

# The *Slow* Secret:

## How to Make Lasting Changes in Your Life

“Wisely, and slow. They stumble that run fast.” -  
*William Shakespeare*

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How many times have you rushed into making changes in your life—a habit change, learning a new skill—only to have it flop?

It’s not just the New Year’s Resolution Syndrome; it happens at all times of the year that we run out of steam or get discouraged and give up.

But here’s the secret: go slowly.

Slow-going holds more power than a gung-ho, all-out approach. Slowing down increases effectiveness and, ironically, helps us reach goals faster.

If you’ve ever tried T’ai Chi (famous for its series of slow movements and poses), you’ve felt the power of slow. The slower you go in T’ai Chi, the better. One reason is slowness allows one to perfect the movements. The body adapts, forming muscle memories that will last when (and if) we speed up the movements.

It’s as if our body and mind are forming “grooves” through continual repetition of the movements.

This is habit formation. Take, for example, the drive home. Our minds are on something else, but we make the right motions to get home anyway. By habit, our minds and bodies follow a groove we’ve formed by doing these actions many times.

This phenomenon applies to anything: exercise, eating, art, patient parenting, carpentry, reading. Slow is the secret.

Some of the reasons slow works:

**1. Mindful.** When you do something slowly, you pay more attention to what you’re doing—you do it mindfully, with full concentration. When beginning a new change, this increased concentration helps form a “groove.” Later, actions become automatic (habit).

**2. Hold back.** When we start a new change, we often begin full of enthusiasm—we go all out. We exhaust the enthusiasm quickly or get distracted by something else. Conversely, when we hold back, we build up endurance and sustain it for much longer—through that dreaded 2-3 week barrier when

people often quit. If you want to run 3 miles, start with *walking* 1 mile. Then 2 miles. Then 3 miles. Then *run-walk* in a similar pattern. You’ll want to proceed faster, but slow the pace. Use your enthusiasm sparingly each time.

**3. Learn it right.** Learning slowly means learning correctly, without erratic hits and misses. We proceed in good form, having learned proper technique. The importance of this is obvious in something like martial arts, but it’s true in *any* activity.

**4. Increase focus.** When we operate slowly, we can focus intently on one thing. Hence, the increased effectiveness.

**5. Calm.** Slow is calm. Fast is hectic. Go slow. Get rid of the chaos. Create success peacefully.

“Slow down, everyone. You’re moving too fast.” - *Jack Johnson*

