

SLOWING

THE RUTHLESS ELIMINATION OF HURRY

Review

“Slow down your body, slow down your soul”—this is the motto of slowing, an emerging practice in the Western world. While you still won’t find it on any of the standard lists of spiritual disciplines, it still fits the definition of a practice based on the life and teachings of Jesus. Jesus was never in a hurry. His slow, deliberate pace, created room in his life for the interruptions that became the stories of the four gospels. John Ortberg defines this practice as “cultivating patience by deliberately choosing to place ourselves in positions where we simply have to wait.” It’s a fun, playful way to slow down our body, in order to cultivate an unhurried soul.

Exercise #1: Pick 1-2 “games” to slow down your life

1. Pick 1-3 neo-spiritual disciplines from my list, or your own imagination, and commit to them for at least a week.

- Here’s a few of my ideas from the chapter:

- Drive the speed limit.
- Get into the slow lane.
- Come to a full stop at stop signs.
- Don’t text and drive.
- Show up ten minutes early for an appointment, sans phone.
- Get into the longest line at the grocery store.

2. See what it does in your soul. Pay attention to the difference in your body as the days go by. Keep whatever is helpful.

3. Practice presence through art.

- There’s a myth that we can pay half-attention to life during the “boring” moments—email for work, running errands, mowing the lawn—and then save our full attention for the “really good moments”—i.e., play, days off, time with friends. But attention doesn’t work like that. It’s less a switch we turn on and off as we so choose, and more of a muscle we exercise, or let atrophy, all day long via our habits of both mind and body.
- The more that we multitask or daydream through the mundane tasks of everyday life, the less capacity we develop to fully enjoy and experience the sacred moments.

- One way to train this muscle is to pick a medium of art that is calm, deep, and beautiful and give it your full attention. No phone. No distractions present.
 - Watch a film. If you want, invite some friends to join you and discuss it after, without reading any reviews online, simply by noticing its effect on your soul.
 - Read a novel in several long sittings. Resist the urge to get up or check your phone should it get “slow.”
 - Listen to an entire album in one sitting, doing nothing else. Not as background noise, or a moodpick, but as art you experience with God.
- Let art re-teach you not only how to be present, but how to enjoy being present, in the many moments that join together into a life.

Exercise #2: Cut 1-3 things out of your schedule

1. If you don't have a schedule, start there. Draw up a week/month in the life of yours truly. Then delete a few things.
 - Here's a few easy targets that eat up heaps of time for many people:
 - TV.
 - Social Media.
 - Time online.
 - Video games.
 - Extra social obligations.
 - This exercise requires a clear vision of your life before God, a basic sense of his call on your life, and a sense of values. It should force you to ask, what really matters to me? What are my priorities? What relationships do I need to give my energies to? What activities are honestly a waste of my time? These are all great questions to sit in the tension of.

Exercise #3: Turn Your Smartphone into a Dumbphone

- Feel free to adapt as you see fit, but here's the basic idea (note: for my fellow Luddites who are technically challenged, a simple Google search will show you how to do any of this):
 - Disable the email function on your phone.
 - Delete all social media apps your phone; switch to desktop.
 - Disable your web browser.

- Delete all notifications, including your text alerts.
- Delete news apps, or at least news alerts.
- Delete every single app you don't need or that doesn't save you time. Keep all the wonder apps that make life so much easier—maps, calculator, Alaska Airlines, etc.
- Consolidate your remaining apps into a few simple boxes and move them to your second screen, so your home screen is free and clear—basically, a phone with a nice photo in the background.
- Set your phone to grayscale mode. You can set your phone so an easy triple click will turn the colour back on, for photos and such. Then triple click again to go back to black and white.

Exercise #4: Parent Your (Dumb) Phone

1. Turn your devices off an hour before your bedtime.

- If you want to level up, don't turn them back on the next morning until after you've spent time in the Scriptures and prayer.

2. Get a real alarm clock.

- For those of you who use your phone as an alarm clock, stop by Goodwill or pop online and buy a "real" alarm clock, as in, one you have to plug in next to your bed.

3. Read and pray with your phone put away.

- For those of you who read the Scriptures off a phone app, consider switching to an actual, hold-it-in-your-hands Bible.
- Whenever you pray, put away all distractions, such as phones, TV, or extra noise.
- Best practice: spend time with your mind upon God (breathing prayer, Lectio Divina, etc.) first thing upon waking, before you touch your phone.

4. Do some deep work.

- For those of you who work in the creative class or knowledge economy, you may want to consider turning your phone and email off to do some of what Cal Newport calls "deep work."
- Set daily or weekly time(s) for this kind of work.