THE CATALYST

Slow down and boost your mental health

Constant hustling masquerades as productivity but drains joy. Burnout taught me that "doing, doing, done" isn't living.

By: Nicole Chevrier | Posted: August 21, 2023

Do you feel like you always have to be doing something? Do you find it difficult to let go of your to-do list and just relax?

I needed to go through burnout to learn that there are drawbacks to being a 'high achiever.' The pursuit of excellence comes at a cost. Relentless busyness is not good for us.

Doing, doing, done

Do you ever notice the pressure to 'be your best self,' whether in your job or as part of your persona on social media? If you are reading this, I am guessing that you are pretty much tied to your phone and your media feeds. The irony is that we often turn to our devices to relax, but this actually speeds us up and can make us feel even more frazzled.

Constantly checking off the items on your to-do list may lead you to feel like you're accomplishing things and being productive, but it can spiral into an unbalanced and unhealthy way of living. And if the point is to 'live your best life,' it can actually be counterproductive.

> *"The high value put upon every minute of time, the idea of hurry-hurry as the most important objective of living, is unquestionably the most dangerous enemy of joy. My advice to the person suffering from lack of time and from apathy is this: Seek out each day as many as possible of the small joys."*
> *Hermann Hesse*

Higher, stronger, faster

Do more. Be more. Get more. The pressure to perform can impact your mental health. I wrote about this in a previous post. The problem with the achiever mindset (achievement more than anything else), which is reinforced by the cult of busyness, is the mistaken belief that by focusing on the external markers of success, we will lead a good life. It's a false promise that the sacrifices we make now will pay off with happiness in the future. So, we deprioritize what brings us spontaneous joy, and important relationships, with the assumption that we can enjoy those things after we achieve our goals.

> *“Our enjoyment of life is taken from us by the not-enoughness at the hollow heart of consumerism.”*
> *Wendell Berry*

The difference between productive and busy

Productivity is different from busyness. And being busier does not mean we are more productive.

Actually, when you are at your busiest, that’s when you need to slow down. Slowing down and taking breaks lets your brain rest, resulting in better focus, efficiency and results.

Productivity has more to do with having time to do the things that matter. When things are in balance, we can handle our day-to-day commitments, and we feel like we have the time to rest, be present, and enjoy life.

Get unstuck

How do you slow down and get off the hamster wheel? How do you become more present, creative, and connected to those around you?

Happiness shouldn’t be put off until the weekend. You can feel it right now, at this moment. Focus on the moment and find ways to appreciate where you are right now.

Try these tips for slowing down

- Set up some reminders for yourself to slow down– post-it notes, reminders on your phone, or whatever works for you
- Try spending some time doing nothing, or as little as possible
- Decrease your screentime
- Go outside, or try forest bathing
- Try meditation or mindfulness
- Do more physical activity, preferably in nature
- Journaling
- Stop waiting for everything to be perfect

To recap, here’s why we need to slow down:

- The way we live now, there is a lot of pressure to be busy, to multitask, and to be as productive as possible
- When we multitask, our minds are racing, reducing our effectiveness
- Slowing down can help us become more present, joyful, and connected to those around us

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An avid writer and photographer. A first-time author, she recently published her first children’s book to help children who are experiencing bullying. When she isn’t at her desk, Nicole loves to spend her time doing yoga and meditation, ballroom dancing, hiking, and celebrating nature with photography. She is a collector of sunset moments.

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