

COMMENT

The Challenge: Take a pause

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"I'm so busy."

Sound familiar? When you ask most people how they're doing these days, this is likely the reply that you'll hear.

I know I'm guilty of repeating these words. But why is this such a widely-accepted answer? It's almost like if we're not "so busy," we're not doing life right. I started thinking more about our societal disease of being busy after attending a recent public meeting on the Toronto Premium Outlets' desire to be open on all holidays except for Christmas. During this meeting I heard a phrase that's new to me: a common pause day.

A common pause. What is that? Sadly, this concept will be foreign to most people of my generation and younger because we barely know what it's like to live in a time where collectively pausing as a society exists.

I looked into the phrase and it appears to have been penned around 1990 when the debate about Sunday shopping took place. I grew up in the '80s, and when I thought about it more I could recall a time when it seemed like the world actually did slow down one day a week. But several decades of "busy" have happened since then, making this common sense idea of pausing seem like a distant

memory.

Today, common pause days are defined under the Retail Business Holidays Act by nine days per year when stores are supposed to be closed. And businesses can apply for exceptions to this rule.

But the demise of the common pause goes beyond shopping. There's a bigger picture here outside of being available all the time for customers and clients. I think society has decided that in general, pausing is no longer important, going against all mental health advice for peace and happiness.

Pair that with today's technology that connects people 24/7 and we've essentially established a way of life where we, as individuals, have to be "open for business" all the time. When someone sends a text, email or Facebook message there's almost an unspoken expectation for an instantaneous or at least quick reply, day or night, seven days a week. Some days this is nothing short of exhausting. Unless something is a matter of life or death, is it really the end of the world if we don't reply for a few hours?

I'm challenging myself and others to put down their phones when the work day is over, or at least pick it up less frequently, and enjoy a pause. It might just be what we need.



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