

August 20, 2026: A Balanced Diet *(is not really a cookie in each hand).*

“The key to keeping your balance is knowing when you’ve lost it.” A. Nonymous

My brief return to work is more than half over; and I’m not sorry that I agreed to it nor sorry to have it close out again. Returning to the same career I followed for nearly 43 years to fill in on an interim duty has been an honor, and a matter of clarity for me. I was thoroughly enjoying my retirement, and I will relish returning to that life-style. I am enjoying my temporary return to work, to the friends and colleagues I have missed, to the projects where I can make a positive difference for the community and individuals, to work that is challenging and fulfilling; and to collecting a paycheck- which is nice too. But the clarity comes after stepping back for a couple years, seeing just how addictive and unhealthy the job becomes. How easy it is to slip from occupation into preoccupation. Back at the office, I can now see that way too much of me is preoccupied thinking about work tasks that need attention, and stewing over conflicts and ways to resolve them. I’m now often simply back lost in my own head mulling over community opportunities and how to seize them, or scripting in my head messages and how best to couch or land them. These obsessive preoccupations crowd out so much of the freedom that I was appreciating and craving in retirement. It’s the quiet, the free space inside, the slow time, listening, reading, writing, exercising, hiking, appreciation for beauty and reflecting, sleeping (!). I could pay attention to what I was thinking and dreaming and wanting for others, friendships I would nourish, and so much more. It’s not as if I hadn’t longed for such things while I was working, but that they couldn’t compete with the obsessions of work life. Sure, I knew I needed and wanted to take better care of myself, for example, but over and over I would resolve “to



start dieting and exercise next week, but right now I have too much to do and too little to give.”

Although. Although, in my temporarily interrupted retirement, I was also beginning to want to add back a small squeeze of pressure and external structure or focus, some useful purpose or service that I could offer. Maybe just enough so I don’t just get stuck back in my own head again merely staring off in a different direction than when I was employed. Not a dollop, just a dab, mind you.

It’s all about striking a balance, I suppose. So much usually is. I don’t want an occupation again, but I do enjoy doing some

work (turns out even a small flower garden actually does count.) I most certainly don't want to return to preoccupation where the most important matters take a back seat or are left standing curbside after having been tossed off my brain-bus altogether. And, I don't want to be unoccupied- talking only to myself, serving no purpose, sacrificing nothing, growing down. So, when I'm back out to pasture, I'll seek new balances, maybe try new things, take some risks (really, really mild ones! ---next week). Learning new balance skills undoubtedly involves falling down or bumping into things a lot until one gets the knack of it. So, don't laugh if you catch me donning a helmet to eat a Brussels sprout...this is tricky, risky business!

Happy Thinksday