The Fallow Season

By this time of year, you know the feeling. You reread the same email a few times but can't remember what it said. You sit in a meeting, nodding along, aware that you checked out ten minutes ago. You reach the end of the day and can't quite account for where it went, only that it took more out of you than usual.

The days aren't necessarily harder. Everything just seems to require a little more effort. Our usual response is to push through. One more coffee, one more deadline, one more busy week, reassured that a holiday is close.

But maybe that fogginess is trying to tell us something.

Leaving the field alone

In farming, there are times when a field is deliberately left fallow and simply allowed to rest. Nothing is planted. Nothing is harvested. To anyone driving past, nothing much is happening. We're used to judging a field by what it produces, so an empty one can look wasted. But sometimes leaving it alone is exactly what it needs.

There's a season for planting and a season for harvesting. *And sometimes, a season when neither has to happen*. We understand this easily enough in nature. Why then do we find it so difficult to accept in ourselves?

We seem to need to always be doing something. We measure our days by what we get done, our diaries by how full they are, and our careers by how much progress we've made. It's telling that when someone asks how we are doing, "busy" has somehow become a perfectly acceptable answer. *Somewhere along the way, busyness became confused with a life well lived*.

Even rest has been pulled into our obsession with productivity. We sleep better, exercise, meditate and take holidays partly so that we can come back refreshed and produce some more. All worthwhile. But rest doesn't always need to serve a purpose. *Sometimes, rest is enough*.

The problem is that life rarely makes it easy to stop. There is always another email, meeting, goal or problem demanding our attention. Markets are particularly good at this. I spend much of my working life thinking about investments, and there is always something happening, an interest-rate decision, an election, a market falling, another rising, and endless opinions about why we should care.

The market never taps you on the shoulder to say, "That's enough for today. Go home." We have to decide that for ourselves. And that's true of much more than investing. *The world will take as much of our attention as we are willing to give it*.

What's it all for?

There is an irony in working so hard to build a better life. We save and invest hoping that one day we'll have greater freedom over our time, yet it is easy to become so consumed with building that future life that we miss the one already happening. Time with family. A conversation without checking your phone. A long run. A good book. Sitting outside doing nothing. Sleep. Laughter. A quiet cup of coffee.

None of it appears on a performance report. But that's the point. *Life isn't only found in what we produce, achieve or accumulate. It's also found in the moments when we're doing none of those things*.

None of this argues against hard work. There is a season to plant, to tend, and a season to harvest. But no field stays in harvest forever. Neither can we.

There will always be more to do. But there won't always be more time.

So maybe the fogginess isn't something to fight. Maybe we've simply been in harvest season for too long. *Sometimes, you just need to leave the field alone.*

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If you have any questions, Tawanda and our team would love to hear from you on investmentteam@seedinvestments.co.za.