

Linenbeauty.com's

Guide to Slow Living

Inspired by our A Simple Path interview series



Introduction

Over the past few months we have had the pleasure and privilege to talk with a range of creatives, entrepreneurs and influencers about their thoughts on slow living. This guide is a collection of their wisdom and ideas, gathered together to help you bring some simplicity and slowness into your life.



What is slow living?

There is no one-size-fits-all answer to this, but there are some common themes and values that underpin the slow living movement. It can seem as if this movement is just a cynical marketing ploy, and while it is true that many brands are embracing the slow living aesthetic, there is far more to it than just advertising.

Slow living comes from a need for a better, more balanced way of life. It comes from a need to step off our daily treadmill and take stock of what makes us truly happy. It encompasses ideas that have been around for centuries and that are firmly entrenched in many ancient cultures, yet it is a result of the overwhelmingly busy nature of modern life.

Here's what our wise guests think slow living means, along with some tips if you want to incorporate it into your life.

Time



Perhaps our most precious, and hardest to come by commodity. There just never seems to be enough of it, and what there is gets filled with work, family, commitments, chores, errands and digital engagement. It's so hard to eke out some time for reflection and to regenerate, yet sometimes just squeezing even the smallest moments out of our day can have enormous benefits.

We can feel like there's no alternative to burnout and exhaustion, that there's no other way. But embracing slow living offers you a different path. It may be that you can only spare 5 minutes at lunch time, but use those 5 minutes intentionally and mindfully and they can set you up for the rest of the day. Take a quick walk around the office, open a window and take deep breaths of fresh air, do some quick exercises, read a poem, light a candle and sit still.

Get organised. So much time is wasted by inefficient jobs and unnecessary running around. Find a system that works for you, whether bullet journaling, phone calendar syncing or a

wall planner, then prioritise what really needs to be done on each day. The rest can be relegated to a 'could do' list, for when there might be a spare moment. Plan your weekly meals so you don't have to shop everyday and you can use your ingredients more efficiently. Do one chore in one room for 15 minutes each day, rather than spending hours cleaning.

If you can make more time to reflect on what matters to you and your loved ones, you will all reap the rewards. It's all about balance. And it may be that a true work/life balance is unattainable, but you can swing the pendulum back in the right direction.

Relationships



Taking time to properly notice the world around us, rather than getting distracted by things we think we *should* be doing, will strengthen our relationships with the people around us.

Switch off your phone if you are meeting friends so you can properly focus and engage with each other. Take a photo of your child perfectly framed by a shaft of sunlight, but then put away the camera and be truly present. Get up 10 minutes earlier at the weekend and bring your partner coffee in bed. Cut out activities that you no longer enjoy and spend that new-found time with your loved ones instead. Say no to things that pull your attention away from what really matters.

If life is really busy it may be that you need to actually schedule in time with your partner. Fix one night a month where you take it in turns to cook and eat a slow meal together. Go on a date. Take the dog for a walk together. Instead of dividing up household jobs, do them together.

Take yourself on a date. Activities like going to see an exhibition, walking without a map, going for afternoon tea in a fancy hotel, riding a fairground ferris wheel, learning a new language all reconnect us with our creativity and passions. And if we are happier, the people around us will be happier too.

Nature



Much has been written and researched on the beneficial effects spending time in nature has on our wellbeing, but sometimes days will pass and we will have done nothing other than go from car to work to home with ne'er a green field in sight. Slow living is a way of reconnecting with nature, of ensuring that we make time to enjoy the simple pleasures of being outdoors.

If you have a garden or yard, it could mean sitting on the back doorstep drinking your morning tea and watching the clouds. Or planting bulbs that will slumber through winter ready to emerge in all their colourful glory just when you've had enough of the dark, cold days. It could be going for a daily walk, whether in the park or countryside, or along the beach, getting your heart rate going as well as enjoying some quiet time.

Children in developed countries are spending less and less time outside, but we know that free play in nature builds self-esteem, boosts physical strength and coordination, and helps

brain development. Spend some time with your kids just jumping in puddles or feeding wild birds, involve them in jobs around the garden, teach them about the cycles of growth and life.

Living slow may seem unachievable in our complex lives, but taking time to appreciate the small stuff, to notice what nature has to offer and what we can do to protect it will make us feel more connected and grounded.

Sustainability



It follows that with more time spent in nature will come a greater desire to preserve the environment and wonders of our planet. A major part of slow living is the goal of living more sustainably and reducing our own carbon footprints as we move through the world.

Sustainable living can mean striving to be a zero-waste household, or simply reducing consumption and being more mindful of what we are buying. From the fabrics used to

make our clothes to the methods used to grow our food, slow living asks us to make choices that will not only help us feel healthy, but will minimise our use of resources.

You can use your power as a consumer to purchase from companies that have strong ethical guidelines or utilise sustainable production methods wherever possible, and still have a beautiful home and live well.

Minimalism



Connected to taking responsibility for the things we buy is the increasingly popular minimalist way of living. Not only does this involve being careful about what we purchase, it also means shedding things we don't really need. Many of us spend far too much time cleaning, organising and managing clutter and a seemingly endless amount of 'stuff'. Slow living helps us redress this balance.

If you feel that the things you own are somehow smothering you or preventing you living more freely, think about clearing out. Read up on creating a minimalist wardrobe, where a few top quality capsule pieces replace impulse-bought fast fashion and means we spend less time worrying about what to wear.

So many toys you can't see the floor of your kids' bedroom? Put some away in a box and rotate them after a month or so, and watch your children rediscover the joy of each object rather than them just being part of an unmanageable tangle of things. Or better still, donate toys that have been outgrown or underused to goodwill or sell them on ebay and use the money for a special family day out.

Stop striving for the latest gadget or the ultimate kitchen tiles and instead find a way to be content with what you have. Sure, buy things that you need and love, but buy things that have a story, things that will last. Things that bring you joy. Value experiences over material things. Living with less means there's less to fix and tidy, and more time for things that matter. And when you live more simply, you feel more deeply. Having less can be liberating.

Ritual

Slow living means carving out space for moments that feel special and help us find our place in the world. Rituals, however simple, can be significant ways to mark not just special occasions but the everyday moments of ordinary life.

Light a candle at mealtimes, play a morning song to show your children that it's time to get dressed, immerse yourself in a warm bath at the end of your working day, bake something delicious and share Friday Fika with your family or friends.

Nothing fancy, nothing demanding, just slow and simple ways to celebrate and be in the moment.



Digital detox

We are increasingly dependent on our phones and devices, and with a proliferation of social media channels much of our day can get sucked into a digital vortex of scrolling through posts or falling down online rabbit holes.

It's got so difficult to avoid the ever-present lure of the internet that some people are resorting to 'digital detoxing'. Whether this involves a weekend away and leaving your

phones behind, or setting aside one day a week as a no-screen day, there is something to be said for stepping away from the digital world.

Slow living doesn't mean living in the past, in some imaginary bucolic idyll, but it does require us to be mindful of how much time and attention we give to our devices. You could decide to have a 'no phones at the table' policy so that you can all share conversations over meals, or switch off all screens at a certain time in the evening and instead read a book. The time we spend flicking through pages online could be time we spend sorting out the pile of correspondence that we've been avoiding, or folding the laundry.

Stepping away from our screens not only frees up time for useful activities and jobs that will make us feel more in control of our lives, but it also gives us more time for our loved ones.

If you are an Instagrammer it can be very difficult to not see every coffee cup or blossoming tree as a potential post. But limiting the number of photos you take, or dedicating half an hour a day to taking several pictures at once and then putting the camera away, can stop you feeling overwhelmed. Use 'quick mode' on the camera so you can take a speedy pic and then get on with enjoying the moment. Schedule your social media posts so you don't have to constantly think about what needs doing. Share pictures of things you love, rather than arranging your life like a series of photo opportunities.

How can we support each other to live more simply and with greater awareness?

The slow living movement, whilst well intentioned, can end up making people feel inadequate and dissatisfied. Despite the emphasis on cultivating contentment, seeing an endless array of perfectly styled minimalist homes, or immaculately dressed kids engaged in wholesome activities, can sometimes have the opposite effect.

It can also seem monocultural, with little space for difference and diversity, or something that only well-off people can achieve.

Instead of portraying slow living as the ultimate lifestyle choice, we need to see it as a set of values that we incorporate to whatever degree is made possible by our lives. We don't all live in beautiful homes. Life is complicated and messy and sometimes downright rubbish. But we can take away some of the stresses and strains by simply being mindful of the choices we make. We can foster attention, self-care and environmental responsibility without spending money or expecting our lives to suddenly be perfect.

Slow living is something that we can gently strive for, without putting additional pressure on ourselves. We hope this guide has given you food for thought and some ideas on how you could make small changes to your life that might make you feel happier and live more freely.

