

Reinterpreting *Leisure* for the Burnout Generation: The Lost Art of Mindfulness in the Age of Modern Busyness

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Abstract

We are the burnout generation. We wake up early, we follow rituals, not routines, we have a diet plan, fitness plan, and career plan. We plan to own a car, a three-bedroom house, and a grand wedding. Our lives are full of goals and ambitions, and we don't have time to pause even to think if we de facto want this. This paper reinterprets the poem *Leisure* by

W.H. Davies in the context of 21st-century hustle culture, exploring the absence of leisure, which leads to a loss of mindfulness and detachment from nature. This eventually brings emotional exhaustion, weariness over life, losing hope and whatnot. This paper offers insights from this particular poem as it is a plea to slow down and argues that reclaiming leisure and humaneness is not idleness but an act of self-care.

Keywords: Leisure, Slowdown, Pause, Time, Burnout Culture, and Mindfulness

Introduction

The question, "What is this life if, full of care, we have no time to stand and stare?" has become a haunting reflection of our lives in the era of smartphones, career ladders, and productivity apps. As members of the burnout generation, we are always striving for goals but are unable to enjoy the here and now. Our schedules, which are governed by checklists, alarms, and deadlines, do not allow for idle reflection.

Our inability to manage our free time is the current issue, not a lack of it. This article explores leisure through the prism of contemporary busyness, relating it to the ideas of slow living, anti-hustle culture, and mindfulness. It will make the case that Davies's poetical caution is not sentimental but rather foreboding, providing a manual for reclaiming humanity in a time of excessive measurement.

The Burnout Generation and the Loss of Idleness

The phrase "burnout generation" describes millennials and Gen Z adults who endure ongoing personal productivity pressure in addition to chronic workplace fatigue.

Furthermore, to work for businesses, we now "work" on ourselves by setting fitness objectives, networking, improving our skills, and building our brands. Even recreational pursuits are optimised and made profitable. Davies's appeal for "time to stand beneath the boughs" stands in stark contrast to the reality that we might go to a park and then instantly grab a phone to record it. Once considered

normal, idleness is now stigmatised as being lazy. As a result, curated, performance-based living gradually replaces unplanned joy.

Anti-Hustle Culture and the Ethics of Slowness

An anti-hustle culture promotes putting one's health before continuous professional growth. This is pro-balance, not anti-work. It is possible to read *Leisure* as an early text in this lineage, rejecting the notion that a busy life is a prerequisite for success.

The Slow Movement popularised the ethics of slowness, which prioritise presence over efficiency and depth over speed ("In Praise of Slow"). Although Davies's work predates these movements, it perfectly complements them. Today's reinterpretation of leisure serves as a reminder that "enough" is a worthwhile objective.

Reclaiming Leisure in the Digital Age

The question still stands: How will we spend leisure time in 2025?

Among the tactics are:

- Digital sabbaths, or days off from electronics.
- Nature immersion: unplanned outdoor time.
- Unmonetized hobbies—things done for fun only, not for social media or productivity.
- Intentional daydreaming which makes room in the mind for rambling thoughts.

Davies's poem aims to challenge the cultural script that demands that every moment be accounted for, rather than providing a precise timetable.

Conclusion

A life without time to "stand and stare" is no life at all, as W.H. Davies cautioned more than a century ago. His words resound as a call to action in a time of quantified selves, incessant notifications, and exalted busyness—not for more hours in the day, but for more room in the soul. The burnout generation's reinterpretation of leisure shows that slowness, mindfulness, and nature are not extravagances but rather essential for survival.

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