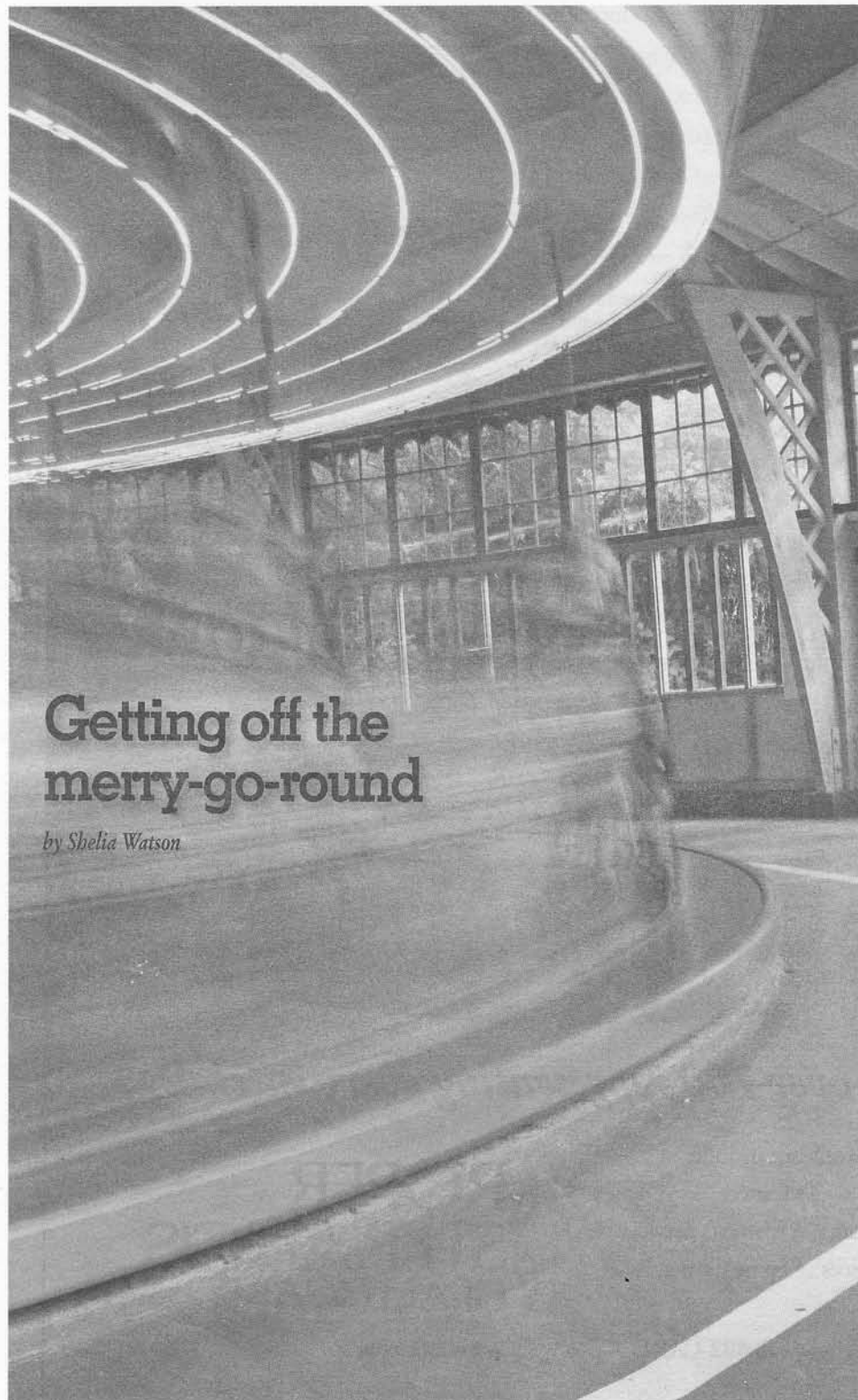


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SUPPLEMENT:  
**2006 HEALTHY LIVING**



## Getting off the merry-go-round

by Shelia Watson

**S**ome call it burnout; others call it the Monday blues. For some it's a vague sense that change might be good, while for others, depression or anxiety may be the red flags that portend a break is needed. Whatever the label or perception, for most people, there is the occasional need for introspection about the course of one's life.

"Almost everyone has felt this way at one time or another," said Nella Barkley of the Crystal-Barkley Corp., a career-counseling center located on East Bay Street in downtown Charleston and at [www.careerlife.com](http://www.careerlife.com) on the Web. "It tends to happen either very early in life, as people are just selecting a career, or at '30-something' onward. The '20-somethings' are mainly occupied with getting situated in their work, making a mark, being one of the crowd, so there's little time (at that age) given to thinking about what you really want to do."

Barkley said regardless of age, the key is to make time for the introspection necessary to grow in understanding of the proper course to take.

In other words: if you want to go forward—retreat.

"It's a huge gift to yourself to take a retreat," Barkley said. "How often do people have five days to think of nothing but their place on earth, what to do with it, what makes them happy?"

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**—Nella Barkley, Crystal-Barkley Corp.**

## **Seeking solitude**

For Katherine Weeks, an agent with RBC Liberty Insurance, a retreat meant a period of concentrated discernment during which she considered whether she should change careers, go back to school or continue at her current position.

“I had gotten to the point where I wasn’t sure whether I even wanted to keep doing this kind of work,” she said. “But it was really difficult to consider any options when I had to get up and go to work and keep my schedule. You just can’t make a serious decision about your life in the middle of running the treadmill.”

Weeks spent several days in a rustic cabin in the middle of the woods at the Saint Christopher Camp and Conference Center on Seabrook Island. The setting granted her the solitude she needed to sort through personal and professional issues.

“What I liked most about going to Saint Christopher was that it was right here, close to home,” she said. “I didn’t have to go hundreds of miles away to be on a retreat.”

## **Location, location, location**

In seeking a retreat location, Barkley recommended seeking a place that emphasizes relaxation.

“Choose accommodations within your budget but as optimum as possible and preferably less crowded,” she said. “You want to stay away from high-rise hotels where you’re constantly pressed on by crowds of other people. Disney is no retreat; neither is Atlantis Resort.”

The duration of the retreat depends on the availability of the facility as well as individual preference, but Barkley advises longer rather than shorter retreats.

“Try to make it longer than two days,” she said. “If you can’t do a full week, try a three- or four-day weekend. With two days you barely stop breathing quickly before you have to go home. When you have a little longer, you can really get down to your thoughts.”

## **What to do, what to bring**

Barkley also recommended leaving a lot of unplanned time on the schedule

“so you can do at the moment what you most feel like doing.”

She also suggested taking along a notebook for journaling and a book or two.

“Take a book you’ve long wanted to read, something that’s a source of inspiration to you,” she said. “A biography of someone you admire is extremely uplifting. That type of book will always reveal to you that people who make something interesting of their lives are doing what they’ve always wanted to do and what they’re equipped to do, skill-wise.”

“No one was ever a spectacular success doing something they didn’t like to do. It’s worth it for you to take time for the search. To be able to live every day so in tune with what you believe your purpose to be is tremendously exciting.”