

If you don't have time to read this, you should convert to my new religion - Non-Rush'n Unorthodox

by Kelly Bryson, MA, MFT

An important part of evolving my selfishness is cleaning up my relationship with time. I have not been getting all my needs met in my relationship with time and now choose to be more assertive about them. The primary need I have is to enjoy my time.

And I am going to take my time as I write this piece. Why? because I have been a-Rush'n (rushing) most all my life and I'm bone tired. Rushing to get through school, rushing to build a private practice, rushing to find someone to love. All so that I could stop rushing and relax. What I am discovering is that my mind always finds something more to rush about. Now my mind wants me to hurry up and write this book. My mind says, "Then I'll let you have some peace." Well I have finally named that voice for the sneaky serpent it is. Yes, I have finally seen the light, praise God, and I've become a born again Non-Rush'n Unorthodox. In my religion there is only one sin - "to rush." It is moral to move at great speeds, but not to rush. In fact the faster you are moving the more dangerous it is to rush. But there is a big difference between rushing and moving at the speed needed to achieve your goal.

A couple of weeks ago I was driving to a workshop I was to give in Los Angeles. I had started out 45 minutes after I would have liked because I was rushing around trying to get a lot of things done before I left.

The workshop was to start at 3:00 p.m. and at my present rate of speed, 65 mph, I figured I would be arriving at 3:45pm.

(Notice I did not say I would be 45 minutes to an hour late. That's because 'late' is a four letter word for a Non-Rush'n Unorthodox. In Non-Rush'n Seminary Schools it is a debate of phenomenological proportions as to whether 'late' even has existential existence. Sure, some people arrive at meetings after other people wanted them to, but we have to have cultural collusion between at least two people to agree that someone is late. 'Late' has no independent existence. Therefore a Non-Rush'n Unorthodox is never late. However it is not recommended to tell that one to your boss until you have achieved a certain level of financial independence.)

Late is a cultural abstraction. In some cultures late does not exist and there are great differences about what late is between other cultures. For example, when I held workshops for psychologists at the University of Belgrade, in Serbia, the workshop participants would usually come 3 to 4 hours after I thought they would. I am glad I didn't think of them as being late or else I would have been furious. I did however suffer a little culture shock.

Because I had not yet been truly saved from the evils of rushing, I was completely wrapped up in the coils of that serpent anxiety as I sped toward Los Angeles. As I imagined the people at the workshop angrily tapping



their feet and looking at their watches, I felt the sickening surge of adrenaline rise in my stomach as my foot would lunge forward on the gas. Then I would look up into the rearview mirror and hallucinate someone's roof top luggage rack into a police car's blue flashing light and quickly back off the accelerator. I was caught between the braking effect of the fear of getting yet another speeding ticket and the accelerating effect of the anxiety of being late.

Just then an enchanting song came on the radio and for just a moment I lost track of the two pendulums of peril I was caught between. Peace pierced through my anxiety and pardoned me from my purgatory. (I am starting to irritate myself with my idiotic alliterations.)

As soon as the song ended I noticed the pull of my thoughts, out the window of my car, down Interstate-5 and into the room of angry waiting workshop participants. The familiar feeling of anxious doom rose its ugly head as I visualized them walking out of the room in disgust. As soon as I returned my mind's eye to the trees on the side of the road, the shiny red truck in the next lane and to my present thoughts about how interesting this all is, I could feel the well of anxiety recede. Wow, if I could just keep my thoughts and visualizing inside the car, I'd feel a lot better. Moving through space in a car is like traveling through time. To the degree I could keep my attention on things I could presently have control over, things that were inside the car, the radio, air conditioning, my thoughts, I felt peaceful. As my mind tried to cross bridges it had not yet come to and do its suffering ahead of time, I felt miserable. Could old Ram Dass have been right with all that "Be Here Now" stuff?

This was the beginning of my conversion. I saw the uselessness and pain of projecting myself into the future. But what about planning and preparing for the future, you say. I want to make a distinction between anxiety-provoking, catastrophic-thinking related to rushing and other more productive kinds of thinking I might call planning, preparing or analyzing a problem. For example I factored in the flow of traffic, weighed the risk of getting a speeding ticket, estimated how much earlier I would get there if I drove 70 instead of 65. Then I performed what felt like a powerful act of self care. I moved my cruise control from 65 to 70. Some of you may say, now wait a minute aren't you starting to rush now? No I am not. Rushing is a state of consciousness not a particular external action. I can walk at my top speed and not be rushing and I can walk at half my top speed and be totally caught up in the raging ravages of the river of rushing.

(Rivers, by the way do not rush! And I happen to know they resent the accusation. Sure, sure some rivers move faster than others, some are a lot older than others. But do not project your own anthropomorphic anxiety onto some young, enthusiastic roaring river's passionate plunge.)

The great learning theorist, Piaget, says that all learning is a series of key differentiations. Planning for and doing acts of preparation is different than beating the worry drums, worry, worry...worry, worry... about the future, hoping to keep the evil spirits of misfortune away. Worrying is an abandonment of oneself. Converting anxiety into actions to address the future is being a good parent to oneself. Here's a traveling tip from Triple A. "One Antidote for Anxiety is Action"

Stephen Covey talks about being addicted to anxiety and urgency. He says there are true emergencies like when a fireman goes to a fire. One reason people become firemen is for the excitement and the sense of importance and purpose. Then, there is getting all caught up in the everyday rat race fueled by fears of having enough and surviving. Perhaps our longing for this sense of purpose and importance keeps us creating urgencies. After all, if you are rushing around doing urgent things, don't you look and feel more important?

Which reminds me of the old joke about the illiterate backwoodsman who came to his urologist's office for his vasectomy operation dressed in a tuxedo. The doctor asked, "Why are you all dressed up?" He said, "Well if I am going to be impotent I want to look impotent."

If I have a cell phone, pager, voice mail, web site, palm top, lap top and email that means my time is sought after and therefore I am valuable. Maybe if I rush around fast enough I can stay ahead of that Edgar Allan Poe ghost voice that says "You're wasting your time, you're not getting ahead, you are going to die with great weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth because you blew it!" What a nightmare! No, No, No, stop it all! Wake up!



See the light and become a Non-Rush'n. Convert from a F.E.A.R. (**F**antasizing **E**xperiences **A**ppearing **R**eal) based attitude of hustling for food, to a self caring based on tending the garden of your life

One way to start is to put your serenity first and refuse to rush. As I said before this does not preclude you moving as fast as you need to get to places at the time you want to. It does require you to focus on being gentle with yourself, trusting that there is enough time, and giving time to what is really important like prioritizing, planning, preparing, prevention and care of the soul.

"But what about when you really do need to hurry, like when you are late for an appointment?" you ask. Believe it or not you still have real choices available to you. You could, for example, follow my example. Recently I was running late for an appointment with my editor and started to panic. You know that feeling where you look at the clock and realize that even if you are able to break the land speed record, you will still be at least ten minutes late, that is if the parachute on your car opens so you don't overshoot your target. I sometimes have that paralyzed octopus amputee feeling, where I have eight things I need to do first, and in perfect prioritized order, but I only have two arms left. Most of my brain cells were busy processing catastrophic contingencies, like what if my editor gets insulted and fires me, or worse, she keeps me but decides to take it out on me over ten years by sabotaging my writing, etc., etc. In this state of near brain death, I was not very surprised when I locked my car keys in my office, in my hurry to get out the door.

I am sure you have your own similar story to tell. Everybody agrees that haste makes waste. But then why is rushing still so popular? I think it is because it appears to pay. It looks like you really do get to work a few minutes earlier than you would have, and that your boss is 3% less angry than she would have been. But what if you could get the same payoff at lower cost. What if you could walk into your workplace with an aura of peace and presence that would inspire connection instead of criticism. Because unexpressed fear and anxiety comes across as aggression, it often provokes attack. So when you walk into your office filled with anxiety caused by rushing around you are not only more vulnerable to criticism you are more likely to get it. It's kind of like when a dog smells fear in someone and is inspired to bite them.

Oprah Winfrey asked Scott Peck, "How do you find the time to do all that you do? You are a bestselling author of several books, the director of the Foundation for Community Encouragement, lecturer, therapist, and husband. How do you do it?" Scott says, "I spend a lot of time each day doing nothing." And Archbishop Desmond Tutu, said "I have so much I want to do today I better spend another hour in prayer." How appropriate that he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

When I'm rushing, I've outrun my soul. Like those cartoons where the character gets scared and takes off running so fast he leaves his shoes (soles and all) behind. So one of the first important steps to becoming a Non-Rush'n Orthodox is to repent and feel the sorrow of your sins. How sad that you and I have lived in so much fear all our lives. Always running like the scared rabbit in *Alice in Wonderland*: "I'm late, I'm late, for a very important date!" How sad that we haven't noticed the cost that our addiction to urgency has on our lives. What a cost to our creativity, productivity and efficiency! How sad that I didn't take the time to take in what my Pennsylvania Dutch friends told me many years ago, "The hurrieder you go, the behinder you get."

Then once we are in touch with the painful cost of rushing we are ready to receive the first (and only) commandment in the Non-Rush'n Unorthodox Religion:

I. Thou shalt not rush.

But be careful not to skip over the repenting part
Because it takes all of grieving
To be open to receiving.

Receiving what? The Kingly luxury of realizing that there is never a need to rush. You never saw Yul Brenner, the King of Siam, rush. No, he took big, slow steps across the stage as he pondered life and love's deepest complexities, etc, etc, etc. No the world waited on him!



And to be a Non-Rush'n devotee, each time you catch yourself rushing you will want to design your own reminder. When I am walking somewhere or just puttering around the house and I notice that queasy anxiety in my shoulders that lets me know I am starting to rush I stop and sing myself two bars from the song that goes:

I like being aware that there's nothing to achieve.
Life's a gift I have only to receive. By Ruth Bebemeyer

The rest of the song is worth writing too:

And I want to stay in touch with life's sweet flow,
And spread loving waves where ever I go.
I want everything I say or do,
To bring strength, warmth, and light to you.

Some final thoughts:

I am thinking about doing some evangelical outreach for my new religion and perhaps target some very important particular sinners like Mario Andretti of NASCAR racing fame. I am not even sure that he rushes (just because you are driving 175 miles per hour doesn't necessarily mean you are rushing) but it would be great publicity for my new religion.

I really hate to label people, much less invent new labels, but this was too tempting:

You might be a Rush-neck if:

1. You are leaning forward when you are driving as if to get your nose across the finish line in case of a photo finish.
2. You multi-multitask, i.e., talk on your cell phone, while you are driving with cruise control set at 80 so you can steer with one knee, roll your foot on Dr. Scholl's foot massager, eat a fast food taco, comb your hair, brush your teeth, listen to a self help tape, work your thigh master, dry your nails out the car window, wink at the guy in the red Beemer passing you, while thinking about whether you should buy that time share in Utah.
3. You were subpoenaed to testify as part of the Tailgate investigation.
4. Skimmed any part of my writing.
5. You are only willing to engage in threeply, or twoplay before sex.
6. You take more than 13 shortcuts to work

Take the time. Take the time.
You're neither fast nor slow.
Take the time. Take the time.
Because it's yours you know.

What's the worry? What's the hurry?
You're missing the moment now.
Just slow down. Look around.
Trust is the way and how.



Don't pedal faster, 'cause what you're after
It's in the scenery, that's all around.
Just slow down. It's waiting to take you in.

I want to change my goal from getting there
To enjoying myself every where.
Long the way, it's a play
'Bout how to engage each day.

It's a cosmic joke this thing called ambition.
To engage myself is my new mission.

I want to know what the sparrow knows.
Doesn't worry 'bout food or clothes.
He just accepts what he is given.
Doesn't care to make a liven.
And keeps singing out his sweet song.
'Bout engaging life all day long.

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All life must become puttering. Just say "No" to self-inflicted deadlines or expectations about how much I'm supposed to get done. "No" to scarcity of time. When I'm caught up in the expectation that I need to be getting more done, I need to get less done and take the time to find me again. Now, let's see where did I put me? There I am, in the closet behind all my fears that say "If you don't live up to these imaginary expectations I'm going to beat you up bad." Come on out of there and start living by the motto, "Me first and only."

Getting caught in a game of Rushin' Roulette"

1. Yesterday you were caught in rush hour traffic so you didn't stop for gas. Today your going to be late for work if you stop for gas and desperately late if you don't stop for gas and run out.
2. I was late and in a hurry to get to a presentation on "Finding inner peace" when I turned the corner too sharp and blew a tire. I arrived much later and in a totally frazzled state of mind.



Kelly Bryson MA, MFT, author of the best selling book, *Don't be Nice, Be Real - Balancing Passion for Self with Compassion for Others (COVER TEXT: A Handbook to Nonviolent Communication™)*, has been featured in Elle and Shape magazines, appeared on many TV and radio shows, lived in an ashram many years, is a humorist, singer and licensed therapist in private practice. He keynotes conventions (national Montessori), is an inspirational speaker and has been an authorized trainer for the international Center for Nonviolent Communication for over 20 years, and has trained thousands in the U.S., Europe and the Middle East. He trains, presents and consults with groups, corporations (Tony Robbins, Paul Mitchell Salons), churches (all flavors), schools (U.Cal.L.B, Body/Mind College), clubs and all types of organizations. He also studied with E. Stanley Jones, Gandhi's concierge and friend. Learn more about his work or information about his private or phone-based sessions, visit his website at www.LanguageOfCompassion.com or contact him directly at 831-462-EARS (3277) (most insurance accepted). To purchase Kelly's book *Don't be Nice, Be Real* or other related CD's, audio tapes & books, or to read chapters from his book click <http://www.languageofcompassion.com/Publications.htm>