

Such pressure is put on us today to be continually doing things: working, shopping, travelling, socialising, planning, etc. etc.. While all these have their place at the right time and in the right way, sometimes it's as if there's something wrong if you're not in a state of perpetual motion, as if on a treadmill that never stops.

Being driven by activism can exact a heavy toll on individuals, marriages, families and society as a whole. Hyper-anxiety, obsessiveness, chronic fatigue, depression and a sense of failure arising from not being able to keep up with the pace are but a few of the effects of this relentless push to fill every waking minute with "things to do."

Yet, a child, for example, is not happiest when it has everything it wants. No, it's quality time with mum and dad, brothers and sisters, in a loving and secure atmosphere which instils deep contentment in a child. A kiss and a hug and a whispered, "I love you", are worth more than all the toys in China. I have seen first-hand how marriages can fall apart because couples don't spend enough quality time together in peace and quiet, sharing their deeper hopes and fears, or talking through their difficulties. Instead, they sit apart with their iPhones. Earning money and making a career are surely important, but they're to no avail if a relationship is crumbling at its core. Turn the phone off and talk!

We need time just *to be*: to be with and by myself and to listen to my own heart; to be with loved ones and experience the mutual affirmation which comes from simply being together, sharing, chatting, laughing, crying. Without being, there can be no real doing. Doing should serve being. It ought to lead me to be more, to be more with those I love. Doing for doing's sake does little. Why exhaust myself to bring in money for the family if they never see me, if a child grows up hardly knowing me and rarely experiencing my love?

Christmas approaches. Before the rush, let there be the hush. Before giving presents, be present to your loved ones and yourself. Before you put up the tree, open out its arms and attach the lights, first light up your face with joy and open your arms to embrace. Who you are is the best gift you can give.