are abusive toward you.
- ___ You find it hard to maintain close relationships or make friends.
- ___ You isolate yourself from others.
- ___ You prefer online relationships over face-to-face relationships.

Sensory Rest

- ___ You have a sensitivity or an adverse reaction to loud sounds.
- ___ You experience blurry vision and/or eye pressure, fatigue, or strain.
- ___ You believe natural foods don't have any flavor and crave processed foods.
- ___ You dislike being hugged or touched by others.
- ___ You are desensitized to aromas others seem to smell easily.
- ___ You are unable to enjoy periodic sensory-rich experiences like concerts or fireworks.

Creative Rest

- ___ You always focus on the needs of others and don't consider your needs a priority.
- ___ You talk yourself out of self-care as if you don't deserve being cared for.

- ___ You feel you are being selfish whenever you consider doing something for yourself.
- ___ You do self-destructive things or make choices that sabotage your happiness.
- ___ You rarely feel your work is of value or that others appreciate your contributions.
- ___ You find it difficult to enjoy things in nature or in their natural state.

Look over each section. Three or more checks in a section suggest you are already suffering from a lack of rest in that area. One to two checks in a section suggest you are at an increased risk for burnout in that area. Now that you know which types of rest you've been missing, let's begin the journey into your well-rested life.

Thirty-Day Sacred Rest Challenge

Hey, fellow rest seeker! You finished the book, but your journey into sacred rest is just beginning. I'd love to walk this path with you for the next thirty days and give you some additional tips, tricks, and tactics for finding the rest you need. Head over to IChooseMyBestLife.com to sign up for the Sacred Rest Challenge. Each day I will send you a little encouragement to help you remember to return to rest in the middle of the busyness of life.

You are not in this alone. There is a whole community of rest seekers who want to celebrate your sacred rest moments with you. Join us by using #SacredRest when you post on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, or Pinterest. Share the hidden beauty and captivating moments you discover as you experience the gifts of rest. Together let's lean into life and recline in the holy.



Notes

Chapter 2: The Secret Life of the Well Rested

1. Pagels, Douglas. *These Are the Gifts I'd Like to Give to You: A Sourcebook of Joy and Encouragement*. Boulder, CO: Blue Mountain Arts, 1999 reprint.

About the Author

DR. SAUNDRA DALTON-SMITH is a board-certified internal medicine physician, author, and speaker. She shares with audiences nationwide on the topics of eliminating limiting emotions and overcoming destructive mind-sets so you can live fully, love boldly, and rest intentionally. Dr. Dalton-Smith is a national and international media resource on the mind-body-spirit connection and has been featured in many publications including *Woman's Day*, *Redbook*, and *First for Women* magazine. She has written two award-winning books, *Set Free to Live Free: Breaking Through the 7 Lies Women Tell Themselves* and *Come Empty: Pour Out Life's Hurts and Receive God's Healing Love*. She is one of the 100 experts included in the 2017 book *Good House-keeping Doctors' Secrets: Fight Disease, Relieve Pain, and Live a Healthy Life with Practical Advice from 100 Top Medical Experts*. She blogs at IChooseMyBestLife.com, where she shares tips to help you heal from the inside out, and she has an active medical practice in Alabama, where she lives with her husband and two boys.

If you would like to invite Dr. Sandra to speak at your next event, you can contact her at DrDaltonSmith@IChooseMyBestLife.com.



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In the interests of patient confidentiality, names and identifying details in patient histories have been changed.

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