

# 40 Slow Tips for SLOW Living

## 1. Schedule Slow Thinking Time

Block off slots in your schedule to stop doing and start thinking. Find a quiet place, switch off your gadgets and focus your thoughts on a current problem, or on bigger, strategic questions.

## 2. Speed Check

At random moments during the day, stop and ask yourself if you're doing whatever you're doing too fast. If you are, take a few deep breaths and return to the task more slowly.

## 3. Ten-Second Email Rule

Before emailing someone, pause for ten seconds and ask yourself if it would be more efficient to handle the matter face to face or with a phone call. Also consider who really needs to be copied in.

## 4. Use Slow Spaces

Many companies are creating quiet rooms for meditation, yoga, massage, prayer, even napping. If your workplace has a quiet zone, use it to rest and recharge at least once a day. If not, lobby to create one.

## 5. Breathe

When you feel rushed and anxious, stop for a moment and take a few deep breaths to unleash an instant calming effect on your mind and body.

## 6. Meditate

Meditation (or mindfulness) is a powerful tool for slowing down. It curbs anxiety and stress, fosters calm and sharpens concentration. It makes you happier, more energised and more creative. Over time it will also rewire your brain so that you can process information...faster!

## 7. Schedule Listening Time

Block off 10 minutes every day to chat informally with one member of your team. Instead of talking about the daily grind, focus on getting to know that person better: their dreams, hobbies, plans, worries, big thoughts.

## 8. Take Breaks

Build regular breaks into your work schedule. Take one when you feel yourself flagging. Or set a timer to remind yourself. But be flexible. If you're on a roll, or in the middle of a big thought or an important conversation, postpone the break till you're ready.

## 9. Downsize Your Calendar

Create a Not To-Do List. Scan your schedule daily to find tasks you can ditch. A meeting you can cancel? A dinner you can duck out of? Move it to the Not To-Do List and move on.

## 10. Prioritise and Delegate

Pause to figure out what tasks really deserve your time and attention at work. Then delegate (or eliminate) the rest. Do this individually and as a team.

## 11. Take a Walk

Leave your desk to go for a stroll – in a nearby green space or even just round the building. This will relax your body and mind. Walking can also be a more laid-back and intimate way to chat with a colleague.

## 12. Create More In-Between Time

Add three to five minutes to the downtime between activities. To help you process, prepare and recover for the next thing on your To Do list.

## 13. Unplug

Schedule moments during the day for dealing with email and other online tasks and switch off the rest of the time. Use Auto-Replies to explain why you are offline and when you will be reachable again. And give instructions on how to reach you in an emergency.

## 14. Lunch Properly

Make it a rule, whenever possible, to have lunch away from your desk. Even if it's just 20 minutes.

## 15. Stop Notifications

End the barrage of interruptions by switching off all Notifications so you have to check manually (ie. when you're ready) for new messages and status updates.

## 16. Rise Earlier

Set the alarm ten minutes earlier every morning (it's worth it, trust me!) so you have enough time to start the day in a more relaxed groove.

## 17. Just Say No

Make a habit of saying No at least once a day to an invitation or request to do something you can get away without doing.

## 18. Monotask

Avoid the sloppiness and inefficiency of multitasking by focusing, as much as possible, on doing one thing at a time.

## 19. Find A Slow Ritual

Choose an activity that inoculates you against the virus of hurry and embed it in your daily schedule. It could be reading, yoga, gardening, cooking, knitting, painting, etc.

## 20. Two-Minute Rule

When faced with a tough choice at work, take two minutes to think it over carefully. This is enough to move past the brain's in-built biases in order to make a better, more rational decision.

## 21. Rethink Meetings

Start every meeting with a period of silence. Use the time to calm down, focus and prepare your thoughts. Ban screens and phones wherever possible. Instead of setting aside the same amount of time for every meeting, think how long each meeting should be: Shorter to focus minds? Or longer to allow for richer discussion?

## 23. Keep Score

Encourage staff to keep a Slow Scorecard tracking how often they enjoy a family meal, a good night's sleep, a heart-to-heart chat or how often they unleash their creativity by slowing down. Offer incentives to boost that Slow score.

## 24. Quote Big Names

Cite heavy hitters who champion the power and wisdom of slowing down. Charles Darwin called himself a "slow thinker." So too does Maryam Mirzakhani, the first woman to win the world's most prestigious mathematics prize.

## 25. Be Mischievous

Why not nominate a "slowest employee of the month" to get staff thinking about the benefits of rest, reflection, connecting with others and deep learning?

## 26. Quote Higher Authorities

Find pro-Slow quotes and pin them up in communal areas or attach them to emails where appropriate. Here are three humdingers from *The Economist* to get you started:

"Forget frantic acceleration. Mastering the clock of business is about choosing when to be fast and when to be slow."

“Working round the clock is probably a sign that you are incapable of delegating, not that you are an invincible hero.”

“Frenetic multitasking – surfing the web while watching TV while listening to music – is a formula for distraction, rather than good management.”

#### 27. Model Slow

To inspire your team to embrace “good slow” you must set the example. Make sure they see you turning off your smartphone and taking more time to think, listen and connect.

#### 28. Spread The Slow Word

Share short videos of staff discussing times when slowing down helped them deliver better results.

#### 29. Namecheck

Check to see if you know the name of the spouse or partner of every member of your team. If you don't, perhaps you need to slow down and spend more time asking questions and listening.

#### 30. Prepare Tomorrow Today

At the end of each day, plan out the following day in order to go home with a clear mind.

#### 31. Handwrite

Take notes by hand whenever possible. By slowing you down, this delivers better learning and retention than typing on a keyboard.

#### 32. Give Home A Chance

Designate specific time slots for handling messages from the office at home – and put your work-linked gadgets in a drawer the rest of the time.

#### 33. Play Hide-the-Phone

Whenever you are chatting to someone in person, make sure there are no smartphones in sight – this makes the conversation deeper and more focussed.

#### 34. Go Green

Create or make more use of green spaces: spending even just a few minutes in nature is immensely relaxing.

#### 35. Curb Working Hours

Give yourself and your team enough time to refresh, reboot and reflect by keeping a lid on working hours. Encourage everyone to leave the office when their work is done. Delegate, outsource, prioritise.

#### 36. Get Puzzling

Spread out the pieces of a difficult puzzle somewhere in the office. Watch it become an oasis of Zen for everyone who passes by.

#### 37. Email Vacation Delete

Set up your work email to delete all incoming messages when you are on vacation. Send out an auto-reply giving the contact details of whoever is covering for you during your break. And ask people to re-send any emails that only you can handle after you return.

#### 38. Slow Coffee Break

Take 10 minutes to do nothing else apart from making and drinking a cup of coffee/tea/etc. No phones. No newspaper. No company reports.

#### 39. Rethink the On Button

Have everyone in your team track their use of technology over a week using an app like Break-Free. Use this to spark a conversation about how to unplug in order to concentrate and connect more.

#### 40. Listen Slowly

Next time you're in a one-on-one conversation, make a real effort to listen carefully. Ask lots of questions. Weave back into the conversation the highlights of what the other person has said to you using your own words.