

## We need to stop the glorification of busy

Nowadays it's almost as if it has become a competition as to who can be the busiest – but being overworked is not a virtue.



**Nicole Paulie**

**BUSY** [BIZ-EE]. Adjective. Meanings: (1) Actively and attentively engaged at work (2) Not at leisure, otherwise engaged.

It's a state of living we are all in at some point or another. Busy with kids, busy with work, busy with both. Your friend asks how you're doing and you reply somewhere on a frazzled range, "I'm crazy busy lately". Chances are your friend is going to reply, "Oh my goodness, tell me about it. We've been so insanely busy too. There's just never enough time in the day, is there?"

It's almost as if it has become a competition as to who can be the busiest – but stop for a moment and think about it. Being busy is not a virtue, and it's not a badge of honour. We are human beings, not human doings. It is one thing to be engaged in activities and doing work, and of course sometimes the load will be heavier than others – this is necessary to move forward in life. Unfortunately, the people who end up in my office have allowed activities and tasks to completely take over their lives, and they forget what it's like to live. They've burnt out and they don't know what to do.

### **Busyness equals illness**

Many studies across the globe show that the majority of people living in westernised countries admit their stress levels are high enough that they are affecting their health. I know several people in my own life who would admit this. When I talk to them about how they wish they were less busy, they will admit to me that they aren't seeking out help because they don't have the time. They're too busy to get help for being overloaded.

In my own practice, I see people like this coming in all the time who are working 10+ hour days all week. On top of that they're trying to fit in any sort of social support when possible; seeing friends, family etc. But week after week they come in exhausted. They admit to suffering from insomnia, gastrointestinal problems, anxiety, depression, migraines and so on – all by-products of stress. Although they try to maintain this level of functioning, they always eventually hit a wall.

The sad part about seeing people suffer with these health problems and stress is that it can be managed and controlled. Often the rush and pressure these people experience each day is unknowingly brought on by their own thought processes; by catastrophising what might happen if the worst case scenario occurred. What is the benefit of doing this, why do we continue?

### **The meaning behind busyness**

Being busy means a few different things, and understanding what we mean can help us understand why we continue to create this sense of urgency.

- **I matter**

If we're busy, that means people need us, and if we're needed then we're important. The more we talk about how busy we are, it can be used to imply that we think we're more important than someone else. After all, if they were important, wouldn't they be as busy as us?

- **I'm afraid**

For some, they keep busy because they're afraid of something; maybe fear of missing out, fear of not being able to support their family, fear that they are unimportant or not needed. Unfortunately, the activities they tend to use to keep themselves busy aren't actually the things that require their attention.

- **I feel guilty**

Maybe you feel bad for not using your time for other things, so you fill your time to avoid having to deal with it. It gives you an excuse to not have to confront uncomfortable challenges and make changes.

### **Stop the glorification of busy**

Worrying does not empty tomorrow of its troubles. It empties today of its strengths. We don't have to burn out and hit that wall. I propose that instead of glorifying busy and wearing it as a badge of honour, let's start measuring our lives instead by our experiences and what leaves us feeling fulfilled.

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