

# When HURRY Slows

■ by Joy Bocanegra, MA, LCPC



**P**rior to March of 2020 most Americans lived a life of hurry. Moving from one activity to another, work, sports, shopping, get-togethers with friends and family and so it went. “Busy” described the typical American. In fact, it’s viewed as an achievement, a sign of importance, a good thing. But is busy really something to embrace? Is busy really a good thing or is that a lie our culture believes? Could the hurried life be something that hinders our mental and physical health?

When the coronavirus hit many people began to slow down, shelter-in-place, work from home or cease working because of closures and layoffs. Unless your work was deemed “essential” or you were scrambling to transition to working at home, or figuring out e-learning, life slowed down. No matter what your circumstances, life changed in some way. We have been limited in where we can go and what we can do. We have had a pause imposed upon us. Even the earth has been given a pause. So many are home and driving less, pollution has decreased.

Although stressful in all its uncertainty, the coronavirus has given us the opportunity to rethink our priorities and provides an opportunity for change. As social distancing and the absence of large gatherings continue and also as things

reopen, we have some choices to make as to how we will live. Let’s look at how two culture lies impact our mental health by leading to anxiety and depression.

Cultural lies can be subtle. We buy into them without fully knowing it. Television, radio, social media, things we read and people we talk to, bombard us with messages all day, every day. Many of those messages are cultural lies.

## Lie #1 More is better

More activities, more stuff, more space (bigger houses) which leads to a great deal to do. Normalizing and justifying more to do, more to take care of and more bills to pay is the lie American culture sells us. We easily get caught up doing what everybody does. And the busier we are, the more likely hurry will creep in.

Carl Jung, Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, said, “Hurry is not *of* the devil: it is the devil.” Hurry typically comes from being over extended and it causes us to be less aware of ourselves and our surroundings. It’s an inner state of panic. If I’ve crammed too much into my morning and I’m running late for work it leads to hurrying. My shoulders tighten and my mind races as fear ensues. My foot is heavier on the gas pedal! I don’t want to be late! How much better for me physically and emotionally if I plan less and leave margin.

Eliminating hurry allows me to be in the moment and notice the beauty around me, the fragrance of lilac bushes and a bird’s song. It allows me to notice other people and offer kindness. Eliminating hurry allows me a healthier mind, body and spirit.

- Continued on Page 2 -

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- Continued from Page 1 -

Jesus is our example. We repeatedly read in the gospels how Jesus slipped away from the crowd to be with his father. He didn't leave because there was no more to do. He left because he needed time with his father and time to rest. We are created with limitations and we need time with God and time for rest. Psalm 46:10 tells us to, "Be still and know that I am God." To be "still" means to cease movement.

The truth is we all need balance, we need margin. The drive for more leaves us overworked, stressed out and exhausted. Being over extended interferes with:

## Good self-care

- Adequate sleep, which is 7-9 hours for adults
- Mindfulness; to be aware of self and surroundings, time to reflect, process emotions
- Rest and relaxation
- Exercise, which helps us de-stress and elevates our mood
- Healthy eating

## Healthy Relationships

- Focused quality time with loved ones
- Time to tune in and connect on a deeper level

## Spiritual Health

- Time to pray, read God's word, hear God speak, show God's love



So, what might you eliminate? The word "no" can be your friend. Saying no to some activities and to our culture's expectations can lessen anxiety. Simplifying where possible can free up time.

## Lie #2 Your value is based on what you have and what you do.

The truth is that you are valuable because God made you in His image. David writes in Psalm 139:14, "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made." The belief that your value is based on having a beautiful house or fancy car or good grades, athletic ability or some other achievement is a prevalent lie. You are valuable because you are you. The key to our mental health is what we focus on and what we believe. So, if you believe your value is based on what you have or do, thoughts of not being or having enough produce anxiety, motivating you to be caught up in performance and striving to acquire things to impress others.

Romans 12:2 says, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is -his good, pleasing and perfect will."

So, catch yourself when these lies creep in and choose to renew your mind by filling your mind with truth. Replacing cultural lies with truth can set you free to live a happier, healthier life. ■



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