

UNPLUG. REBOOT. RECHARGE



Ninety miles due west of Key West and 200 miles south of Tampa Bay lies a tiny atoll in the middle of the Gulf of Mexico. Here hides a treasure called Dry Tortugas National Park. For the past decade, I have been making a yearly trip with friends to enjoy the pristine waters and amazing ecosystem as well as to angle for large species of pelagic and reef fish. While on

this small undeveloped island, I am unable to contact the “real world,” and I am able to clear my mind and focus on new goals.

Recently, I began bringing my children along on these adventures, and I appreciate the value these trips have for them as well. For the first day or so, unable to use our digital devices, we experience a bit of withdrawal. Then, an amazing transformation happens. We begin to live in the moment and to enjoy each other’s company. We become much more aware of our surroundings and engaged in what we are doing.

Until I unplugged completely 10 years ago, I did not appreciate the impact of doing so. I realized that the daily barrage of phone calls, email, and text messages combined with stress and routine interferes with my ability to see the big picture: what I am doing with my family, my friends, my patients, and my practice. Disconnecting gives me the freedom to think creatively and often allows me to make decisions, both personal and professional.

During my most recent visit to Dry Tortugas National Park, I thought about the direction in which my practice



is growing, how to structure my time more efficiently, and how to accomplish more of my goals without adding to my already overstuffed schedule. It was the sort of thinking so difficult to engage in during the activities of daily life. In addition, I got to make priceless memories with my family and close friends.

Whether by traveling somewhere remote or even just turning off the digital devices over a weekend, I recommend arranging to check out for a time in order to recharge. ■

Robert J. Weinstock, MD
Chief Medical Editor