

Super Foods for a Super Body p. 108

# fitness

FAST **NEW PLAN**

Mind, Body + Spirit

SPECIAL!

**30+**  
SHAPE-UP  
GUIDE

Fight gravity  
for good

**Get  
Lean in  
4 Weeks**

- Lose belly bulge
- Look 2x as toned
- Pull-out walking guide

Yes! You  
can be tank  
top sexy in  
7 days [www.fox.com](http://www.fox.com)

**Eat All Day**  
(and **never** get fat!)

SO CHEAP!

**12**

**BEST  
NEW SKIN  
SOLUTIONS**

**Love  
Your  
BODY**  
**AT ANY SIZE!**

Your ultimate **motivation** guide inside

ISSUE #100

ISSUE

ISSUE #100



If the sound of silence kills you, try pounding a rock against a bucket on a middle-of-nowhere farm in a patch of vegetables. When I did it years ago, the rhythm of it—plucking a striped potato beetle off a plant with my left hand, crushing it with a rock in my right—was monotonous and hypnotic. I remember thinking it was amazing that so much relaxation could come from such destruction.

I'd arrived in my vegetable patch via a circuitous route: At age 25, I'd felt burned out from the frantic treadmill of school and work. I was lost and I was tired. Was this really what the rest of my adult life was going to be like? I needed an intervention, and so I called a massive, radical time-out from the nonstop madness: I sold my stuff, moved onto a decrepit sailboat in San Francisco Bay, surfed around the coasts of Spain and Portugal for six months and then—unwilling to rejoin the rat race just yet—dug my hands deep into the earth at my family's weekend farm in Pennsylvania.

For four months I did nothing but nurture plants from the ground by day and preserve them by night—canning tomatoes, drying peppers, freezing corn. But around month five, when my college buddies started calling to chat, I began to question my decision. There they were, throwing themselves whole-hog into the world, being rewarded with big bucks, impressive jobs and exciting romances. Battling bug infestations on my organic tubers felt...small.

And suddenly, instead of relaxed, I felt stressed. It was my 26th birthday, and I was consumed by one thought: *What the hell am I doing?* Unplugged equaled unfulfilling.

## Why We Crave Speed

More than a decade has screamed by on fast-forward since my grand experiment in dropping out. Hit pause? Slow down? Yeah, been there and done that. Today I'm back in the ranks of the average American, who works 50-hour weeks while taking fewer than 13 days of vacation every year.

With two high-energy sons and a deadline-driven career, not to mention marriage, friendships, volunteering, sports and housework, who the heck has time to slow down? I no



**Happiness tip:** Find a gear that gets you where you're going on time, but resist the urge to speed through life.

longer have the luxury—or, to be honest, the inclination—to quit my life and go squash potato bugs. The truth is, I like being crazy-busy. Just not crazy-out-of-control-busy.

There's a crucial difference between A Successful Life, Versions 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0. First we had the drop-out, turn-off, get-ready-to-navel-gaze movement. Then, Version 2.0 claimed "busy" as the newest, shiniest status symbol. Multitasking, at least in my town, was a competitive sport, with moms at the playground furiously pounding on their Treos. "For some women, the busier you are, the more important you feel," explains Abby Seixas, a psychotherapist in Boston specializing in issues of stress and work-life balance. But the tide is turning, and busy itself is no longer something to be pursued with such gusto. Like red wine and chocolate cake, it is best experienced in moderation.

So instead of embracing the "slow" movement or "busy" race, I'm looking for Version 3.0—a life that moves at a medium pace. A life where I can continue to feel the thrill from pushing the speed limit but somehow learn to cruise in third gear instead of struggling to find a nonexistent sixth. To downshift instead of drop out. "We need to stop this all-or-nothing way of being," says Marty Dillingham, a program

# 4 ways to hit the brakes



Stop for a five-minute time-out every two hours. No matter how nuts your day is, get up from your desk, go out into the sun and fresh air, and reengage your senses. In the amount of time it takes to go to the vending machine, you can reconnect with nature.



Is your heart racing with anxiety before a big meeting? Draw in five slow, deep breaths. Pay attention to your inhale and exhale on each one—it will help refocus your mind on the present and ease nervousness.





development manager at The Crossings, a wellness spa and leadership retreat in Austin, Texas. "The sustainable change is going to happen with the little things. You don't have to alter your whole life and run off to the ashram. Just make simple adjustments. Bringing awareness to the moment is what helps."

It's not just the tyranny of the to-do list, as Seixas calls it, that's burying me. Nor is it the sheer volume of things I do, but the way in which I do them that has me out of breath. "Slower might not be the right word," Seixas says. Being *present* is. "When we're really fully pres-

ent, it can naturally slow us down."

"Presentness," Seixas adds, also speeds up our ability to experience life: "If you're doing one thing, but in your mind you're off somewhere else doing another thing, you don't get that complete experience because you're not really 'there.' You can't smell the roses if you're multitasking." When you think about it, can you remember the last time you did

anything—from grocery shopping to gardening—without devoting at least half of that activity to planning or stressing over something else entirely? It may seem more efficient (how much effort does it take to check items off your shopping list, really?), but at the end of the day, according to Seixas, your mind is frazzled from being scattered.

Finding focus through exercise is a great way to start downshifting. Instead of getting in the car, sitting in traffic and spending 20 minutes driving to the gym so we can throw on our iPod and crank out a wham-bam sweat session on the treadmill, Seixas suggests heading outside for a run in

the woods (or park or streets). Without requiring any greater time commitment (probably less), your workout routine will go from frenetic to full-body. "Exercising outdoors can help you become more present," she says. "Your attention is fully there, and that can have an amazingly renewing effect."

As a corollary, says Roger Cole, Ph.D., a research psychologist at Synchrony Applied Health Sciences in Del Mar, California, and a yoga instructor, the more you can focus on the rewards of an activity while you are doing it (as opposed to what it'll get you later), the more fulfilling each item on your to-do list becomes. Almost everything—be it cooking, exercising or home improving—has in-the-moment payoffs we tend to overlook. "A walk or run through the woods gives you fresh air, natural beauty and a chance to be alone for 30 minutes," Cole says. "That in itself should be an incentive for

doing it, not just because your butt will look better in jeans. It's about reaping the reward now instead of later."

Another easy way to downshift: Instead of dashing madly through dinner prep—slapping together ingredients while chatting on the phone with the news blaring from the television—pull your attention back to the sensual aspects of what you're doing. Turn off the TV. Hang up the phone. When you eliminate distractions that

you can control (screaming kids aside), making dinner can feel not only manageable but enjoyable. Seriously.

In the end, it comes down to being more intentional with your time. If you're on a deadline with a work project, turn off your e-mail and give it your full attention. If your girlfriends are having a night out, leave your BlackBerry at home and focus on the grown-up company you rarely get to share. "I always say the difference between a yoga practice and a stretching practice is the intention you bring to it," Cole says. "The awareness—making whatever you are doing the goal rather than just a means to an end—is the path to a balanced life." ■

## "The difference between a yoga practice and a stretching practice is the intention you bring to it."

OPENING PAGES: KATE POWERS/GETTY IMAGES. PAGES 120-121: TOP RIGHT: ANDREW PARSONS. TRANSTOCK INC./ALAMY (CAR). BURKE/TRIOLO/JUPITER IMAGES (STOPLIGHT). THINKSTOCK/JUPITER IMAGES (STOP SIGN). M-DASH/ALAMY (YIELD SIGN).



Take a few minutes when you wake up to write down whatever spills out of your brain. Dump mental clutter onto a (recycled) page and then rip it up in a symbolic gesture of mental housekeeping.



Change the scenery. Why do so many of us remain in an environment we know is toxic? Exit the room where an angry coworker is holding court. Leave your kids for a minute and stand outside on the porch if the blaring cartoons are driving you nuts. Remove yourself, even temporarily, from direct contact with stress, and enjoy the instant calm.

