

The Slow Manifesto
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Dedication

I dedicate this book to my wife Dawn, and our two boys Justin and Austin. It would not have been written without their support and love.

Acknowledgements

I appreciate the support from the people who encouraged me to publish this book, and for their thoughts and feedback.

A heartfelt thanks goes to you, the person who is choosing to read it.

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Introduction

The Slow Introduction

Slow down, and welcome to *The Slow Manifesto*.

At one point, the book that follows was going to be a heavily researched, more “academic” style of writing. It was going to share data, facts, resources etc... about the need for our society to slow down. It was going to demonstrate in a fairly scientific way the benefits of slowing down for humans.

Eventually, I said to myself (as I usually do), **screw that**.

This needs to be a book of **action**... a book that fills you up with the feeling there is more to life than the next iPhone upgrade, the next 41 megapixel camera, the next 70 hour work week etc...

So that is what this is. I’ve turned what was originally titled *Slow – The Book* into a manifesto for lifestyle change. I’m going to get “in your face,” and I’m not going to hold anything back in this writing. I won’t insult you, dear reader, but there is no place for sugar coating anything when it comes to major lifestyle change.

Slowing down your life is serious business, and that mentality is carried throughout this book.

If you don’t like that style of writing, please stop reading.

If you’ll stick with me though, what I hope to convey through this manifesto is the seriousness of the situation we’re in as a society, and what to do about it so you can enhance your life. I hope you’ll enjoy the read, and more importantly I hope you’re inspired to make a positive change in your life, as I was.

Thank you, thank you for reading my very first published book. Slow down, and enjoy it.

Chapter 1 - The Slow Life Manifesto

We need to slow down, as a society... *not* just as individuals.

We need to slow down our use of technology, the advances in technology, our daily lives, our consumption of various natural resources (which ARE limited), and we need to slow down and think more critically in our communication with each other.

We just need to slow down ... period.

But that being said, “slowing down” doesn’t mean we need to stop. So for the purposes of this manifesto I’m going to define what I think “slow” is, and what “slow” isn’t. Hopefully that can help you define “slow” for yourself.

Slow is:

- Not checking email or texts first thing in the morning, and instead enjoying a cup of coffee, preferably with a loved one.
- Not eating in 15 minutes or less, instead savoring each bite... and enjoying your meal.
- **Focusing on quality** instead of quantity. We live in a “mass-produced for the masses” society, we need to slow down, and get back to a local, hand-crafted society.
- **Pacing yourself through life**, of which you only get one... and right now, we aren’t doing such a good job as a society.
- **Slowing our work down**, enjoying “mini-retirements” along the way, and sending a BIG middle finger at huge corporations who focus on 70 hour weeks and barely two-weeks of vacation.
- **Developing the ability to critically think**. That means slowing down enough to look at both sides of an issue, and having an open mind when it comes to hearing the “other” side you might not agree with.
- **Reading past page 18 on average... seriously?** I was shocked when I found out most people haven’t read a book since high school. This is depressing.
- **Slow is about taking care of you and your health**, because without those, the rest of this doesn’t mean anything.
- **Slow is about finding balance in your life**, and being willing to find it in the face of seeming “weird” to people who haven’t figured it out yet.

Slow isn’t:

- An excuse to be lazy.



- An excuse to not participate in society (however, you don't have to participate in every living thing either).
- An excuse not to stand for something.
- An excuse to “opt-out” and hope things just get better (they won't without your help).
- An excuse to be depressed.
- An excuse to over eat, or fail to take care of yourself.
- Slow isn't an excuse, it's a mindset, it's a movement... it's what life is meant to be, not what marketing companies make you believe.

Now that we've defined (somewhat) what slow **is** and **isn't**, let's briefly cover *why* slow is necessary as a society (my book will cover much more detail).

We need to slow down and wake up, people.

Right now greed and outdated principles are ruining our lives, and we're going so fast that we don't see it. We can't whine about how things are going if we're not slowing down long enough to think and do something about it.

But this isn't a manifesto about activism, so no need to worry. You can read Derrick Jensen or Bill McKibben if you're interested in that topic (both are recommended).

We have to start somewhere, and “Slow” is where I'm starting. I hope you will too.

Because in a world focused on speed, life begins by slowing down.

I hope that by reading the book, and from visiting the resources on the website for the book at <http://slowthebook.com>, you'll at least consider the possibility of slowing down your own life (if you haven't already).

If I've helped at least one person in that regard ... this whole project will be more than worth it from my perspective.



Did You Notice The Birds?

Your mobile phone is ringing.

Another text is coming in ... you have email in your inbox, and there is an “important” meeting you need to attend.

You’ve got to upgrade your laptop, your mobile phone, your sunglasses ... you need more stuff ... need to go to that party (so you can be on your phone again).

Life keeps moving faster, faster, faster ... you’re soooooo busy.

No, you’re not.

You’ve made all of your “busy-ness” up. It’s a status symbol. Deep down, you think you “need” to be busy, or society won’t accept you.

Which is patently false.

While all this was happening ... the coolest bird just flew by. On top of that your son, your daughter, they’ve each been asking for your attention.

Your wife, she wants to make passionate love to you ... but you keep returning “just one more text.”

Your husband, he wants to tell you something ... but you keep getting that damn phone.

Did you notice the birds?



Racing To Life's Finish Line

"I've gotta paint my house." (Do you? Or do you just need something to do?)

"We've gotta get these bushes out of the backyard by Fall." (We do? Last time I checked, we can always do it next year.)

"I've gotta pull an all-nighter just to get this done on time." (Really? Did you screw up the management of your time to begin with? Or are you looking for some sort of status symbol you can hold up for other people?)

If you keep running towards the "finish line" of life, when do you stop to catch your own breath? And why is it we attach an imaginary status symbol for "sacrificing" so much of our lives to get things done?

Besides, who cares that you work 80 hours a week doing a job that should really only take you 30 hours a week to complete?

(Yet you, for some reason, stretch it out to 80, then brag about it to your coworkers. Be honest here, we've all done it.)

Here's a little insight, nobody really cares about your workweek, even when they act like they do. They are all too busy with their own lives to care about your all-nighter or 80-hour week.

People might give you a pat on the back of some sort, but at what expense?

And, do you really need these little, tiny "hoorays" to function in life?

(Like the typical, "I need my 15 minutes of fame" person the news media finds to interview when they bring you "live" to a scene.)

The answer is, no, because this type of recognition is completely meaningless.

So what do I mean by the title to this post?

Simple. Walk through your life ... don't run. It never has been, and never will be about *how much* you get accomplished. Rather it's the *quality* of what you accomplish that matters.

We can get *how much* from anyone ... are **you** willing to step up and offer us *quality*?



You Work 70 - 80 Hours A Week, So What?

I just love it when someone comes up to me and brags about “how they pulled an all-nighter last night”...

Who gives a fuck?

Great, you’re ruining your life, and your health, in the name of a faceless corporation or business that doesn’t really give a shit in the first place (for the most part).

All in the name of some fake “status symbol” you can hold up and get 4 minutes of recognition for.

I mean, think about it... you say this... and really, how much does it mean to other people?

Nothing, except empty platitudes and a pat on the back from your boss who DIDN’T have to pull the all-nighter.

Whoever invented the 40-hour “full-time” work week needed to be shot on sight.

But think about this today...

If you work yourself down to the bone, in the hopes of getting a big promotion or raise at the expense of your health... is it really worth it?

Can you look your family in the eyes and say; *“I’m working 80 hours a week and I can ALSO truly be here with you too, because I’m so full of energy AFTER working myself down to the bone, that I can do everything!”*

Didn’t think so.



Going Fast, Always Producing, Wanting More Stuff ... Are You Content?

If you always seek to acquire “stuff.” If you always are looking to move “fast,” be “first,” and go, Go, GO...

Maybe you're not **content** with your life.

Contentment is a major cause of stress in our lives. Being content with your life requires a “slow” mindset ... a present mindset ... an “in the moment” mindset.

A being here, and now, mindset.

So look into it. If you look slow enough, there is a surprise footnoted from this very page that can help get you started.



Why Can't You Just Call In Sick One More Day?

In 2013 I went through a nasty upper respiratory infection that lasted 3 weeks.

During this time, I reflected on what it was like to work in the “retail” world (over 12 years ago). I remember what it was like to be sick, and perhaps call in sick for “one” day, to rest.

But then to have to go to work right afterwards, sick or not.

Had to “keep that job” you know ... right?

Wrong, I couldn't have been more wrong.

Just because your job might demand performance, doesn't mean you have to do so when you feel like crap. So call in sick, take your recovery slowly, and perhaps even call in sick for one day *after* you're better.

If your job fires you, or threatens to, for taking care of yourself ... you have to ask yourself, was the job really worth it begin with?

Probably not.

If you're in the hospital because you didn't take care of yourself when you were sick, and then got a secondary infection that was even worse ... what is the point of performing anyhow?

If you're dead ... none of it matters either.

On top of that, I'm willing to bet that any company that expects you to work while you're sick doesn't care if you're there in the first place.

As for the income part, the “*Well, I need the money*” part ... when you think really hard about it ... is this little bit of money worth ruining your life over?

I'm willing to bet if you lived “slower” in the other parts of your life, selling some stuff or quit buying useless stuff etc... you could probably find a way to get by until you found a new job.

You could, dare I say it, go and create something yourself. You could share your gift with the world (e.g. write a book, create art, etc...).

Read “*The Art Of Non-Conformity*” by Chris Guillebeau for a good starting point on the subject. Follow that with “*The Icarus Deception*” by Seth Godin. You need something to do while you're getting better anyhow, might as well be for yourself (for once).



Slow Risk

Risk is one of those topics that is fairly subjective.

So when I talk about “slow” risk, I’m actually not referring to one specific type of risk, as there are many types.

But when we take risk, or examine it, we need to slow down.

There is advice circulating out there similar to the following:

“Fail fast, and fail often.”

That statement seems to be loaded with **risk**, right? If you fail fast, you’re also contradicting the very essence of the “slow” philosophy I’m referring to as it pertains to risk, right?

Not so fast.

I challenge that by failing fast, and failing often, you’re actually slowing down **risk**. This is because you’re allowing yourself small steps of failure instead of an unpredictable large, catastrophic failure that is bound to happen if you take big risks too fast.

Think of it this way...

If you are trying to avoid every little failure and prepare for every single possible negative consequence, especially when you’re “risking” the unknown ... you never **learn** about that unknown.

Learning is how you **slow risk down** ... and failing fast is how you learn.

You see, *The Slow Manifesto* isn’t about going “slow” all the time, in everything... it’s about picking the highest leverage points at which to go slowly.

I think we need to get better at picking the right points to go slow ... and that’s why I wrote the book.

Slow Thinking

How many times have you seen something interesting, say online, and immediately blogged about it ... tweeted it ... commented on it ... etc...

Instead, why not slowly think about it?

Because you don't have time, right? You've got to move on to the next thing, right? If you don't, you'll be "left behind," right?

Wrong.

In our culture of "go, go, GO" I'm starting to see a disturbing trend develop. Overall, the time we invest methodically thinking about things is diminishing.

As a result, we see more "reactionary" thinking instead of **proactive** thinking. We seem to have lost **deep** thinking (for the most part) awhile ago. Especially in America, where we have an "anti-intellectual" attitude.

Let's get our deep, slow, methodical thinking back.

Don't get me wrong ... there is a place for "on the spot" decisions, but rarely, certainly *not* in every situation.

But there is a larger cultural problem here...

If we don't slow down and think that is **exactly** what advertisers, marketers, and politicians want. Because if you're not thinking deeply, clearly, slowly ... the decisions you make will be based on a *limited* amount of information that seems convincing on the surface.

TV commercials, or even worse ... **mainstream news media** anyone?

But you don't have to listen to me. This type of thinking, and the exploitation of our attention is happening, right now, as you read this. There are a ton of books written on the subject.

So I encourage you to slow down and think ... do your own research and observe your own habits. I'm pretty sure you'll see what I'm referring to.



Writing Slowly

Who said you had to blog or write every single day?

They're wrong.

Write slowly.

Take your time, write when inspiration strikes. Create the atmosphere where your creativity can blaze like a large flame. Don't fall for the pressurized, click-bait, hurry up and produce content culture we are currently living in.

All that produces is run of the mill, everyday, "me too" crap.

If you write, do so at your pace, maybe even slower. Write 50 words a day, 500 words, even 5,000 words if you like. There is no magic number, no spectacular formula for writing success.

There is a ton of content on the Internet, most of it not worthy of an Editor's slush-pile. Don't contribute to it. Don't fall for the "gotta get it out there" line.

This is a short book, written slowly.

Hopefully, yours will be too. Not slow by my definition, though, slow by yours. If that means you write 50,000 words a month, great. Just make sure you take your time.

A good book to read on this topic is *The Art of Slow Writing* by Louise DeSalvo.



Chapter 2 - Slow Technology

Let's Not Let Technology Replace Humanity

We have a gift.

It's called our **humanity**. It consists of our consciousness, ability to adapt, and our ability to think beyond primitive needs.

We live in an age where technology has developed to a point where it can replace certain parts of our humanity. For example, **email** replaces face to face meetings, a fact that Stephen Petranek reminded me of before a call we had last week.

Think about this one small way technology is actually damaging our human relationships:

When you email someone, that email takes all of the emotion, tone, inflection, and understanding of the communication away.

You no longer have the necessary elements for a human, face to face conversation. And while we could replace that with say, a Skype conversation (video or audio), or as Stephen pointed out to me ... a hologram conversation ... we don't do that, do we?

Nope. We send an email because it's convenient.

And in our overly progressed, overly efficient society **convenience causes obsolescence**. In other words, we create technology that can bring us what we want more conveniently, and that typically makes the solution before it obsolete.

Email is making our human conversations more convenient. Plus we can "hide" behind our monitor, so we sometimes say hurtful things that we would NOT say face to face, or on video.

This is a simple example:

Eventually some of society is looking forward to a "singularity" event where technology makes some or all of our biology obsolete.

I don't look forward to that. Because when biology, seen as an outdated model by singularists, gets replaced by technology ... humanity ceases to exist.

Sure, technology could "perfect" a human form and processes. But it cannot replace humanity. Technology needs to be left to evolve itself, not transcend to attempt to evolve humanity.

Slowing Technology Down

I'm an avid user of technology. I do think we need to take more control and start slowing technology down, however.

Here's what I mean...

I surf the Internet, I use mobile technology, I text, I Tweet, etc... so I'm not afraid of what the latest technology can do *for* us. What I **am** afraid of is what some types of technology, and the attached mentalities behind buying, consuming, and using said technology ... are doing *to* us.

There have been spectacular innovations within the last 50 years. The Internet, the mobile phone, the social media, wearable technology, sensor technology etc... All of it good innovation in concept, and for the most part, in use.

That said, we need to slow down what I call our "consumer mentality" when using various technologies. We need to instead adapt a more-focused "user mentality."

Here's the difference:

Consumer mentality = "gotta get the latest update/version/gadget/color/Tweet/text/etc..." in order to claim my status within society.

User mentality = "think 'do we really need to upgrade?'/Tweeting valuable content, *not* what you had for breakfast/I don't NEED to get that latest text right away/I shut OFF my phone from time to time as appropriate/Bottom line, I USE the technology, it does NOT run my life at all, EVER."

Bottom line ... life-saving, world-changing, and problem solving technologies are a good thing. Standing in line so you can try and be first to get the latest iPhone 7 and get your 15 minutes of fame on YouTube ... that is more of the consumer mentality.

We need to slow down our technology so we can use it, get good at using it, and quit letting it use us.

Their marketing and advertising is aimed at turning you into a consumer, so they can increase their quarterly revenue and churn out profits. They could care less if you lose a bit of your humanity in the process.

But don't take it from me, look around the next time you walk down a city streets, or drive in traffic. How many people *aren't* paying attention?

We need to fix that. And, that is only one small example of many for the need to slow down our technology. Focus more on the world-changing, problem solving, life saving stuff ... and less on getting a bigger camera or screen in your phone.

The main inspiration for this comes from the potential I see with our use of technology. I suppose I would like to see technology being developed and used in a way that makes this world a better place, and not a tabloid news bite.

Slow Social Media

If you want to, you could be connected 24/7/365.

In fact, there are some people that don't stop answering their phone, checking their status on whatever social media account, and don't stop to talk to someone without connecting to something else etc...

Why do that to yourself? Because some commercial on TV said you had to?

(Have you ever slowed down long enough to analyze WHY you do these things? It's OK, most people haven't, you're not alone.)

I'm defining **social media** as any media form that you interact socially with someone or something else.

So, **slow social media** would mean slowing down long enough to have *a full conversation with everyone you talk to face to face, 100% of the time ...* for example.

Can you imagine that?

Can you imagine turning your phone off for most of the day, and picking **limited** times of the day where you can immerse yourself in media and return phone calls.

I know, I know, you might miss something if you don't have it on 100% of the time, engaging your Twitter feed **while** you're talking to people.

Who cares if you miss something? Was there some scheduling deity from up above that came down and decreed:

"You MUST answer the phone when it rings, you MUST answer every status update, or post your own ... or even look for something to do online when there is nothing ... you MUST!"

I think not.

And the sad thing is, we do this when we're talking to another person right across from us, or even worse while we're driving a car.

Have you stopped to think what the other person is thinking when you do this?

Didn't think so, most people haven't.

And the really sad thing is, this is just one sliver, one small example of our 24/7/365 over-connected society and social media use.

So slow down. Try turning the phone off unless you choose to engage in social media and return voice messages. You'll probably find you really don't miss that much.

And the weird feeling you get? That will go away.

The reward? Your time. 😊 And that's a reward that is becoming more and more valuable as we go along.

Personally I am active on social media, but slowly, at a pace I control. The boredom I feel sometimes is a relief, *not* a negative consequence. As for the mobile phone, it stays off until I want to use it.

Amazing concept eh?

I used to be the 24/7/365 guy, and I'm sure that because of it, I lost valuable interpersonal connection with people. Not to mention the health consequences.

Let's slow down, and take back control of our lives folks.

"In a world focused on speed, life begins by slowing down."

Slow Smart Phones

It's simple...

Turn the ringer off, turn the notifications off, and use the phone.

Don't let it use you.

Too many people are letting their phones use them ... don't believe me?

Ask the person who bumps into you because they were texting while walking down a crowded sidewalk. Or the next one who is paying more attention to their smart phone than the other cars on the road while driving.

Or, the idiot who sits at a green light because whatever they are watching on their smart phone is more important than keeping traffic flowing.

(Traffic is already enough of an issue, thank you very much.)

Or perhaps the worst example ... the person who does one of two things:

1. Starts talking to you, then interrupts that conversation saying "I've got to take this." No, they don't.
2. Has to text someone who is less than 500 feet away from them, instead of walking up to them and talking to them face to face.

All because of the little computer they have in their hand.

Have you ever done any of these things? Are you going to keep writing it off as "human nature?"

Or can we all slow down long enough to realize that we have the control of these little computers with phones and cameras?



3 Steps To Slow #Twitter Or Any Other Social Media Usage

I'm a "slow" Twitter user (@JosephRatliff, in case you wanted to connect with me there).

You can be too, and the rewards are numerous. But one key reward is taking control of some of your time. That, and not getting wrapped up in some of the "high school drama" that can manifest itself on this or any other social media tool.

With that in mind I've prepared a short, easy to implement set of 3 steps (tips) to slow down your use of Twitter (or any social tool) and reclaim your time:

1. Establish time parameters. It's so easy to get lost in the Twitter feed (especially if you use the #Discover feature in the top bar). Before you know it, you've wasted a ton of time clicking on meaningless links, looking at cat pictures, and retweeting stuff that probably won't get seen anyhow.

(If you think your Tweets get seen by a TON of people, unless you have 100,000 followers or you get retweeted by someone who does ... they probably don't).

2. Get a focus, plan your use of Twitter. Don't just log on and say to yourself "*Yeah, I'm going to only spend 45 minutes on Twitter today.*" You'll just end up spending more time. So have a focus, a purpose for logging on ... and make it as specific as you can.

Good examples are connecting with a specific person, using Twitter to research a specific topic or seeking a specific piece of information. And be careful with this one ... using the feed to discover a news bite (if you're a journalist, or your vocation centers around news).

3. Don't use Twitter every day. You don't have to log on every single day. This is one I'm still working on myself, but I'm getting better at it.

Now, you might be saying to yourself "*But I'll miss something if I don't at least, CHECK Twitter once a day.*" No, you won't. And even **if** you did, and that's a BIG "if" ... it won't be the end of the world.

Twitter works tomorrow as well as it does today, until it quits working, that is. Then no one will have the "advantage" you're thinking about.

So there you have it, 3 steps to slow #Twitter (or any other social tool). I hope you'll try these with an open mind, because there are much better things to do with the little time you have on this Earth.

Like, GASP, write a letter longer than 140 characters ... and GASP AGAIN, **mail** it to that person.

The Story Of The Snail

If you paid attention to the website associate with this book (<http://slowthebook.com>), there was a snail on top of the world in the header graphic.

Yes, it sat right there on top of the world (it's still on the book's cover).

Aside from the obvious thought that the snail was there because they ARE "slow" ... or that "slow and steady wins the race" ... there are much deeper reasons a snail exists on top of the world.

This is that story.

I thought to myself one day...

"What if that snail had the ability to think on a basic human level? Not evolved, critical thinking, but just enough so that snail could express their thoughts to me."

They would feel on top of the world, wouldn't they? To be given the gift of human thought, the ability to think and express themselves, this snail would feel eternally blessed to have been given the gift of **evolution**.

Have you ever stopped and thought about the gifts like these that you have been given? Well the snail in this story, and on the cover of my book, has. It feels like it's on top of the world.

Now the snail moves so slowly, anything it would want to do to express itself would have to top a short list of the things this snail would want to accomplish, right?

And depending on the type of snail, we're talking about a time period of only 2 to 7 years (in the wild, up to 25 years in captivity) to get whatever this snail wants to do accomplished.

In short, there's NO time like the present for the snail, especially when compared to our average human lifespan of almost 80 years. And this snail moves at an astoundingly slow rate of 1 millimeter per second ... so I suppose a "snail's pace" really does apply here.

For the sake of argument, and for this story, we're going to say that this snail can only pick one thing, maybe two things, that it can focus on accomplishing in its entire life.

We're talking about the thing, or perhaps the couple of things it wants to do to truly feel on top of the world. Also it doesn't have time, nor can it make time for doing much else other than focusing on what we'll call its "dream."

It moved slowly, because that's natural for a snail to do, but it also accomplished its one or two things. And that's the lesson of the snail on the cover of my book.

It hasn't reached the top of the world yet, but it's going to, because it's following its own "slow manifesto." One free of technological advancement, free of distractions, one that I'm sure will be loaded with genuine connection (because heck, it doesn't have time to create anything else).



We obviously need to be human, but think like this snail. Yes, we can move faster than the snail, we are the evolved species etc... but we can still think like the snail.

How? It starts with picking your own “one or two” things.

Quit trying to be everything to everyone (you can't), quit trying to please everyone (you can't), and quit trying to do everything everyday (you can't).

Slow down, do your one or two things. Get good at that, in fact get so good at that you'll be able to share it with other people in the world. You know, the ones that really “get” you. Then show them how to find their one or two things, and how to slow down. How to tune out the marketing, the unnecessary, the critics.

Do that one or two things you have time for in your 80 or so trips around the sun. Obviously, we'll expect bigger things from you because you can move faster than 1 millimeter per second.

But let's keep this relative, okay?

Sure, you can use the tools and technology needed to do your one or two things. The snail used its tools, and whatever technology it was capable of using. Of course, because you're human, and because technology at your disposal is just a little bit more advanced, we'll expect your one or two things to reflect that.

But don't get distracted by any unnecessary upgrading encouraged by marketing companies. Don't fall prey to endless emails sitting in your inbox, and shut off the damn phone once in awhile. Don't forget to acknowledge your loved ones, your friends, and enjoy life for what it is (not for what marketing *makes* it to be).

Because in the end, we're all snails in the eyes of the evolved life form that looks at us and our ability to walk about 5 mph, do all this quantum mechanics stuff, and explore less than 4% of space... and thinks...

“Oh they're so cute, those little humans running around acting like they're important. They'll learn soon enough.”

You see, the little snail on top of the world that was in the header graphic, I never wrote the world you see was Earth, did I? It's that *snail's* little world. Kind of puts *our* world into perspective in the grand scheme of things, doesn't it?

We're just on this pale blue dot, trying to make our way and understand things better. We're trying to explore, engage, connect, work, play, love, etc...

But are we really, truly, deep down doing it the way each of us wants to?

Are we following this snail's example? I mean, they have been on this planet for **over 500 million years** ... so I think the snail, this snail, has a lot to teach us... if we bother to slow down enough to learn.



Chapter 3 - Slow Culture

"Slow" Is Not An Excuse

I touched on this in the Manifesto, but here is a deeper explanation of what I mean when I say “slow is not an excuse to/for _____.”

Because I started a blog before I actually published this book, I’ve already gotten email questions like:

- “Joe, won’t ‘going slow’ mean a lack of productivity?”
- “Joe, isn’t this an excuse to be lazy, or an excuse not to get stuff done?”
- “Joe, I don’t want to be one of those people who is thought of as a ‘slowpoke’... so how can I implement the principles of Slow?”

And variations of these types of concerns.

They are valid concerns, for sure ... but slow isn’t an excuse to use, it’s more of a **mindset** behind living more *deliberately*, more *consciously*, more *critically*...

... instead of rushing to the next thing in the interest of some society-imposed notion we all have to produce as **much** as we can, as **many** as we can, or as **quickly** as we can.

And that mindset can be extrapolated to mean many things. For example, as it applies to upgrading your technology it can mean thinking and being aware of your need to upgrade, instead of upgrading for the sake of upgrading (or *worse* because everyone else is doing it, for those Apple fans out there).

It can apply to making products, striving for quality (slow) versus quantity or “mass produced for the masses” (*not* slow).

And on, and on.

Slow isn’t an excuse for anything, it’s not something you choose to “not do”... instead it’s a methodology, a mindset, for “doing” at a pace where you’re in complete control of the outcome (not marketing, society, emotions etc...).

Be in control of your thinking, eating, upgrading, manufacturing, political views, etc... and don’t let them control you. To do that, **slow down**.

THAT is what slow is.



Forget The News

You've **got** to watch the news each day right?

You **have** to be "informed" right?

WRONG.

News is junk food for the brain. You should avoid it, as much as possible.

Since when was it a requirement to watch it? Who made some "rule" that said you "have to be informed?"

It isn't a requirement, and you don't have to be informed according to what a media company decides to publish.

Besides, why on earth would you want to be informed about the crap that makes the news anyhow? How has it EVER contributed to your life in a meaningful way?

And finally... what could you do with the hour you waste on watching it each day?

Genuine Connection

I suppose if there was only one overriding principle I have for writing *The Slow Manifesto* ... it's to once again encourage **genuine connection** between us.

Genuine connection doesn't solve all the world's problems, it's a tall challenge, and it requires a MAJOR rethinking of some of our Western traditions, but I think it's worth it.

And, I like tackling big problems.

So I think slow technology is a good thing. I like progress as long as it's focused, useful for the world, and has minimal side effects for society as a whole.

One side effect of digital technology, for example, is that I see it taking our genuine connections and reducing them down to bite sized "if I have time for it" interactions.

Some might challenge:

"But yeah, I have complete control of the technology I use, and can form genuine relationships when I choose."

Could you do better if you honestly analyzed your use of technology and focused on deeper and more genuine connection with another person?

In short no trade off, no "control" of technology needed. You instead focus on deepening your personal, face to face relationships. You completely push the use of your smart phone, the Internet, your tablet etc... into the *background*.

Now how does that "form genuine relationships when I choose" sound? A little different?

I'm not, nor would I ever suggest that you *never* use digital technology. In fact, all I'm suggesting is it never becomes your primary focus, that you're genuine in the claim that *you're* the person in control of it.

Because most people aren't in control of it. I thought I was, until my "awakening" of sorts back in March 2011. I won't bore you with the details of the awakening itself, but as for my "control" of the use of technology...

Not. Even. Close.

I was online into the wee hours of the night, justifying any use of down time with hours plugging away online. As Twitter really skyrocketed into popularity, as was Facebook, then Google Plus, let's just say I was controlling how many minutes I spent on each.

Not focusing on how much time I spent with the family, my wife, etc... Granted, we didn't have problems, and we were both using technology about the same way, but once we focused on **genuine connection**, our family life got even better.

Have you ever stopped to look at the birds?

Not glance at them just to “check it off of a daily list” mind you, but truly stop and look at what kinds of birds fly around your area?

I found quite a few varieties.

Have you ever stopped to think about the gifts we’ve already been given? Have you ever enjoyed them? Not just once, or twice, but as a regular part of your life?

This isn’t some “checklist item” that you complete to say “I did it!” ... no ... this is a lifelong process of celebrating **you** being a human.

Now, what about connecting with other humans ... genuine connection?

Genuine connection defined: a connection with another human being where you can comfortably share the intimate details (not necessarily sexual) of your life, and not feel embarrassed. This person reciprocates that same relationship.

Obviously, it’s an interesting challenge to have 150 (or more) genuine connections of that nature, right?

Social networks seem to promote “connection” with other people, but I would qualify that as a **superficial connection** at best. Bits and bytes that say you’re “connected.”

I think we’ve come to a point where the genuine part is being eroded away, not completely mind you, because we will always have close friends and family (if you’re close to your family).

I think genuine connection is a *much* harder place to get to these days, because of the time and energy (and priority) we’re placing on maintaining the more superficial connections. Some might say this has always been the case when new technologies are created (like the telephone, for example). But I challenge that by saying we have those technologies AND the new ones coming available.

I’m speaking in the sheer volume of ways to connect. The number of choices we have to communicate leaves us texting each other when we’re only 50 feet away from each other, for example.

Or worse, we start prioritizing our connections to fit as many of them as possible into what amounts to a small time frame.

Where is the time to create and develop a genuine connection if you are stuffing emails, texts, phone calls, and all of the little bits of communication into the same 8, 10, 14 or even 20 hours we all have in a day?

(20 hours for those that don’t sleep much).

If those texts, emails, phone calls etc... all were focused on one connection with someone, this *could* be a good way to use technology to foster genuine connection. But come on, who actually does that?

You should.

Where does your multitude of daily communications take you? Not towards one, or two people ... and the relationship



with them ... but towards **many** different conversations, **being made shorter** because people have more ways to reach us.

(BTW, just because they have more ways **to** reach us, doesn't mean we have to **respond** to those ways to reach us).

So, let's use a "get more out of less" approach here...

Let's take each conversation and relax, slow down, and then deepen the connection we have.

Let's focus on those relationships we want to build, but not limit those relationships to texts and Tweets. Have lunch, make it an hour instead of 30 minutes, and eat slowly. Most importantly talk face to face instead of in bits and bytes.

Because the next genuine connection could reward you with the richest experience life has to offer. I hope you get to enjoy as many of these as possible.

Slow Consumption

If we keep treating ourselves as a product, companies will have no trouble selling cheap and crappy products to us.

We have to demand more, of them **and** ourselves. And that brings me to **slow consumption**.

Let me ask you a question...

Do you have a garage or storage unit full of “stuff”? Have you touched that stuff in the last year? Six months?

If you haven't, get rid of it, and most importantly QUIT replacing it. You don't need to buy more stuff, if you're not using the stuff you have.

Keeping it “just in case?” Yeah, I thought you would think that.

How often has “just in case” happened? Yep ... my point exactly. And even if it had happened, if “just in case” only happens once a decade (or a little less), could you possibly find a different way to get through the situation?

(No, I'm not talking about “go bags” or emergency kits here).

Slow consumerism (or consumption) is not blindly getting rid of everything, but it's a careful and honest analysis of keeping and using **only** what you need to live comfortably (and being careful about justifying “why” you're keeping stuff, most likely, you need to get rid of it).

Because here's the deal, here's where we have a little honest talk about your stuff...

- Nobody cares what you wear. The latest “fashions” are just marketing designed to get you to buy more clothes.
- Nobody cares if you have the latest iPhone (or other gadget), unless THEY went and upgraded first ... then THEY care about themselves, not your upgrade.
- Nobody cares about whether or not you have the “tool to do the job” buried somewhere in your garage. In fact, how many times have you actually been able to find that tool when you really need it? Thought so.
- And even if you COULD find that tool, by the way, if you only use that tool once every 5 years ... why is it taking up space in your garage?
- In short ... playing “beat the Jones-es” is a dangerous and expensive game to play, and marketing from companies is only designed to get you to buy more stuff, **they don't give a hoot** about what you have to do to maintain that/store that/replace that stuff later on.

Slow your consumption down people ... your wallet, your stress level, and the landfills across our country will thank you.

Plus, maybe those companies would learn a valuable lesson about creating **quality** if us consumers weren't so silly as to buy their useless crap all the time, right?

Slow Politics

We rush to our vote every four years we elect a President, I think.

Why?

Because we vote “Republican” ... or “Democrat” when we shouldn’t focus on that at all. We need to slow down ... and vote for the PERSON we feel is going to lead our country to prosperity, not the corrupted and “paid for” country we have currently.

I’ve said before on other writings, I’m *MyPartisan* for a reason. I think for myself, and don’t pay any attention to the T.V. spots, magazines, newspapers, etc...

Instead, I learned to use public records to find the answers I wanted.

But this isn’t about me... this is about you ... and going **slow** enough to think about what our vote means.

Bottom line, we need to go slow with our vote, quit listening to the BS on the TV and the media, and make our own decisions.

We need to change the idea behind this quote:

“If voting changed anything, they’d make it illegal.”

~Emma Goldman

We need our voting, or whatever we put in place to replace voting ... to change something. Right now, that might mean voting with our dollars, no matter how challenging that might seem (cut cable, get into activism, write, publish a blog, etc...).

Slow down, and think about the politics of your country.

Slow Religion

This is probably going to be a touchy subject.

On top of that, I've bounced back and forth between publishing this article in this book, and leaving it unpublished altogether.

It's important to note that NO offense is intended towards **any** set of beliefs here (religious or otherwise), or the people that believe them etc... and that I **personally** respect **all** opinions on this subject (not the same as condoning actions).

Let's get to it...

Slow religion means that no matter what you believe, or don't believe... no matter where your faith lies, what book you've read etc...

Slow down.

Our differences do not *need* to lie in religious (or non-religious) beliefs. In fact, it seems to me that "religion" is the wrong venue to "be different" on. We need to slow down, and think critically, **before** attacking another person based on their beliefs or religious disposition.

It seems like those that choose to fight (wars) based on religious beliefs (or non-religious beliefs) are just ... wrong. I understand that might sound discriminatory, but I'm pointing to the *fighting* itself, and the decision to fight against each other (in some extreme cases, killing each other) over what we believe or don't believe religiously.

For example, if you like to sit on the couch, because you believe the next episode of *The Tomorrow People* is important, but your neighbor wants to go out and run every day ... do we start wars or fight each other over that?

Nope. I understand that is overly simplified, but...

Haven't we evolved beyond this need to (en)force our beliefs (or non-beliefs) on others, as human beings part of the same race?

Nope. Unfortunately we haven't. And we need to "slow down" as it pertains to religion.

We're different enough as humans, and we **don't** know everything about creation, the universe, each other etc... and we need to start acting like it.

Believe what you want to believe. But *don't* force others to change their mind about what they believe.

And let's devote more focus to the things that matter in our current form, skin and bones.

The rest will happen according to whatever you believe, but even if it doesn't, whatever it is **will** happen anyway.

For now, we are all going to die at some point, that much is **guaranteed** (although we might extend that in the future).

What happens after death, will either happen according to what we believe or it won't.

But that ISN'T something we need to kill each other for, it **isn't** something we need to discriminate against each other for, and it certainly *isn't* something we should be wasting our time arguing about, quite frankly.

There are **much** bigger fish to fry... like learning how to be *humans*. In my opinion, we're still "rookies" when you consider the big picture and its cosmic timescale.

Slow religion down. Believe if you want to believe, don't if you don't want to. But don't hate or discriminate against another person for what *they* believe. That's just wrong. We are only a small drop in this huge cosmos called the Universe, no matter who (or what process) created that Universe (or even *how* it was created).

We. Don't. Matter. In. The. Big. BIG. Picture. The Universe is going to hum along LONG after we're gone, regardless of our beliefs or whatever set of beliefs happen to be "right."

And just because we might *believe* we have an idea of how such cosmic and universal events (and the people part of those events) have transpired... in the end, in the big picture, we just don't know. No matter what any books that have been written on religion, or otherwise, might say.

Even our science community itself will never answer all questions, or even a *small portion* of those questions, because there are just WAY too many questions to be asked.

So, let's slow down religion (and politics, and, and and...) and just enjoy each other's company in this short ride we call life (whether it ends up being eternal or not).

We only need one "label" for existing on this planet peacefully... that of **Human (and all of the imperfections, good and bad, that come along with being human).**



On Progress

We strive to make more and more **progress** as a society, civilization, whatever.

We must move forward, not backward. We have to upgrade, not remain stable. We must go faster, not slower. Must make more, not less.

We must stop doing this.

Not just for ourselves, but for the world as a whole. When is it good enough? When do we have “enough” technological progress to say “Hey, let’s stop progressing and use this for awhile.”

There are obvious exceptions to this “slow and stop *all* progress” mindset. We have lives to save, an environment we’ve destroyed (but won’t fully admit to doing so), and a future to think about.

We **can’t** stop every single form of progress in every area of our civilization. It would be foolish to expect that.

But we **can** stop all harmful industry, fuels, energy, greed, “efficiency” (notice the quotes), and on ... and on. We could start the process of actually stopping all of this now, and turn the page to a new era of our civilization.

It will require resisting old, damaging, expensive (in the big picture, not just \$) forms of industry we’ve progressed past for a long time ... but we can do it.

We just have to act like we’re capable of as a human civilization. It might be uncomfortable for a little while, but afterwards, we will enter an era of advanced civilization. We might just biologically evolve as humans too.

It’s time for the era of slow progress.

Slow Privacy

With the recent developments concerning the NSA (shared by Edward Snowden and others) ... we have to have a big, unified, and thorough discussion on privacy in our culture.

And we need to dive deep into this discuss before it's too late, and we can't turn back.

It's time for slow privacy.

The difference between privacy and "slow" privacy lies in how anything concerning the privacy of the citizens of our country is presented.

Take Facebook for example ... they push the boundaries of our privacy all the time. They'll come out with a feature, seemingly wait to get push back on that feature if it violates our idea of privacy ... then finally make a change.

It's a process. That's what "regular" privacy is.

Slow privacy would be the same scenario, but instead of Facebook just pushing out a feature and trying to push its version of privacy on the world ... they go more slowly ... and *listen* to the community **FIRST**. This is to see if that feature is even necessary or could be improved in a "beta" mode that doesn't affect the **1 BILLION** accounts in that community.

Go slowly. Slow privacy **ALSO** pertains to giving us, the users, the consumers, etc... a means to set boundaries that **ALL** companies, media, and Government **MUST** abide by.

A set of "privacy terms" for us as users.

Because let's face it, every one of us is different in our expectations of privacy. Some people are willing to reveal more, and some less of ourselves online and offline. These terms would also immediately establish **ownership** of said data (like emails, posts, etc...).

So, these terms would tell other companies **EXACTLY** how they can use our data, and if we want to be private ... we can be. If we don't, we don't have to be. That's called freedom to choose.

Just because people want their privacy, doesn't mean they want to hide anything. And privacy establishes these "terms."

Start with this article: <https://chronicle.com/article/Why-Privacy-Matters-Even-if/127461/> and go from there in your research on privacy.



Slow Society And Our Children's Future

I want to offer you a thought that might change the way we think about our society and how “evolved” we think we are. (*HINT: We’re not that evolved at all*)

I have written about “how we need to be kids again” in a previous blog post at <http://josephratliff.com>, but this time, I’m taking issue with our **society** (think really big picture).

Society robs us of our most human traits, including the “child” within each of us. Society “tells” us to act in certain ways from childhood. While everything it “tells” us isn’t necessarily “bad,” if we listen to society too closely ... we get robbed yet again.

Society as defined for this book: All of the systems, institutions, media, and even some people who promote one (or a very limited) systematized, homogeneous, particular way of doing something for a number of human beings (in some cases, mindlessly promote).

These systems, institutions, media and people do not change their endless (and mindless) ways of promoting these ideas, even in the face of critical evidence, either “at all” or until a major revolution occurs.

In short, no critical thinking is allowed, nor are individuals who promote alternative viewpoints. The “system” (loosely defined) simply continues to operate. Almost in a machine like manner.

This “society” is the one that robs us of the “child” inside each of us, aiming instead to produce some ill-defined productive “member of society.”

The “child” within each of us is that never ending curiosity, that creativity, that imagination which allows us to define the world we live in.

Society robs us of that.

Within society, there are concepts known as “real life,” “growing up,” and becoming a “productive member of society.”

Our education system (as a whole, with certain teachers as exceptions) tells us from age 4 (or so) to “sit and behave,” “be good little boys and girls,” and to keep doing things the same way. It puts us each in a little box, homogenizes us, sterilizes us, and numbs our creative senses.

It was a system that flourished in an age that needed factory workers for factories. That system needed “good little boys and girls” to punch in, do their job, clock out and go home. Repeat the same process, over and over again.

The rest of society makes us dependent on that “job,” so dependent that advancing technology that might replace those jobs freaks people out.

(When, if you think about it, not working like a serf actually frees us, but that’s hard to think about when you have a mortgage to pay).



All of that “society” **sterilizes** the child right out of each and every one of us (with few exceptions). That society teaches us to be “good at school,” good at taking tests and checking boxes, while preparing us for life’s “factory.” (NOTE: “factory” means different things depending on what time context you put it in).

Life goes on and on, we go to school, get a job, perhaps getting buried in debt under the illusion of some “secondary education.” We might find someone to love, have a family, get a “good job” (that we hate), and wash, rinse, repeat.

Society’s “machine” just keeps churning out product (that product is you, me, and our children). “*It’s not safe.*” Society says. “*There’s a new war.*” Society says. “*Sit and behave.*” Society says.

Society says a lot of things...

- The new i-Phone 6 came out.
- You could win the lottery.
- Eat these enormous portions.
- Take your pills.
- Don’t spank your children.
- Go to church on Sunday.
- It’s okay to spank your children.
- Get back on the couch and watch our ads!
- Get in line.
- Yo.
- You’ve got cancer.
- Trust us.
- You’ve got mail.
- Pay those taxes, we need more money for war.
- There’s another war.
- Terrorism.
- Terrorism.
- 09/11.
- Buy this stuff.
- Keep this stuff.
- Store this stuff.
- Our landfills are filled with this stuff.
- But keep buying this stuff anyway.
- And on, and on ... the list is almost endless.

Society is taking the “child” right out of our children.

Once we amass enough “experience,” enough wisdom, enough of societal influence, then the homogenization is already complete. We lose that “child” in us, and few are lucky to ever find it again (usually only through some traumatic life experience).

Now, don’t get me wrong. I don’t think we can all just run around aimlessly ... without focusing ourselves in some fashion. But I don’t think the current version of society is helping us do that. It’s outdated, it’s slow, and it’s too rigid, too inflexible.



It doesn't allow our best traits as humans to shine through, and it suppresses our desires. It uses fear to herd us like life's cattle towards a completely imaginary barn. It dictates how we should live. It treats us like sheep.

And we're better than that, don't you think?

We're more intelligent, more connected (we need to work on the depth of that connection), and we have more tools and resources at our fingertips now than at any time in our history. But that's not good enough.

We need to become kids again, and we need to quit taking the "child" out of our children. We need to explore more, become more curious, and think more critically.

We need to get our heads out of our gadgets, learn how to connect with each other on a deeper level (digital connection is superficial at best), and quit defining our lives in a binary (A or B) way.

We need to think for ourselves, learn how to communicate better again, and quit thinking there is only one right way to do anything.

In short, I think we each need to let out the inner child, and protect our children from this societal homogenization.

We only have one short experiment to conduct (civilization), and our children are our best shot at success in that experiment. Let's quit robbing them of that chance at success.

About The Book

The Author



My name is **Joseph Ratliff**, author of the book *“The Slow Manifesto – In a world focused on speed, life begins when you slow down”*.

Since 2001, I’ve participated in a number of businesses, worked with hundreds of people, been a part of many teams etc... I’ve also observed people at a distance, in general, going about their daily lives.

One thing I’ve noticed, is people need to slow down. I was frustrated by my observations to the point where I decided to devote a small book to the subject.

And don’t get me wrong, I was “there.” I used to get gadget after gadget, upgrade after upgrade, buy stuff and get more stuff etc... I used to eat fast food, watch fast TV, go shopping, had a job in retail etc... etc...

Then 2011 hit ... and in March, I got a very BAD noro-virus. If you’ve ever gotten it, you know what I’m talking about. After I got better, I had serious digestive problems.

To make a long story short, because of this and other health issues like my weight at the time, some serious life changes were needed. So I decided to make several HUGE life changes, all at once:

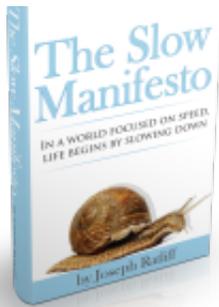
- I lost weight (74 lbs in 12 months from March 2011- March 2012). To this day, my weight has been kept off.
- I changed my eating habits, stopping pop, ice cream, cakes, etc... and I made these changes immediately and PERMANENTLY.
- I **slowed down** my eating, enjoying the new foods I was eating (more fruit, vegetables, lean meat etc...).
- I **slowed down my life** in general, no more writing “emergency” copy projects, taking life one day at a time, getting plenty of rest etc...
- I **adopted a minimalist mindset**. I’m not an extreme minimalist, with less than 100 things and traveling like a nomad, but I don’t shop nearly as much any longer. I’ve also reduced the “stuff” in my house by at least 70% or more.
- And on, and on...

I tell you this not to brag, but because if I can do it, so can you. And that is what I wrote the book for, to encourage others to do the same. It’s not for everyone.

Enough about me. What are you going to do with what you learn about “slow”?



The Book



Right now, we live in a world of “fast.”

You can talk and text at the same time, and according to the TV commercial, that’s a good thing (it isn’t).

You have to eat faster, work longer hours, buy the latest car, the latest computer, the latest cell phone... because you might be “cool” if you do all these things... right? And “not so cool” if you don’t.

Come on, admit it... you go fast, and do all these things, get all these things etc... for status in our society. That’s where we go wrong.

We need to move **slowly**.

We need to be able to read past page 18 (on average) in a book, we need to slow down and appreciate nature, our resources, our already given riches. We need to live with less stuff, and more enjoyment of each other. We need not to live life at a pace that gives us heart attacks, that takes our precious attention away from those we love.

And here are the big ones...

We need to slow down and pay attention to what is happening in the world, because those that live in the U.S. (like me) are about to have their country taken away from them by greedy politicians, bankers, and some insane wealthy people.

We need to slow down and think critically, because the future of the world will depend on it. We need to slow down, and quit being lazy, hiding behind our monitors and simply “Tweeting this” and calling it good.

The revolution won’t be tweeted... it needs personal interaction folks, so sitting in your armchair and pushing Tweet buttons won’t cut it (although it does help, a little).

We need to slow down. And that is what “The Slow Manifesto” is all about ... how and why to do just that.

Resources

Book resources for **The Slow Manifesto** are listed below:

1. *In Praise of Slowness* by Carl Honore – The book that inspired me to write about “slow” and what it means to our lives. It’s available at <http://www.carlhonore.com/books/in-praise-of-slowness/>.
2. I’ve discovered this is a **huge** movement of sorts, from slow food (at <http://www.slowfoodusa.org/>) to different ways to approach speeding laws (at <http://www.enjoytheride.wa.gov.au/>). You’ll discover, as I did, that we’ve deviated from a much simpler time in our evolution as humans.
4. *The World Institute of Slowness* – Exactly what it says, and it’s at <http://www.theworldinstituteofslowness.com/>.
5. “*Avoid The News*” essay by Rolf Dobelli (PDF). News is junk food for the brain, to slow down this part of your life, I highly recommend reading this essay. Get it here:
http://www.dobelli.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Avoid_News_Part1_TEXT.pdf

More resources will be available at <http://slowthebook.com/resources/>.