

Slowing Down the Pace



We live in a fast-paced, never enough time, “need it now” society. Information flows instantaneously. We can research any topic, buy anything or sell anything through the internet at any hour of the day or night. We can wind ourselves up and try to keep pace with the speed around us. Or...we can take a deep breath and slow down. We can pace the amount of information we absorb and the speed at which we move through the world. We can limit the amount of “stuff” we are willing to take in over the course of a week, a day or an hour. Recently, I facilitated development conversations with senior staff at a college. As part of the conversations, I asked people to share their own stories with me. What a wonderful gift I receive when I have an opportunity to listen and reflect back to people what I hear. Their words touching softly on my ears, their tone excited when they are talking about something that touched their soul or times in their life when they felt a deep passion for what they were doing—all are connections to my own story and others that I hear.

The interviews were scheduled back-to-back with barely enough time to eat a snack all day. During a brief break, I walked to the art center, where I witnessed meditation and art in a beautiful form. A man, hired by the college, was creating a mandala out of colored, tiny sand pebbles. He was on campus for three weeks to create this piece that would be disposed of at the end of his visit. In the meantime, it was being created by his memory in the most quiet, meditative and amazing act of slowing down. It was mesmerizing to watch. What beauty! What inspiration! What if we all took the time in our lives and work to be meditative in doing our life's work? What richness might emerge? How contagious might it be for others? The collective energy could be amazing.

As I walked briskly through the cold, wintry air back to my interviews, I silently vowed to be more reflective in listening to the remaining stories that I was going to hear that afternoon. I vowed to take in the stories and not let my mind wander to thinking about my long drive home at the end of the day. I vowed to stay in the moment.

By consciously deciding to change how I wanted to be, a transformation occurred. I began connecting with others at a deeper level. I was open to letting information flow with a clear mind, not a cluttered mind. The richness of the conversations provided an opportunity for connection and learning about what mattered to the person across the table from me.

As I drove home, I could not get the beauty of the artwork out of my mind. The slow, deliberate and meditative work of one person creating something beautiful for all others to witness was such a gift.

Reflection Questions: What would it take for you today to slow down and weave your life journey in a deliberate fashion? Can you start small and, like sand crystals, begin to create a new world for yourself?

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