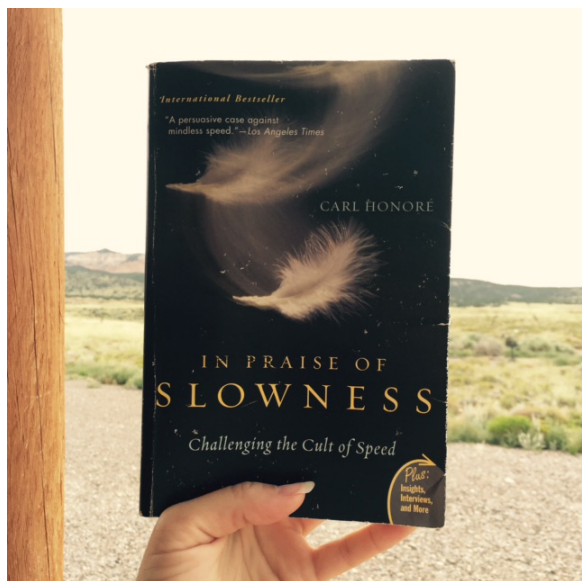


illuminating
articles

[Spectacular Books]

In Praise of Slowness



I'm writing this from a little one room cabin in Southern Utah. There are no alarms, no TVs, no doorbells, no honking, no interruptions. I rarely look at the time or even care what time it is. I eat when I'm hungry and sleep when I'm tired. I'm on a vacation that I take annually, and it is one of the best things I do for myself all year.

For nearly two years, I've been fascinated with the book, "In Praise of Slowness" by Carl Honore, but haven't taken the time to read it fully. I figured I would honor the title of the book by reading it as slowly as possible. In seriousness, though, it is a book filled with anecdotes and research about time, about quickness and what it has meant to our health and lives.

One of the stand-out parts to me in this book is the research that shows that going faster doesn't actually equal better outcomes. More money isn't necessarily made when companies move faster, we don't actually get more done throughout the day when we move faster. In fact, when humans push too hard, we get less done and we hurt ourselves more, the quality of our work is poorer and the quality of our lives goes down significantly. Perhaps most alarming is that our physical health suffers a great blow when we go too fast.

It has always puzzled me when I see people living lives of great, never-slow-down-speed, holding a green smoothie in one hand, a phone to the ear in the other, standing in the line at the health food store with frozen pizzas and protein bars. They've no time to cook a meal, no time to slowly cut vegetables or wait for the smells to waft up from a simmering pot of soup. They've no time to connect, let alone interact with the other people in line or with the person checking their groceries. I wonder, do they notice the weather? Is it cold or warm? Are there birds singing?

The book has several chapters devoted to different aspects of slowness and fastness in our lives: intimacy, parenting, eating, working, physical health, and more. It is interesting to me that speed makes its way into so many areas, and largely without notice!

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In Praise of Slowness

Below are some questions I came up with to help you begin thinking about the speed in your life. *Take some time* to sit down, answer them honestly, and to be thoughtful about your feelings. Share your answers with a partner, loved one, or friend and see if you can't incorporate just one way to be more slow in your life.

1. Do you feel "stuck" in your life of speed, as if you have no other choice?
2. Do you have piles of books, heart projects, art projects, recipes, etc. that you hope to get to someday?
3. Do you wish you could go away somewhere and turn everything off (phones, computers, electronics) for a few days?
4. Do you have feelings of anxiety when deadlines approach such as school registration, bills that are due, reports to be filed, etc.?
5. Do you have friends or family or loved ones that you long to spend more time with?

To conclude, this book (and my writing about it) aren't a condemnation of speed or fastness. I *like* to go fast. It makes me happy and I feel invigorated. What I can't do, and what has hurt my physical and emotional health over the years, is to never ever slow down or take a break from speed. Over the years, problems with physical health, including insomnia and adrenal fatigue, have given me pause

to step back and evaluate my life. I still move at great speeds, but I also take time to stop. Just stop. I'm working on learning the art of doing nothing (*dolce far niente*) and am getting better at it everyday. It has improved my life immensely and I know it will improve yours, too.

The book is widely available at bookstores and online and you can see a beautiful TED talk by Carl Honore, here:

http://www.ted.com/talks/carl_honore_praises_slowness?language=en

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