Why I’m Always in a Hurry, & What I’m Doing About It

I’ve come to realize, more and more, that I’m always rushing.

I rush from one task to the next, rush through eating my food, impatient for meditation to be over, rushing through reading something, rushing to get somewhere, anxious to get a task or project finished.

What’s the deal? This coming from a guy who has written a lot about slowing down and savoring, about being present, about single-tasking?

As always, when I write these articles, they’re as much a reminder to myself about what I’ve found to work as they are a reminder to all of you. I’ve found them to work, but that doesn’t mean I always remember to practice them. It doesn’t mean I’m perfect, by any means.

So what is going on? Why do I hurry so much?

I’ve been reflecting on this, and the answer seems to be that my mind has a tendency towards greed. This isn’t greed in the sense that I want a lot of wealth … but my mind finds something it likes and it wants more. Always more.

Some examples of greed:

- I like chocolate (or wine, or coffee, or cookies) and I crave it, and want more even if I just had a bite of it.
- I am doing a task but also want to do 20 more tasks, because I want to do as much as possible. Wanting to do more and more, to do everything, is a good example of the mind’s tendency to greed.
- When I learn, I want to learn *everything* about a topic. I’ll look up every book I can find, every blog post or article, every podcast or video, every forum post, and want to read all of it. Of course, I can’t possibly read all of it now, but I want to. I’ll buy 10 books but jump around from one to the next, not finishing any of them.
- When I travel to a new city, I want to see it all — all the best sights, all the best vegan restaurants, all the best bookstores and museums and experiences. I can’t possibly, but I’ll do my best to fit all the best stuff into the small container of my trip, and research it for weeks.
- When I’m going about my day, I try to fit as much as possible into it: not only all my tasks, but spending time with the wife, reading with the kids, working out and meditating and doing yoga and going for a walk and reading and learning online and answering all my emails, watching all the best TV shows and films, and checking all the forums and news and blogs and more and more.

I rush around, trying to fit all of that in. I'm trying to maximize every day, every trip, every event, every moment. I'm trying to get everything possible out of life.

This comes from a good heart — I appreciate the briefness of life, and I appreciate its brilliance, and I want all of it in the short time I have left here. That's not a *bad* thing, wanting more of life.

But what is the result of always wanting more, always wanting to maximize? It's rushing, grabbing onto everything, never having enough, never being satisfied, never actually stopping to enjoy, not really appreciating each moment because I'm greedy for more great moments.

Indulging in this greediness for more, this maximizing everything, doesn't satisfy it. It just creates more wanting for more.

Indulging isn't helpful. Staying with the feeling of wanting more, wanting to maximize, wanting to rush, wanting to do it all … that's more helpful. Stay with the feeling, Leo, don't indulge it.

Don't try to do it all, but instead be here now.

Don't rush, but appreciate the moments in between things as just as important as the next thing.

Don't try to maximize, but instead practice letting go. Let go of greedy tendencies, let go of whatever you're clinging to (having it all, doing it all), let go of the urge to rush.

Whenever there's a tendency towards greed, counter it with *generosity*.

The Practice of Generosity

What does generosity have to do with hurrying and trying to maximize every day? In one sense, generosity might be giving money or possessions to people who need it, or giving help wherever needed, when possible. But that's just one sense of generosity.

Generosity is any way that we turn away from our self-centered view and start turning towards others. It could be as simple as turning towards another person in our life and trying to see what they need, rather than focusing on what we want to get out of life.

Or it could be turning towards that person and giving them the gift of our full attention. Really try to be present, with an open heart, trying to understand and hear the person. This is the spirit of generosity.

When doing something alone, the spirit of generosity can be turned to each moment —

giving that moment the full gift of our attention, seeing it fully and opening our heart to it. This is a salve to the usual spirit of needing more, more, more, of wanting to satisfy me, me, me.

I’m trying to practice the spirit of generosity, whenever I notice my greedy mind wanting everything, wanting more, wanting to get the most out of every day. Instead, I turn to this moment, each person, each activity, and give it the loving gift of my wholehearted attention.