



Time on your hands? Or not enough time? COVID-19 has forced many to slow down, to stop rushing from one place to another. For others, such as essential workers, it's meant having to work harder and under more pressure than ever before. Whichever camp you fall into, thinking about how you use the time you have is really important to both your physical and mental wellbeing.

Too much time?

One of the silver linings for some people is that COVID-19 has forced us to slow down. So how do we make the most of this opportunity? Perhaps we can take inspiration from Carl Honoré, a self-professed “speedaholic”. Honoré was always looking for ways to save time, after all faster is better, right? We speed dial, speed walk and even speed date. We have fast food; superfast broadband and we all want to be on the fast track. Let's be honest, even instant gratification takes too long these days!

Carl's “wake up call” came from his son. Every night Carl would come home from work, still in fast mode, in time to read his son a bedtime story. Carl says that he would speed through the story skipping a page here, a paragraph there but his son, who knew *The Cat in the Hat* off by heart, was having none of it. Storytime became a frustrating battle between Carl's speed and his son's slowness. Then Carl read about the most amazing time saving idea - the one-minute bedtime story. How fantastic is that? He would have to try it out. Then he caught himself and thought: ‘What am I doing? Why am I trying to make the most precious part of the day, the one-on-one time with my son, a time saving challenge?’



From that moment on Carl said he started to think about time differently and was inspired to write *In Praise of Slow*, a book highlighting the importance of slowing down in an ever busier world. As he says:

“Sometimes it takes a wakeup call to alert us to the fact that we are hurrying through our lives, instead of actually living them, living the fast life rather than the good life.”

Perhaps COVID-19 is our wakeup call?

To hear more about how Carl broke free from this ‘roadrunner mindset’ and learn about slow food, slow travel, slow cities and even slow sex, watch his fascinating [TED Talk](#).





WATCH THIS: What are we missing? Focusing on the little things *could* turn out to be the big things in life. Watch [this video](#) and find out.

Not enough time?

For some people, COVID-19 has resulted in long hours, stress, pressure and an increased risk of infection. For these people, slowing down might seem like an intangible luxury.

But finding small breathing spaces during the day to notice how you are feeling can be really important. Some people call this being mindful. Jon Kabat Zinn, an America Professor and the founder of Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), describes mindfulness as “paying attention in a particular way on purpose in the present moment non-judgementally.”

Mindful living

A range of [studies](#) have shown that mindfulness can help reduce stress and anxiety, enhance relationships, increase focus and memory, boost immune systems and may also help reduce compassion fatigue and burnout in healthcare staff.

We don't think twice about the daily things we do for our personal physical hygiene, like brush our hair or take a shower, so why not do the same for our minds?

In the time it takes to clean our teeth, we could practice mental hygiene. By taking three minutes to create a [breathing space](#) or undertake a [body scan](#) meditation we anchor ourselves in the present moment. Building these small spaces of calm into our day can help us pause, take a breath and slow down. Why not give it a try?

Your challenge! Get Mindful

Over the next week, take time to still your mind and be fully in the present, whether it's through meditation, prayer, noticing nature or just paying full attention to someone close to you.

Here are some activities, try them out and find the best fit for you.

1. Download a [free mindfulness app](#) and practice for 10 minutes each day.
2. Find your inner tortoise and experience [slow food](#). Choose a traditional family recipe, prepare it slowly and mindfully, use as many local Australian ingredients as possible, and eat



Exploring Wellbeing

Session 6 Place: *take notice*



it slowly - noticing the different flavours tastes and sensations in each mouthful. It will taste better! And finally, share with others in a [virtual dinner party](#).

3. Try this [awe walk](#) and take time to notice and connect with nature
4. You choose!

Want to learn more? Check out these websites



[Smiling Minds](#)

Free resources to help you still your mind and deal with stress.



[The world institute of slowness](#)

Great ideas about how to slow down and why it good for us all.



['Dear Mind' Take Notice](#)

Simple activities to 'take notice' and boost your mental health and wellbeing.

