

# Quantity versus quality

We get more done today but it seems there's less satisfaction.

By Robin Friedman

**A**lways on fast forward and unable to find the play button. Experts say we get more done today, but with less satisfaction.

Not only do our days seem to be in relentless fast forward, but entire weeks and months of our lives seem to speed out of our control.

People today live through more "episodes" than earlier generations. Our days are rigidly scheduled into calendar blocks. Our time is fractionally ruled by electronic devices. We change jobs, partners, and locations. Our lives feel fragmented and compressed, without longevity or stability, and this can result in a

generic feeling of overload.

Eventually, experts say, we arrive at a point where we lose the ability to see the bigger picture, and our focus shifts to the mere completion of tasks. As a result, we are unable to enjoy reflective moments.

We react rather than ponder, plan rather than be, do rather than live.

And until we alter — or at least become more conscious of — the frenzy of our pace, we'll never find true fulfillment.

We'll yearn for the play button.

## It's alive!

Clocks, and their mechanical approach to organizing time, are a relatively recent experience in human history. The first clocks in 13th-century medieval towers only had one hand, and were used primarily as signaling devices, calling people to work and special events. People regulated their time by organic cycles such as the sun, moon, and seasons.

The widespread use of clocks coincided with the Industrial Revolution's need for precision timing. Gone was the elevation of leisure as practiced by the Greeks and Romans. (Aristotle believed one could learn more about a person in an hour of play than an entire lifetime of work.)

Early industrialists wanted their machines whirring 24 hours a day. A new workforce had to be disciplined

