



## Stop the World, I Want to Get Off (Tips for Succeeding in Today's Fast-Paced World)

Society today is more complex and changing more rapidly than any other time in human history. One week of the New York Times contains more information than a 17th century person was exposed to in their lifetime! And the pace of change continues to accelerate beyond our evolutionary design. World renowned thought leader Yuval Noah Harari observed, "Our culture operates at a frenetic pace that favors immediate reactions over careful reflection."

The result: higher levels of stress, anxiety, depression, and loneliness and a shorter lifespan. This often leads to poor decisions and actions that hurt ourselves, our career, our company, our family and our friends.

Fortunately, you can take steps - small steps - to help you live a happier, more fulfilling life, where you make better decisions and have a more positive impact on yourself and those you touch.

We already know many of the things you can do. Yet, most of us don't do them. Maybe it's time to take a fresh look and start small. Below are some suggestions that can help slow the world down and make you more effective and happier.

Building a new habit is very hard, as evidenced by the fact that between 64% and 88% of New Year's resolutions don't last beyond 30 days. Therefore, it is important you pick something that is easy for you to do, and set up a system to stick with it. It can be something from the list below or something else. Anything else. The critical choice is that you choose something you will do consistently.

*"It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop." Confucius*

1. **Sleep.** If you can only work on one area, - chances are it is sleep.

Only 35% of American adults get the recommended 7 or more hours of sleep per night. Countless studies show that the consequences of a lack of

sleep are devastating. This includes higher stress levels, impaired ability to think or remember, and increased risk of hypertension, diabetes, obesity, depression, heart attack, and stroke. Sleeping longer means living better and living longer.

Perhaps start with one or two of the following action items:

- Prioritize sleep by changing your mindset so your day starts when you go to bed.
- Stop or reduce screen time 30 minutes before going to bed.
- Keep the room dark and cool.
- Try to go to bed and wake up around the same time every day, even on days off.
- Avoid caffeine after noon even if you are one of those who think coffee doesn't affect your sleep. It does.

2. **Quiet Time.** Carving out quiet time can increase new brain cell growth in the hippocampus (linked to memory and learning), improve emotional regulation, reduce stress and blood pressure, improve productivity and creativity, and improve mood. It can often take time to see the benefits of quiet time, but the benefits will assuredly happen.

Here are some suggestions:

**5 minutes in the morning.** In the morning before you leave your house, in your car or when you get to the office and before you do any work (e.g., before you log onto your computer, answer a text, make a phone call, have a meeting...), set your alarm for five minutes, find a quiet place where you sit comfortably, close your eyes, place your hands in your lap, allow your breathing to slow and deepen, and think of the person you want to show up as today. Recognize, you do not need permission to show up as the person you want to be, and you do not have to be consistent with the person you have been.

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When thoughts come into your mind, which they invariably will (e.g., your “to do” list, people you need to speak with, family issues, fun events you want to plan...) let the thoughts go and keep bringing yourself back to thinking about the person you want to be today. It is normal to have to repeat this process countless times.

**5 minutes before a meeting.** Like the morning routine, before an important or challenging meeting, spend five minutes in quiet. This time think about (i) the person you want to be in that meeting, (ii) how you will show up as a great listener who is truly focused on understanding others’ views and needs and (iii) what you want the participants to know, feel and do.

**5 minutes at the end of the day.** This can be at the end of your work day, or the end of your evening. As with the other suggestions, find a quiet place where you can sit comfortably and uninterrupted. This time you may want to have a journal. Think about or write down three things you did well and three things you are grateful for. Next, without writing, acknowledge one thing you would have liked to do differently. Visualize yourself doing it correctly and then give yourself grace and let it go completely. Life is a journey. Daily recognition of the good you do and the things you appreciate, as well as maintaining a growth mindset, will have huge positive impacts on you and those you touch.

**3. Hunger Level.** We cannot perform at our best when we are hungry or overly full. These states make it very difficult to think clearly and exhibit high emotional intelligence. For example, a study of 1,000 decisions of whether to grant parole applications found that the greatest predictor was how long it has been since the judge ate. After eating, such as in the morning and after lunch, judges were much more inclined to grant parole. As time without food passed, the number of approved parole requests declined to near zero just before lunch and at the end of the day.

To avoid the negative biological impact that hunger or feeling bloated has on your ability to think, listen, speak and act, try to maintain your hunger levels on a scale of 1 (famished) to 10 (stuffed) – between 3 and 7. Keep healthy snacks on hand for the periods in between meals and reducing your meal portion sizes.

In summary, select one doable action that resonates with you and that you will stick with. After a month, assess how that is working for you, and see if you want to change it or add another simple doable action item that will help the world slow down and support you thriving at work and at home.

