

## Take Time to Slow Down

"There is more to life than increasing it's speed," said Mohandas Gandhi. There is great truth in his words, but they are words that our culture hasn't yet learned. We continue to squeeze more into our hours and days, winding the spring inside of us tighter and tighter. We need to take some time to slow down.

Years ago I remember hearing about how all the labor-saving devices that we were adding to our homes were going to give us more leisure time. Few of the people I meet have more "down time." If anything, we are swimming in an ever-deeper pool of activity.

Some of our new tools allow us to make life move even faster. You can take or return calls while driving. Fast-food lunches can be eaten in the car or at your desk. Email allows you to get important papers around the world and back in the same day. Cell phones and pagers scream at you with their built in sense of urgency.

Hurrying isn't an innate skill. We aren't born knowing how to rush. Have you ever tried to speed up a pre-schooler? It's as difficult as pushing a chain. Uphill. Against the wind. Children don't know how to hurry. They're often more interested in examining the acorn they've just found than in sticking to some adult's all-important schedule.

We have fallen prey to the tyranny of the clock. While there are some things that have to be done at a specific time, surely there could be more flexibility than we allow ourselves.

One night last Spring, I went with a friend to hit golf balls at a driving range. Two stations down from us was a man who had brought his cell phone with him. He answered four calls in the time it took to hit a bucket of balls. God forbid that he should be away from the phone long enough to enjoy himself!

I have another friend who has a four-year-old son. He and his wife are divorced and his son spends one night a week and every other weekend with him. One weekday recently my friend overslept and attempted to hurry his young son so they could make up some time. "Eat your breakfast now," he told him. "Get you're clothes on. Are you trying to make daddy late? You've got to get going!" Tears, words of anger--the morning was a blur of negative activity and heated vocabulary.

On the way out of the house, my friend said his son gave him a present. He encouraged his dad to stop and look at the world. After all the heated words, in spite of the threats, my friend's son stopped as they opened the back door. He paused to look over the yard, taking it all in. My friend said he was as if he was seeing the yard for the first time. His son taught him that day. "Slow down, dad. Take in the world."

"There is more to life than increasing it's speed." Take some time to take in your world today. Look closely at a tree. Watch a child at play. Breathe deeply. Give or get a leisurely massage. Schedule a time of "shared inactivity" with a friend or your spouse. Put some pause in your day. Your spirit will be better for it.

Jeff Hood