

Time after time



THE DOCTOR IS IN
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My inexpensive fitness tracker stopped working – just like that. After many attempts at resuscitation, I could see that there was nothing that I could do to revive it and restore it to its useful function, and sadly acknowledged that it had now clearly reached its end.

Feeling a bit unsettled, I wondered how I'd now walk or go on the elliptical machine and count my 10,000 steps a day?

We should all have such First World problems, I know; but it's the small stuff in life that often causes the most distress. Owning a bathroom scale that shows my weight reproducibly as I hop on and off of it and a watch that tells the time correctly and reliably counts steps are basic little things that help keep me happy.

I was brought up to believe that if I was on time, I was actually late, and that it was more respectful to wait for someone else than to have them wait for me.

You can imagine my horror the first time I remember being late as an adult. Timing it perfectly to head out the door for our first baby's one-month visit to the pediatrician, our son decided he had other plans and needed to poop. After a complete change of clothing, rushing breathlessly, we arrived only 15 minutes late for our scheduled visit.

It seemed we were more bothered than the office staff, and I soon discovered that not everyone thought the way I did. In fact, more often than not they ran late.

This experience didn't break my habit, as I thought maybe this time they'd be ready to take me early and I wanted to be there. Over the years I continued to set the clock in the car and on the stove a few minutes fast so our children got out of the house and we'd arrive "on time."

Lucky for me, my daughter-in-law came to the rescue with a smart watch. "Take my fancy exercise watch," she suggested, as she couldn't wear it.

Day two and I was a happy camper – almost.

The smart watch tells time and keeps perfect track of my steps, but insists on telling me what to do. It speaks to me just a bit too much, announcing my messages with a buzz, sending me reminders to move in the middle of seeing patients, praising me if I stand up, and lights up in the middle of the night to check my oxygen saturation levels, among other things. It can be annoying, and at times it definitely keeps me awake when I would rather be asleep.

In addition, it competes with my phone for my attention, which without a doubt gets too much of my time already.

Now everyone walks around stressed and anxious – and it's definitely not just COVID

WEREN'T WE all happier and less stressed years ago when we had a simple watch and no cellphone?

My husband and I were trying to figure out how we used to tell a babysitter how to reach us when we went out without our children.

Then, too, how did my parents handle it when I came to Israel as a teenager for eight long weeks and called home only once, from the central post office, half-way through the trip, on a specific day and prearranged time, telling them that everything was fine?

Fast-forward to today, when we can phone all over the world in seconds without operator assistance.

While we have all of these technological devices designed to make our life easier, we worry much more now, often feel that checking messages on our cellphones is more important than the people we are physically in front of, and sadly, put more pressure on ourselves by feeling that a normal response time to any communica-



ASK YOURSELF honestly if you control your time or if it controls you.
(Jon Tyson/Unsplash)

tion, whether by text or WhatsApp or email or TikTok, is approximately two minutes and not the once acceptable two weeks or more.

Our children have no idea what an aerogram is, or that whatever news I sent home was happily out of date by the time it arrived, so no one thought that they might actually have to worry.

Now, everyone walks around stressed and anxious, and it's definitely not just COVID, though COVID anxiety is increased as a result of information overload delivered into the palm of our hands at all hours of the day and night.

While I think I am grateful that my daughter included me on her "See my drive in real time on Waze," am I happy and do I really need to know that there has been an accident on the road and she is delayed?

Isn't ignorance bliss? How many people who were technologically free over the holidays were sad to have to turn on their phones and bring the world back into their lives afterward, and how many were climbing the walls in anticipation of a social media fix?

NOW THAT the holidays are over, it is up to us to decide what we would like our daily routine over the year ahead to look like.

Here are a few thoughts:

1. Explore the expression, "use your time or lose it." You won't get time back, but you can definitely waste it. And... you are not getting any younger. Is it important to you to spend your time wisely? If so, how do you want to spend it, and with whom and on what?

2. Ask yourself honestly whether you control your time, or it controls you. If you don't like

the answer, what can you change for yourself (and your loved ones) to make things better?

3. When buying a pair of shoes not so long ago from Melvin, my favorite salesman, he said, "First put your foot in the shoe toward the back, and only then buckle." In other words, take the time and put yourself in the right place. Take a moment to breathe, get settled and focus on your goal. Frequently we simply act or react, without taking the time to stop, think, and respond with calmness and intentionality.

4. At times, we are so busy running to where we think we want to or ought to be going that we get caught up in the destination and totally ignore the incredible journey along the way.

5. Being outside as we have been in the past 20 months has hopefully given us all a greater appreciation for nature and the simpler things in life. Perhaps we are all meant to learn many basic lessons from all that's happened that we have previously missed.

6. Being part of the *hevra kadisha* in years past; having carried out debriefings after horrific disasters, such as fatal plane crashes and 9/11, and counseled victims of terrorism, and now having lived through a pandemic, I am reminded once again that not only is life incredibly precious and we don't get the minutes back, but today, this day, is the day we want to be living for. If you tend to finish your sentences with "I will be happy when....," work on changing it to "I am grateful now because...."

7. During the month of Elul, a friend sent me daily videos of that morning's shofar blowing. Each day was different, whether because of the sound, place, time of morning or the person blowing it.

Things feel very special when we slow down and take the time to appreciate what is happening around us. Like the shofar and the shofar blower, each day adds something else, and it is our job to appreciate its uniqueness.

8. We have just entered *shmita*, the sabbatical year for our fruits, vegetables and gardens. Many fields will lie fallow and use the time to rejuvenate.

If we take the time to make space for what is important in our lives and put aside what isn't, then we will truly find our own inner peace, and feel rejuvenated as well. ■

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