

Craig Clearwater
This I Believe Statement
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I believe in living slow.

In grad school, my roommate told me he was going to do something out of the ordinary for lent.... obey the speed limit. Later, I was amazed to find out he liked it. Slowing down his driving decreased his anxiety as he was less worried about wrecking or getting a ticket. With a clearer head, he had more time to reflect and take in the scenery. His commute became enjoyable and he arrived more relaxed. His gas and car maintenance bills even decreased. After lent, he choose to keep this habit.

I have discovered living life at a slower speed has a lot of the same benefits. You are more relaxed with less worries. You have more time to contemplate and you make better life decisions. You are healthier with less wear and tear on your body. You are more conscious of the autumn leaves changing.

I started living slow against my will. As a child, numerous tragedies blindsided my family. My grandfather took his own life and my uncle died in a motorcycle accident, driving too fast. My father was repeatedly laid off and my parents were under significant financial strain. I was shielded from all of this by my parents but I sensed deep down that something was not right. Covert depression and moderate social anxiety took hold.

The depression and anxiety wore me down and froze me up. I honestly could not do as much as I previously could. I had little choice but to develop a slower, simpler way of living. I had to give up less important activities to free up time and energy. Later in life, I had to work less hours and I had to learn to be frugal to make ends meet. I took longer to reach typical life milestones but I eventually did. For example, at age 37. I finally got engaged to the great relief of my parents.

Depression and anxiety forced me to slow down but ironically, this also gave me the space to confront these inner demons and, with time, overcome them. Slow down, confront, and overcome is a common religious theme. Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness and was confronted by Satan. Buddha spent 49 days meditating under a Bodhi tree before reaching enlightenment. Muhammad secluded himself in a mountain cave, etcetera.

Unfortunately, it took me much longer than 40 days to make headway. Years later In college, the depression finally softened with the help of a tight knit Christian community. In grad school, Eastern meditation and mindfulness techniques helped ease my social anxiety. With practice, I became calmer, more awake, and receptive. Eastern practices really emphasize slow living. Consider this quote, "Just slow down. Slow down your speech. Slow down your breathing. Slow down your walking. Slow down your eating. And let this slower, steadier pace perfume your mind. Just slow down."

Slow living has a poor reputation in our lightning quick culture while fast living has a certain exciting allure. Some are afraid that if they slow down they will lose out, be left behind, or have to face their inner demons. There are a lot of pressures on us to speed up but I encourage you to resist this urge and, while you're at it, obey the speed limit. This I believe.