

# slowing down *TO SPEED UP!*

By Gail Lowney Alofsin



Feeling overwhelmed? Schedule jam packed? Find yourself lamenting, “If only I had more time?” You are not alone! With 24 hours in a day, you can get a great deal done when you manage your time and the choices that you make! Remember the fable of the Hare and the Tortoise, slow and steady wins the race?

The fact is, we cannot live in a state of acceleration, seven days a week. We will burn out and become ineffective. We all want to win the race, the race for more time and balance in our lives.

In researching my book focused on time management and the semblance of balance, professionally and personally, I have listened to many different perspectives on how people manage their time and strive for balance. Many people wake up and the first thing they do is check their email, voicemail, LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook. Several students and young professionals that I spoke with do not wait until they wake up; they sleep with their Smartphone by the side of their bed and respond to texts in the middle of the night. When do we turn it off?

When I was growing up, our options were limited. We had three television stations, we waited for our newspaper to arrive in the afternoon, and our choices of toothpaste and deodorant were between four and five. A few decades later, we are inundated with choice. There are over 40,000 different items (skus) in a large grocery store. From the time we wake up until the minute we got to bed, we are exposed to over 6000 marketing messages – from television commercials, logos on clothing, advertising on social media, electronic media and a visit to the local pharmacy.

Technology continues to advance at a rapid pace. Perhaps answering texts and emails 24/7 will become the norm. I sure hope not!

While there are no absolutes, below I offer advice on how to stop, breathe, refresh and do what you need to achieve for you.

### **Wake Up Early and Spend This Time on YOU!**

I have interviewed women and men who wake up and put on their roller skates. They open their emails, check voicemail and start responding before their first pot of morning coffee has finished brewing. Once an email has been opened, there are requests, questions and assignments that need to be addressed. You lose “your time” to work for others, prior to commencing your day. Maybe an employee, coworker, boss, client or local nonprofit is looking for assistance. Maybe someone looking for a contact in your company; they may be inquiring about who is in charge of insurance, banking, employment, donations, marketing. I have yet to open my email and find a sponsorship inquiry for \$10,000, unless you count the Prince in Nigeria who needs my bank account number to transfer his wealth into my account!

My former eighth grade teacher, Sister Theresita Donach, starts her day with prayer and contemplation; concluding her day with kick boxing! Meditation specialist, Abby Murphy, advises us to make time for daily reflection and to give ourselves “permis-

sion to pause.” Web expert, BJ Gumkowski, wakes up, enjoys a 3 mile run and rides his bicycle to work, entering his office with a spring in his step. Doing something for you is not selfish, it is healthy.

You may say, “Gail, you have no idea about my life and how busy I am. I have a demanding job, three children, a spouse who travels for work and a variety of pets that the kids have brought home.” Yes – life is busy for everyone, yet you still have to capture moments for you – to refresh your mind and spirit.

### **Boiling Frog Syndrome**

Author and Speaker, Sharon Hoyle Weber, writes about the “Boiled Frog Syndrome” in her book, *Hot in the Pot*. The premise of the book is that we keep saying “yes” and assuming more tasks until we burst. Her analogy is that of placing a frog in a pot of water. When a frog is in a pot of water and the temperature is rising, the frog will adjust to the heat. While the frog notices the heat, it acclimates slowly until it cannot handle it anymore. Eventually the frog “bursts.” For us, this is the point when we start slamming file drawers at work, get angry at others about our workload and feel so overwhelmed we no longer know where to start.

The second analogy is when the frog jumps into the pot of water and in recognizing how ridiculously hot it is, jumps right out! That is a smart frog – avoiding unnecessary problems, pressure and panic that was created prior to their arrival to the pot.

So what about you? Are you hot in the pot? And if you are – can you jump out or start working with your colleague, team or family to turn the heat down?

### **The Penmanship Book**

My husband is a pilot. Prior to flights, he has a check list that he uses before the plane leaves the ground. Mark Adams, former VP of Johnson and Johnson and Entrepreneur, has run multiple companies by using lists he outlines on a yellow pad. He creates “Do” lists versus “To Do” lists and his focus is on realistic goals. Some people create their to do lists by clearing their head of everything that is in it and highlighting the priority four, seven or ten items that they must get done that day. My personal favorite is keeping notes on every meeting – whether it is handwriting in a physical notebook or typing on an iPad. Susan Hayhurst, my former client from Pepsi and Snapple, referred to it as my “Penmanship book” and would inquire, “What is in that book?” When we would discuss the initiatives we were working on, I would record everything in the book and send her a follow up email with both of our action items. This has been a great time saving method for me personally in getting things done. Our clients depart from us and head to their

next meeting or project. If we can take a minute to record notes and action steps, it ensures the initial meeting was effective, efficient and remembered.

As we all run from project to project, whether we are in sales, marketing, administration or operations, keeping our notes in one place is a great time saving tool. Lists work. Whether the notes are on your smart phone, yellow pad or note book; creating a list will assist you with your productivity.

### **Slowing Down to Speed Up**

I truly believe that the busiest people “slow down” in order to increase their productivity. My sister, Jennifer, is an orthodontist, triathlon runner and mother of four. She “slows down” with her family by including her girls in the activities around the household – cooking, cleaning, gardening and exercising together. She “dates” her husband of 16 years; whether it is a weekend getaway or a week surfing in Costa Rica. When she wakes up in the morning, the first words she reads are posted on her bathroom mirror – “I am not going to let anyone or anything ruin my day today.”

I posted those words (courtesy of Dr. Wayne Dyer) on my mirror over two years ago and what a difference it makes when you start your day with this mindset versus an abrupt email from the “real world.”

The secret of productivity is to stop and make time for the things in your life that matter – family, friends and things you enjoy doing. It will make a difference in your overall health of mind, body and spirit.

### **Master Your Moods**

When the outside world starts to aggravate you, whether it is a barista at a coffee shop, parking lot attendant, coworker or family member; stop and reflect upon the situation, could the problem be you? If everyone in the outside world is starting to gnaw at you, perhaps the challenge is your mindset? Master your moods by creating a “Snap Out Of It” check list. A few examples for your list might include listening to upbeat songs on your iPhone, calling someone who thinks you are remarkable, taking a walk, participating in an activity with positive people. Add more laughter into your life – stop to review a comical YouTube video or listen to a colleague’s delightful story. Do your best to surround yourself with positive people, personally and professionally.

As a sales & marketing executive, adjunct professor, active Board member serving on 4 boards, national educational and inspirational speaker ([gailspeaks.com](http://gailspeaks.com)) and “the best” mother and wife, Gail Lowney Alofsin practices work life balance on a daily basis! Gail can be reached at 401-640-4418 or [gailalofsin@yahoo.com](mailto:gailalofsin@yahoo.com). Follow Gail on Twitter - [@gailspeaks](https://twitter.com/gailspeaks).