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Too busy to blog about busyness

Heidi Schlumpf | Jul. 10, 2012 NCR Today

A few weeks ago, a number of friends passed around this [1]*New York Times* column on "The Busy Trap," which concludes that "Life is too short to be busy." But I was, uh, too busy to comment on it until now. (Ba dum chhh).

Columnist Tim Kreider points out that the majority of people who complain about their extensive busyness have a self-imposed ?first world problem?:

> "It?s almost always people whose lamented busyness is purely self-imposed: work and obligations they?ve taken on voluntarily, classes and activities they?ve ?encouraged? their kids to participate in. They?re busy because of their own ambition or drive or anxiety, because they?re addicted to busyness and dread what they might have to face in its absence."

He brings up not only how this hurts children (who never have unscheduled time in which to explore on their own) but also adult friendships. The part in the column about friends unable to get together last-minute really struck home.

I am busy: I have a full-time teaching job, plus a pretty time-consuming part-time job as a freelance writer. And I have two toddlers, who not only keep me and my husband busy, they literally exhaust us. Much of my busyness is the result of my own drive and anxiety, but a good portion of it is the result of having to be a working mom.

Still, we try not to overschedule our family, and thus are able at 3 o?clock in the afternoon to decide to go to an outdoor concert that night. Calls and emails to friends to see if anyone wants to join us are inevitably met with, ?We?re busy tonight. How about three weeks from Thursday?? Of course, they?re probably annoyed that we can?t commit to three weeks from Thursday.

Two nights ago, I made a homemade peach-blueberry pie and proudly posted the fact on my Facebook page. I love that a friend called up and said, ?We?re coming over for dessert.? We hadn?t seen each other in months, and both realized that if we waited for a well-planned occasion, it may be several more months. The bathroom was dirty, I hadn?t showered that day, but I had a nice pie to share with our two families, and she brought an equally yummy cherry cake.

Kreider actually makes the case for sloth, long considered a ?deadly sin? by Catholics. But I think most spiritual sages would agree with his argument for time for contemplation?and not just for writers:

> "Idleness is not just a vacation, an indulgence or a vice; it is as indispensable to the brain as vitamin D is to the body, and deprived of it we suffer a mental affliction as disfiguring as rickets. The space and quiet that idleness provides is a necessary condition for standing back from life and seeing it whole, for making unexpected connections and waiting for the wild summer lightning strikes of inspiration ? it is, paradoxically, necessary to getting any work done."

And with that, I?m off to sit in a lawn chair with a book. What about you?

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[1] http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/06/30/the-busy-trap/?nl=todaysheadlines&emc=edit_th_20120701