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# **ACC DOCKET**

*INFORMED. INDISPENSABLE. IN-HOUSE.*

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**Slow Is the New Fast**

**Skills and Professional Development**



It is easy for someone else to look at our lives and immediately see what we need to do to solve a problem and move forward. The good news is that we are just as capable of easily seeing what needs to be done, but we have to be willing to give ourselves over to the process. Although we live in a hurried and harried world, as much as we'd like to think otherwise, the world does not come to a screeching halt when we choose to step off the treadmill.

A picture on my wall reminds me that all the "hurry up" in my life is wasted time. To get done what I really want to accomplish requires that I forgo things that complicate or add to my to-do list.

### **SIMPLIFY.**

Slow down.

Imagine doing less.

Make time for loved ones.

Practice patience.

Learn to gently say no.

Increase your quiet time.

Follow your heart.

Yield to life, yield to peace, yield to joy.

If we'd actually like to get more done, then we need to do the counterintuitive thing and back off. Following the SIMPLIFY mantra, here are eight practical steps we can take to get control of our lives,

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our emotions and our time so that we can be a better example, leader and goal achiever.

*Have one point of attention:* We all like to think we are good at multitasking, but studies have shown that we can do only one thing at a time. When we try to accomplish multiple tasks simultaneously, no one thing gets our undivided attention, and everything suffers. We, and those around us, are better served when we focus on one thing, work on it to completion or a logical ending point, and then move on to the next thing.

*Slow down:* When we rush, we often get sloppy because we are more focused on getting it done quickly than getting it done well. I always ask myself: If I don't have time to do it right the first time, when will I find the time to do it over again? "Haste makes waste," after all.

*Do less:* When we think of doing less, our goal should be to increase the quality of what we do. This is not permission to be lazy but permission to be and do better. While we may have less to show for our efforts, the impact of what we've done will increase due to the quality of what we invested in the outcome.

*Breathe:* When we breathe slowly, fully and deeply we increase our capacity to respond peacefully. We give our worn-out souls a moment to gather and regroup. Each breath gives us a little bit of time to think through the next step, or better yet, a chance not to think at all and just be.

*Do nothing:* When we want to get out of a hole, the first thing we have to do is stop digging. Sometimes doing less isn't enough; we need to consciously choose to do nothing at all.

*Stop worrying:* "When you worry more, your life will get better," said no one, ever. Worrying doesn't do anything for us other than deepen the stress that we are already under. If we can handle the situation confronting us, we have no need to worry. If we cannot handle it, worrying will not make it go away.

*Practice gratitude:* When we are grateful, we acknowledge what we are and what we have are enough because we don't negate what is. Studies have shown that a grateful attitude is the key to happiness, and happiness is the key to success.

*Keep practicing:* When we do what we do because we enjoy it, it is easier to continue doing what we do. The purpose of practice is simply to rewire the brain. "Practice makes perfect" is valuable only when what we practice is in alignment with the way we want to perform.

We do not become obsolete just because we waited 20 minutes or even 20 hours to respond to an email or text. In those instances, when an immediate response is the difference between life and death (or death of a deal), then sure, respond. But for the vast majority of us, that is not the case.

There are things we can do to improve our relationships and productivity, and they involve our stepping back and letting go rather than pushing forward despite lack of energy, drive or motivation. We cannot get what we want by continuously going, going, going. And even in our need to do more, we can accomplish more by being fully present, focused and unfrazzled by the hectic pace of life, which starts when we realize that our first step might be to stand still.

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**Whitnie Wiley** was a long-time columnist for the *ACC Docket*, where she wrote the Lead the Way column for more than seven years. The column provided leadership tips for in-house counsel and others as they pursue their personal and professional goals.