

Almanac

Assignment: choose one listing below, and celebrate it! Send us pictures and we'll send you a Porch tee shirt!

Moon Phases



January 25 Full Moon

February 24 Full Moon

For tons of great information about

"That orb'd" maiden

With white fire laden

Whom mortals call the Moon."—(Shelley)

go to: <http://liftoff.msfc.nasa.gov/Academy/UNIVERSE/MOON.html>

January

January Birthstone: Garnet

The Garnet is a symbol of constancy and fidelity.

January Flower: Carnation and Snowdrop

Tea Month

This is an official day in the United States, but could we please celebrate it in Canada, too? There is something so warm and cozy about a cuppa; nothing better during the month of January, when all but the most southern of us will assuredly NOT be on our porches, than sharing a cup of hot tea with a neighbour.

January 1-8

Letter Writing Week

Here is an excellent Web site about letter writing: www.wendy.com/letterwriting/

January 1: Tons of stuff to do today—assuming you're not too hungover....

Feast of St. Basil Source: www.theologic.com/oflweb/feasts/01-01.htm

Japanese New Year

New Year (Oshogatsu) January 1-3. This is a



Porch Talk

SLOW

Slow Movement Catching on Worldwide:

Journalist Carl Honoré is redefining the meaning of slow with his best seller *In Praise of Slow* achieving global appeal.

It dawned on him one day that, "zipping through *The Cat in the Hat*" at his son's bedtime, was leaving a hole in his life. In his moment of epiphany, he recognized it was time to step out of fast forward mode; despite being exceptionally good at multi-tasking, the rewards were empty.

So he sat down to write *In Praise of Slow*, creating a best seller that's now published in 11 countries and several languages.

A self-admitted speed freak, Scottish-born, Canadian-raised Honoré is decluttering his schedule to savour more important moments in life.

"We're afraid of downtime," he says. "Because we have this cultural assumption that faster is better, it's so easy just to carry on doing everything fast. Fast can be good.

But we're pretty close to the breaking point and there's a worldwide yearning for slowness."

Having tapped into something big, the freelance writer is inspired by the global response to slow, as attested by the emergence of Slow Food and Slow Sex out of Italy, Slow Biz in Toronto and Slow Parents in Australia.

Engaging life with our foot on the accelerator courts major health issues, he adds. Our adrenaline is constantly pumping in fight or flight mode, bringing us all closer to burnout. Even children hit burnout these days, conforming to frenzied schedules. This kind of fear-based stress can't be good.

And yet we entertain a fear and distrust of "slow."

"The word slow is almost a pejorative in our culture,"

Honoré says. "The slow movement is rescuing this word and saying, 'Slow is good, I'm not being lazy.' The best way to get value for your time is not to rush through. It's to do things at the right speed, to give them your full attention and concentration. We've lost the ability to shut out all the distractions from technology and just focus on what's happening, engaging with it thoroughly and completely on every level."

Since the industrial era, we've been conditioned to believe that "Time is money," or even worse, "A Winged Chariot Drawing Near." People are ashamed to admit that they take time to simply daydream, reflect or meditate, because there's a stigma attached to "doing nothing." Honoré recalls one friend who would make up her activities because she was afraid to say she'd just been hanging out in the garden.

Some companies are actually instructing employees NOT to check their emails and voicemails over the weekend, thereby discouraging our addiction to technology. Yet all too common are those who jog with cellphones or talk on them while playing with their children....

Honoré says that simplifying his life has actually increased his productivity.

"The irony is you often accomplish more. It's the old tortoise and hare, isn't it? I personally find that I seem to get a lot more done in less time than when I was in headless chicken mode—always dashing around, trying to squeeze another thing in there. I feel happier with my work and I feel I get more done."

The real litmus test for Honoré was reading his son's bedtime story.

"One evening not long ago," he writes in his book, "something remarkable happened. I lay down on my son's bed to read him a long fairy tale... then I read an even longer story, this one about a dragon and a farmer's son. As I closed the book on the final page, it suddenly dawned on me that even though I had no idea how long I'd been reading... I was happy to continue. My flirtation with the One-Minute Bedtime Story was now a distant memory."

For more information: www.inpraiseofslow.com ☼

Sally Smith

