



# PARING BACK AND POWERING OFF

Friends,

May is Mental Health Awareness Month, and I believe a big part of mental wellness is remembering the importance of trying to live a balanced life. In today's lifestyle, with the constant pressure to be "the best" and an overreliance on technology, we unknowingly place large amounts of stress on our minds and bodies.

Whether we realize it not, the pressure we put on ourselves and the pressure we pass on to our children all too often comes with consequences. As a parent myself of former competitive skiers, I understand how easy it can be to get caught up in your child's "potential." My own children pointed out the pressures they felt when they were younger because we are a sports-centric community: children either feel the stress of competing, or they feel the stress of being left out. It took me awhile, but eventually I learned to spend less time helping my children "go for the gold" and more time just goofing around and enjoying unstructured and spur-of-the moment fun. In retrospect, these memories are the ones that Margarethe and I cherish the most.

Luckily for us, there's hope! Researchers figured out that some of the best solutions for improving mental health and increasing happiness are also some of the most intuitive. So I'm issuing a call to *inaction* this month, in honor of Mental Health Awareness—a call to take a step back and remember to seek balance in your life and in your personal and professional

relationships. Here are a few remedies to help you get started:

- **Spend more time with people face-to-face:** Research shows that personal relationships are the best indicator of a long life—even more than whether a person smokes, drinks, or exercises. That's pretty stunning: just having a casual conversation with someone can make you healthier.
- **Turn off the phone, iPad, TV, or computer:** If I asked you to recall a happy memory, I doubt you would respond, "Using my phone." Yet this is how so many of us spend our leisure time. Being over-connected can feel overwhelming and create a sense that we're missing out on something. So turn away from the screen and enjoy the beauty of the physical world around us.
- **Pare back:** In modern life, it's never been easier to have more—more stuff, more activities, and more distractions. But the reality is that sometimes, less stuff and fewer commitments can make us happier and have been proven to reduce stress.
- **Unstructured time:** I've learned to be comfortable with a blank piece of paper or with an empty piece of time because I don't think clearly when I'm bombarded. This is an important part of the creative process—sometimes your brain needs to be emptied out before it can fill back up with creativity and motivation. We need to add these in-between times back into our lives.





And finally, we need to acknowledge that there are two extremes in Park City, particularly when it comes to stress and lifestyle: not everyone lives in a world of abundance. In fact, a large part of Park City ekes out a hardscrabble living, often working two or three jobs just to make ends meet. We are trying to relieve some of this stress by continuing our push to provide free and more responsive transit options, building more affordable workforce housing in town, and expanding access to various public health and wellness resources in partnership with Summit County and the Park City School District.

So I hope you will join me this month by spending a few minutes trying to discover a better balance: remember to turn off your phone for a few minutes, pare back a little on all those non-essential possessions, take a long walk or bike ride for no particular reason, and force yourself to strike up a conversation with someone you otherwise might not.

Happy May!

— Jack Thomas, Mayor

