



# Stop and Smell the Roses

**Too much to do. Not enough time to do it. Too many people with demands. The “sandwich generation.” Obligations. Commitments. “I’m in retirement but I’m busier than ever.”**

What’s going on? Why is there never enough time in the day to do what you need to do, and want to do? The average workweek seems to have gotten longer, a very small percentage of people take the vacation time they are owed and deserved, and those who do take vacation probably spend a lot of it checking in with their workplace. It seems America has become a society of finding out who can rush the fastest and farthest, and stave off a heart attack the longest in the process!

People drive fast, walk faster, all with purpose in the destination. The journey to get there is relegated to the back of one’s mind. So what if the scenery was spectacular on the walk to work; you have to beat that red light to cross the walkway and can’t pay much mind to it anyway! When driving, you might try to beat the light even though the pedestrian is still in the crosswalk, and when walking, you might march in front of that car as the light turns yellow just so a few seconds of standing on the sidewalk could be shaved off.

What’s the result of all of this rushing? Maybe you get somewhere with a couple of minutes to spare, but what do you give up in the process? Rising anxiety, stress-related heart palpitations, sweaty armpits and mental distraction, just to name a few things. The text can’t wait, so you chance writing it while driving down what appears to be a quiet street at night, only to look up at the last minute and see the person walking their dog in the dark. Phew. Crisis averted. But what if you didn’t look up at just that moment? What might have happened?

-[psychologytoday.com/us/blog](http://psychologytoday.com/us/blog)

The rush seems to rule the day. Rushing to get somewhere, to get something done, to beat the crowds...and for what? To move on to the next thing that needs to be addressed. This is a real dilemma for many people; demands from family, children and parents and siblings; demands from work and the worry if you don't get it all right you might lose your job; financial demands that require your attention and focus; demands to be healthier and to rush to the gym or get the grocery shopping done; demands from home to do the laundry, let the dog out and clean the house. The list goes on and on and on. In fact, the list never ends. You never quite get to that destination, because as soon as you get there, something pulls you onward to rush to the next place. The time to enjoy your success is often stolen by the need to move on to what's next.

The demands are real, so the rush is necessary, right? Not really. In fact the more you rush and hurry, the more you reduce your effectiveness.

If you resonate with the pain of rushing and the frustratingly incomplete experience of getting somewhere but never believing it to be enough, it's time to stop letting the rush rule and to start turning your attention to what's along the way. How do you do this? Five steps to consider:



**Realize  
when  
there  
is no  
rush**

1

Recognize the pull that comes from wanting to get somewhere just to be able to finally relax and breathe once you do. Now recognize that you almost never achieve this blissful state. Once you allow yourself to be calm, thinking "all that's finally done"... the next demand pops up. Speak out loud to yourself when this happens: "Rushing isn't going to do me any good because something will need to be done so I may as well relax as I complete the task." In order to break the rushing cycle, you might need to have a conversation with yourself several times a day, just to remind yourself. There's nothing in it for you to rush.

2

Set and write down priorities each day. What are the top three most important things for you to get done? Yes, you need to keep your job, walk the dog, clean the house, and feed your family, but what else do you care about and that is meaningful to you? A priority could be "engaging with my children in a more interactive manner." If that's the priority, then throwing food on the table so you can run and clean the house as soon as everyone inhales their food isn't going to fulfill that desire. Care about things. Have an interest in something that matters and when you find yourself pulled to rush, pull out the list of priorities and focus on them.



**There is  
more time  
than you  
think**

**3** Notice how you walk, talk, and even breathe. Are you always racing, running, huffing, and puffing? If so, deliberately slow yourself down from time to time. Physically pulling yourself back from that hurry and anxiousness can remind your brain that there is always more time than you may think.

**Don't wait until the  
last minute**



**4** Schedule the important things in a thoughtful manner. Instead of booking your meetings each hour back to back, consider booking them in 50 (or even 40) minute increments. You can probably accomplish just as much and have time left over. If you know you have to be at your daughter's soccer game by 7 p.m.,

don't wait until the last minute to leave work to get there. Pretend the game starts at 6:45 p.m. and leave yourself the time necessary to get there 15 minutes early. If you do get there early, make use of that time, or just use it to rest yourself and catch your breath.

**5** Remind yourself, by using a mantra, a religious verse, a poem, or something important to you, that the journey really is what matters. People with children recognize how fast they grow up and if you spend that time rushing around to meet their basic needs, you will miss the journey. If you focus only on getting the project done at work, you will miss the opportunity to learn and enjoy your colleagues or the process. If you drive well above the speed limit to get to your destination, you will miss the opportunity to be kind to another driver or enjoy the view along the way.

**You might think that none of these things are necessary and it only matters where you wind up. For some people this may be true, but if you find that for your health and peace of mind, it's time to stop rushing and start noticing what's urging you on and making you crazy in the process...Stop. Breathe. And then choose a step here to practice.**

**The journey is  
what matters**

