



A Season of Happiness

this Healthy Living article Free with our compliments

www.aseasonofhappiness.com



HL14



Slow Down - you move too fast!

A hypothetical scenario: there's a rock concert coming up featuring twenty top bands, a cannot-afford-to-miss occasion. Tickets cost \$200 a piece and it will be a hassle getting to and from, but it will be worth it. So you go. Then you discover they play it at high-speed and it's over in thirty minutes. The night out has cost you heaps and you feel cheated. But, if you consider the big picture, what's to complain about? This is how you live your life, every minute, every day - rush and tear, gabble gabble, skipping from one concept to another in the blink of an eye. Is it any wonder that you get stressed and appreciate so little? When you think about it, modern living is only fast-paced because that's how you make it. And when you are on your death-bed and your past is flashing before you, what do you reckon you'll remember that was of any consequence? Quite possibly not much, because it all happened too fast.

The pattern starts to form perhaps even before we are born. They say that a child in the womb is aware of its environment. Sounds of happiness or conflict in the home, a loud bang, the dog barking, someone shouting at it to stop, all are heard by the child. It doesn't know what these noises mean in terms of personal experience, but it will get a fair idea of whether they are good or bad from their mother's reactions. Here is something they can feel - sudden tension, a buzz of excitement, a skipped heartbeat, fear, anger, all of those emotions they will be confronted by and will have to deal with one day. Before a child has even seen the light of day, the programming has begun, not the least being the pace that it will be expected to keep up with.

If the birth was planned, presumably allowances would have been made for the new arrival, but no matter what the changes to the parents' thinking, the routine they have been following to this point must be disrupted. Very few have the luxury of complete devotion to parental duties and have to fit them in with whatever else is in their normal schedule. The result is often a speeding-up of everything, from preparing meals to shopping, looking after other kids if they have them, plus nappy-changing, feeding the baby, heaps more washing, all these for the stay-at-home parent. Meanwhile, the partner who can still go to work isn't immune, having to take up the slack around the place. It's now a higher gear for both and this is what the child learns from. Soon enough it will be crawling, then walking, hopefully in its own good time, and the examples continue as it is introduced to more of its surroundings. Toys, of course, are totally necessary to keep the child amused and for the teaching of a few basics such as shapes, colours, numbers and letters. Then come those life skills like what and what not to touch, plus the simpler rules of the house. Each child being different, one might expect they would be permitted to progress at a pace guided by individual temperament and mental capacity; unfortunately, many parents see what other children have achieved, in some instances their own offspring, and they expect the new one to be at least as smart, if not smarter. The poor little tacker hasn't even begun kinder, yet Mum and Dad have already signed it up for the race of a lifetime!

And so to school - maths, English, social studies, exams and the graduation ball... Hey, wait a minute! What happened to the formative years leading up to hormones and puberty? Well, you say, we kind-of turned around and they'd gone. That's a pity because the babies have become teenagers who babble unintelligibly at the speed of sound, have next-to-no social skills and are falling behind in most subjects except sex education about which they already know more than their teacher thanks to practical experience. And the sad fact is: they haven't failed themselves - we've simply pushed them too far too fast. They have been driven through childhood like a herd

of stampeding cattle. No wonder they are so ill-prepared for what comes next. Not that they'll need our input, seeing as they already know everything there is to know of life. We might beg to differ, but up to now we haven't exactly been shining examples of doing it right; just how to get it over with quickly. As for appreciation - that takes time and we never seem to have any to spare!

In truth, life is over-full and we can only get through everything we deem necessary by rushing. It's as if we need to be somewhere fast, tearing along the highway, glimpsing roadside billboards as we fly past, gaining little from them apart from a vague recollection of a fleeting image and perhaps a few words. Where is this mythical place we are heading towards at break-neck speed? Presumably it will be somewhere in our future; as for its nature, very few can claim to have a clear idea of that; and when they eventually arrive, most won't even know they have. Isn't it about time we quit this lemming-like charge and started to really enjoy our world and all it has to offer?

There are some wonderful experiences to be had if we just slow our pace. Take reading for instance. Once upon a time a book was an essential part of the day, an ideal distraction while sitting in the bus on the way to work, or in bed and winding down before switching off the light. They tell of the best and worst of times, of romance, of magic, of history and the distant future. Readers can live the life of any character in the book as if they were them. Reading is a total experience of other lives, dreams and aspirations, challenges and victories; or it should be. I'm talking actual reading here, each word and syllable, every paragraph, travelling steadily through the story as the author intended when they wrote it. Save speed reading for technical manuals and teaching aids which will give you the basic facts minus any emotion which is irrelevant; but treat a book as you would a movie watched and savoured at normal speed. Then you'll be able to say in all honesty that it was better than the film.

Vacations were always intended as a refreshing break from the usual grind. How have your most recent ones panned out - relaxing, or just more of the same? Personally, we used to find the build-up exhausting as we tried to finish everything that needed attention before we left and were generally dissatisfied because nothing was done properly and would have to be re-done when we came home. The journey itself should have been a pleasant drive through countryside and towns we rarely saw; it actually turned into a road-race: hopping from one service station to the next, frustrated by having to overtake the slow drivers who, for some reason, weren't in as much of a hurry to get where they were going. We, of course, were understandably motivated because there was so much planned and we only had a fortnight to jam it all in! We did start feeling the benefit of the holiday towards the end and frequently commented that two weeks wasn't long enough. Later on we tried three weeks, then four and it was still insufficient. We discovered why on a very short vacation, seven days snatched out of a heavier-than-normal schedule. One week wasn't really long enough to do lots of sight-seeing, and we were pretty tired, so we decided to just veg out, taking the odd walk along the beach or merely sitting in the sun. It was magic, arguably the most enjoyable, relaxing holiday we'd had in years, and it set the scene for many more to come. That's what vacations are supposed to be for - taking it slow, taking it easy, leaving the rat-race behind. Try it sometime.

Remember when a new relationship was looming and you were planning your first move and trying to make a good impression? How did it go from there - a whirlwind romance that culminated in a lifelong partnership of joy, or a five-minute disaster? These days, old-fashioned courtship is something out of a Bronte novel - no-one does it like that anymore. I would be surprised, however, if relationships that have endured since the early nineteen hundreds weren't born, initially anyway, of a slow and tentative approach. Never mind what mother and father felt it their duty to advise, courtship was a known and practised art, a step-by-step progression observing all of the proprieties and courtesies necessary to woo the intended. It was rarely a public exhibition, and neither party took the other for granted. Often the simple friendship was kept personal and secretive because hopeful lovers weren't prepared to declare their undying fondness for each other until both were sure that it was what they wanted and that it could last. There was another reason too, a very special one: it was of a fairy-tale nature, the stuff romantic novels were born of - excitement, anticipation, butterflies in the stomach, that heady buzz

whenever they were close, or maybe just thinking about each other. Why would anyone in their right mind want to rush such a euphoric experience? Listen and learn, lovers young and old: any relationship that is destined to be meaningful will be worth waiting for - just take it slowly, enjoy each and every precious moment, and let the magic work for you. Your lifetime together will never be as wonderful as those first few weeks of hopes and dreams, so make them last.

Promises and commitments can make or break any relationship, romantic or not. We have a tendency to be influenced by the emotion of the moment and, depending on our mood, can place ourselves in awkward situations simply by jumping in feet first without thinking. An agreement to take on a new responsibility may not seem to be a problem at the time it is made, but down the track it could prove almost impossible to live up to. Perhaps we said what we did because a refusal might have hurt a person's feelings, or we were initially confident of being able to stick to the bargain; but the end result is what matters. Failing to honour a commitment or keep a promise dumps us in the unreliable basket - a person not to be trusted. Taking the trouble to think before opening our mouth can prevent a few incautious words coming back to bite. The same applies to letters, emails, texts and tweets. Once sent, they have become history, hopefully one to be proud of and not a continuing source of regret.

Knee-jerk reactions of any kind frequently turn out badly. It is well worth taking a step back before responding to a situation, especially one which confronts us suddenly and without warning. Most things in life don't have to be handled like an emergency stop in a car - there is usually time to consider options and figure out the best way to deal with them to our advantage. I know it sounds rather clinical and tedious, and the temporary reluctance to reply may give someone the impression that we have lapsed into coma, but what happens next is a label we may have to wear for the rest of our life, so it had best be the right one.

It isn't easy to slow down when the world around is spinning faster than ever. It seems to be made worse by the speed with which people talk, in particular the younger generation. There is a lot to fit in, so much to say; but please don't think about adding: "There's so little time." That's one thing we have more than enough of. So, drop down a gear or two; appreciate life as it comes and don't wish it away; and please, please let the children play - they are only young once. And if you discover the Universe is definitely due to end tomorrow, resist the temptation to gabble as much as possible in your remaining hours: instead, pause for thought and utter maybe just a few heart-felt words of thanks for the memories.

Next Issue: Gluten Free Food – it doesn't have to taste awful

A Season of Happiness - helping you towards a better lifestyle

For a look at some more informative articles on a variety of subjects just click on the navigation bar



Focus



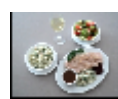
Money Matters



Healthy Living



eBook previews



Recipes



Popcorn

Where every effort has been made to be accurate and fair-minded, comments and opinions expressed on this website are based on personal experience and do not necessarily reflect the views of the wider community or those groups and institutions mentioned. A Season of Happiness and its staff accept no responsibility for any outcome based on suggestions offered. What works for us may not work for you. Please bear this in mind.