


UNITED WISDOM

# A Slower Life with Real Obligations

Meaning and Direction

Andrey Zarinsh & Maria Evilkut

P-23-N03 · EN

@andrey.zarinsh @ilkutki

# A Slower Life with Real Obligations

## Epigraph

> *anticipates things that are difficult while they are easy*

Laozi, Tao Teh King 63.2. Exact short fragment in James Legge’s historical translation; attention to an emerging task, not a guarantee that every difficulty can be prevented.

## What this article is about

Advice to live more slowly is easy to welcome on a free morning. It is harder to understand beside promised work, care for someone close, and schedules involving several people. This article does not replace duties with a pleasing image of unhurried life. It distinguishes an action’s speed, a hurried relation to it, excess promises, and actual conditions of time. The Bhagavad Gita retains action and duty; Tao Teh King considers small beginnings and lightly made promises; Marcus Aurelius addresses human work within shared life. Their religious and philosophical grounds differ. Contemporary examples and the exercise are original, without established efficacy. We consider where pace or sequence can change, where agreement is needed, and where a personal decision is insufficient. Slower life concerns participation rather than one speed for everyone: necessary action may stay fast, and inability to slow down does not measure human worth.

## I. Slower does not always mean taking longer

Imagine someone leaving home while searching for a key, answering a message, and explaining a delay. Another person placed the key earlier, gave a departure time, and now closes the door quickly. The second acts faster at this moment yet may be less hurried in form. This establishes no guarantee that preparation removes difficulty. It separates duration from the organisation of attention. Advice about slower life becomes clearer when we ask not only about minutes but about what makes different tasks crowd into the same minute.

Speed cannot be declared the enemy of meaningful action beforehand. A task may need timely completion, a simple decision may suffice, or delay may burden somebody else. We consider no acts requiring medical or technical instructions. In an ordinary example, make a promised call at the agreed time rather than delaying it for a beautiful feeling of leisure. One can act quickly with a clear subject, or slowly while repeatedly avoiding it. This supplies no general indicator of good pace; it returns attention to the task, its conditions, and those expecting participation.



@andrey.zarinsh @ilkutki

A different difficulty appears when every action is mentally assessed through the next. During a meeting, someone prepares a letter; while writing, they think of another meeting. The connection may be necessary, or it may reflect excess availability for assignments. The scene establishes no diagnosis. Ask what the present task requires and which part of the future genuinely needs attention now. This promises no special concentration. It makes one action’s boundary describable, so that an entire future day need not issue simultaneous demands at each present step.

Slowing down may begin by declining an addition rather than extending duration: not opening another assignment before an agreed one ends, not promising an evening before a required meeting’s length is known, not accepting another deadline without clarification. These are original possibilities dependent on circumstances, not rules for every worker or household. Some people lack such choice. Naming that limit matters: personal attention does not govern an organisation. First distinguish possible changes from unavailable ones, keeping discussion about pace connected to life rather than a test of someone’s inward correctness.

## II. Name obligation and urgency separately

An obligation can have a deadline, but every urgent request does not become our obligation. Someone already promised help with one task and receives a message asking for another immediately. Is there a new agreement, who set the time, and how does it relate to the earlier undertaking? This is no universal instruction to refuse help; shared life includes unexpected changes. Yet the word ‘urgent’ alone identifies neither who can act nor the cost to an agreed task. Distinction helps seek an actual arrangement instead of automatically expanding promises.

Importance is not established by volume. A quietly expressed request may concern a real duty, while a persistent message may concern something postponable. The article nevertheless offers no way to detect importance from tone. Ask about content: what must happen, by when, why that time matters, and who participates? An answer may revise the first assessment. One need not obtain another person’s entire day; relevant information offered by agreement may suffice. A clear undertaking can preserve necessary speed while removing an undefined requirement to remain ready for everything at once.

A real undertaking need not become a boundless role. Promising to meet a relative does not accept every later task; preparing one part of shared work does not promise to repair any delay elsewhere. A boundary removes neither care nor warmth. It shows where agreement exists and where another conversation is needed. Participants may willingly expand their involvement, or time may be unavailable. Both are better named directly than first taking ownership of everything and then treating exhaustion as the inevitable price of caring about another person.

Pace also involves previous trust. Repeated last-minute changes leave another person uncertain. Wanting to slow down does not remove the need to explain a change. Give notice, offer an available alternative, or acknowledge that an undertaking cannot presently be fulfilled. This guarantees no agreement and replaces no applicable rules. It preserves honesty. In the original example, slower life starts not by making a deadline disappear, but by declining to portray unavailable time as available: a real limit enters conversation before somebody discovers it through a disappointed expectation.

## III. Action remains part of life

In Bhagavad Gita III, Krishna rejects the idea that outward renunciation of action alone brings perfection and considers action without attachment. Edwin Arnold’s rendering places this beside sacrifice and the religious order of the world. It becomes no slogan of constant busyness or justification for every imposed task. The relevant boundary is that stopping visible work does not itself establish liberation within this text. The original application distinguishes declining an excess promise from declining participation in shared life, preserving responsibility for an accepted act and the ability to discuss its conditions.

Imagine a gathering requiring preparation of a room. One participant wants less bustle, so stays away without notice; others hurriedly take their share. Their own day slows while the common cost grows. This does not establish that every refusal is wrong. They could have stated unavailability or agreed another contribution. The distinction is between a discussed limit and a vanished promise. The example does not turn the religious text into event-management instructions. It shows why one person’s pace cannot be assessed apart from tasks their decision leaves to others.

Attachment to an outcome and responsibility for an act also differ. Someone can undertake work and honestly perform the available part without guaranteeing what depends on other conditions. Or an ideal final appearance may be demanded so strongly that no act seems sufficient. This is a possibility for reflection, not a diagnosis. Religious liberation is not reduced to a contemporary work habit. Comparison can nevertheless ask: what did I undertake, what can I perform, and which further outcome silently entered the promise? An answer may clarify participation’s limit without erasing the task.

Action without an excess promise may look ordinary. Someone reports completing agreed material while still awaiting a reply. They declare neither the whole project finished nor endless availability because a response is absent. Further participation can be discussed separately. This precision belongs to an original contemporary scene, not an established means of attaining calm or liberation. Its narrower meaning is that a finite task receives a finite description. Each duty need not promise complete control over a shared outcome, while uncertain results need not remove responsibility for reporting one’s actual contribution.

## IV. A small task needs attention rather than dismissal

In Tao Teh King 63, Legge’s rendering considers difficulty while still easy and greatness while small, beside caution about lightly made promises. This concerns the Tao and sage, not an established law of project management. It does not promise that every sudden difficulty could have been prevented. The original application asks whether an available small clarification relevant to the task is being dismissed. Naming a time or asking about a meeting place may suffice; uncertainty may still remain. Attention to a small matter does not confer complete control over the future.

A step need not be made artificially small. An understood, available act can be completed. Division helps when it reveals a genuine subject and boundary, not when it turns life into endless accounting of tiny movements. An imagined letter may first need clarification from its recipient; without it, a long response could answer the wrong question. Clarification then forms a separate task. With the subject known, additional stages need not be invented for a methodical feeling. The chosen order should serve the task rather than force it into an attractive scheme of gradualness.

Caution about promises also concerns present speech. ‘That will be quick’ may appear before scope and dependencies are understood, followed by hurried attempts to meet an unsupported deadline. Willingness to help can coexist with clarification: first inspect the material, then give an available time. This need not make conversation long. One honest sentence may replace later explanations, though no such outcome is guaranteed. The change aims not to look leisurely but to avoid hiding unknown scope beneath confident wording on which another person is already building their schedule.

Advance attention also has limits. Every delay, change, and other person’s decision cannot be known beforehand. When one appears, name the new condition rather than finding evidence of deficient awareness in every case. The historical sage formulation remains part of its source; readers need not demonstrate literal fulfilment. In the original exercise, a time can be reconsidered, an assessment error admitted, or involvement changed by agreement. Learning remains possible without making surprise a moral defect. Slower pace can include honesty about unknowns rather than a promise that foresight will remove every shared difficulty.

## V. Shared life includes work and limits

In Meditations V.I, Marcus Aurelius addresses himself about rising for human work and connects it with shared nature. The historical Casaubon edition actually read acknowledges rest yet also compares devotion to work with neglect of the body. We do not adopt those severe comparisons as present recommendations about sleep or exhaustion. The Stoic self-address retains its tension. It makes participation in a common good discussable, but determines no reader’s safe workload and gives another person no authority over their body through a quotation about duty.

Self-address cannot become an order to somebody else without changing its role. Someone may question their own attention to a shared task; a manager or relative repeating the words occupies another relationship. They may have more authority and the listener less freedom to decline. The original application does not propose persuading a tired person with a historical example. Identify the task, participation, and available assistance first. Shared meaning does not erase distribution questions. Redistribution may preserve care better than asking one participant to desire doing everything more strongly.

In an imagined household, someone close needs assistance regardless of a wish for unhurried life. Renaming avoidance does not make the need disappear. Yet one person taking every task need not be the only worthy response. Available support, others’ involvement, and current limits can be considered. This provides no professional care instructions. It distinguishes two errors: erasing a real necessity, or declaring its arrangement beyond discussion. In either case, talk about inward pace bypasses the conditions under which somebody actually has to perform the task.

Slower pace may mean seeing one necessary act without an extra demand to prove personal worth. Completed work need not become a story of flawless care, nor asking for assistance an admission of failure. This is an original distinction, not a psychological conclusion about everyone. It may be available, or conditions may be too tight to change experience noticeably. Calm is no success test. Ask whether a task became clearer and participation’s boundary more honest. Without change, leave the question open instead of making a difficult day test spiritual eligibility.

## VI. Opportunities to slow down are uneven

One person can silence notifications; another must answer during specified hours. One can move a meeting; another has little choice between travel and a shift. Advice about identical leisure hides these differences. These are original illustrations, not a study of their prevalence. A form available to one person cannot become another’s required standard. The point is no competition in hardship but an accurately framed proposal. Before suggesting a pace change, understand which part of time is genuinely available for decision and what consequences the change creates in shared life.

With limited choice, the question can shrink: not redesigning a week but clarifying one task transition, not gaining a free morning but declining a second meeting in an occupied interval. Even that may be unavailable. Honest description then serves better than an invented obligation to find inward freedom in all circumstances. A small change does not compensate for unjust conditions, which may require different decisions and assistance. We distinguish an available personal act from an environment someone need not repair alone merely to satisfy advice about slower living.

Assistance cannot be presumed available. A request may receive no response, another participant may lack time, or the offered form may not fit. The exercise promises no resource created immediately by clear asking. It distinguishes a task actually shared from one still carried by a single person. This matters for the next undertaking. A schedule cannot rely on merely desired assistance. Name hope separately from an actual agreement. Pace then rests on available conditions rather than imagined willingness that nobody has confirmed through participation.

Comparison with someone else’s leisure often leaves conditions outside the frame. A walk or quiet table reveals neither preparation, others’ work, nor the cost of that hour. The appearance need not be declared deceptive; it simply need not measure personal deficiency. Another choice may be interesting when relevant context is known and choosing differently remains possible. Persuasive appearance does not make it compulsory. Slower life stays a question about particular arrangements of participation rather than a visual standard requiring one to conceal tasks and dependencies.

## VII. Personal pace meets another person’s waiting

Delaying a reply differs from ending constant availability. A promised message may be awaited for somebody else’s next step; immediate access never agreed may need a separate conversation. These cannot be combined under the word ‘boundary.’ A boundary has terms and grounds. It helps state actual availability but cannot cancel an earlier undertaking through an inward decision alone. Changed conditions need communicating, preserving the difference between chosen unavailability and an obligation now requiring revision with another person’s involvement.

A next contact time may suffice. It need not promise that the whole issue will be settled; participants may agree only on a status response. In imagined shared work, clarification rather than a final result is awaited. Naming this distinction can prevent unsupported conclusions on one side and complete informational silence on the other. This is not always available or a universal business standard. It shows how a message’s form may preserve connection without requiring completion to be portrayed before the relevant work is complete.

Sequence helps where tasks genuinely allow adjustment: clarification before a letter, preparation before a gathering, agreed timing before travel. Life does not consist only of convenient chains. Duties sometimes coincide, requiring others’ involvement. Personal discipline promises no removal of such conflict. Name the competing times and consider who can change the conditions. Without a solution, inward calm cannot substitute for shared agreement. Meaningful pace includes noticing what needs external discussion rather than endlessly trying to repair incompatible scheduling demands within oneself.

Another person’s expectation is not always an order. They may want an immediate reply without an agreement; another time can be offered or a new task declined. Respect requires no availability at every hour. Describe refusal as declining particular involvement rather than judging the person’s importance. A brief message may suffice, or circumstances unknown to the article may make conversation harder. The distinction remains: expectation, agreement, obligation, and response form have different grounds. Clarity preserves a voice without assuming everyone else’s time must accommodate our leisure.

## VIII. Attention requires no special feeling

An agreed action may lack a feeling of calm. Someone fulfils a promise while thinking of another difficulty, or does fewer tasks without feeling unhurried. This establishes neither a useless agreement nor a diagnosis. Conditions and experience differ. Check whether accepted promises decreased, an action became clearer, and another person’s consent remained. If feeling stayed unchanged, invent none for a report. The original exercise offers distinctions and particular description, not a prescribed inward state to be displayed after a schedule changes.

Attention can have a concrete meaning: knowing the task underway and where accepted participation ends. This is no concentration technique or claim about the brain. Someone reads a request before agreeing, perhaps briefly. Its conversational value is that assent concerns a known subject. An unclear subject can be clarified; a clear but unacceptable one can be declined. Attention thus concerns the content of choice rather than an attractively slow gesture or complete inward quiet, which may not belong to a particular day.

Do not turn this language into an assessment of others. A fast reply establishes no superficiality; a slow one no depth. Silence has different possible causes, which someone need not disclose for our explanation. Clarify a practical condition: when is conversation available, and is a response still needed? One delay cannot furnish a portrait of inward life. Religious and philosophical texts offer questions for personal consideration here, not detection of who is sufficiently aware, attached to outcomes, or living incorrectly among duties. Respect remains possible across different paces.

Attention may end by recognising that a simple act suffices. Every minute need not be investigated, pace reported, or hidden meaning sought in a familiar task. An understood, completed undertaking can end. This boundary protects life from becoming an endless exercise. Slower living need not mean constant self-observation; it may remain clarification of one promise and an option to add no further task. If the question is unwanted now, declining the exercise says nothing about maturity. Life need not demonstrate the usefulness of every proposed form of reflection.

## IX. Conditions test a pace, not its pleasing name

After a change, name what actually happened: a promise clarified, two tasks no longer overlapping, another participant warned about unavailability. Or the change did not occur because a condition differed. These are different outcomes. One need not declare the first a new life or the second a personal failure. Retain an accurate account of the available part. The exercise has no established efficacy and no happy-day score. It distinguishes a chosen step, surrounding conditions, and further expectations that might otherwise turn a small agreement into a promise of complete transformation.

If the act did not help, reconsider particular grounds. The task may need another time, assistance may lack agreement, or participants may need another form of contact. Change the proposal or end the attempt. It need not be repeated endlessly to prove loyalty to an idea. Sources supply no attempt count and do not endorse every contemporary application. Responsibility remains with author and participants. A historical argument can be respected without defending, beneath its name, an arrangement that no longer fits its purpose or the available conditions of shared work.

The traditions remain distinct. The Bhagavad Gita considers action, religious order, and liberation; Tao Teh King, the sage’s way and small beginnings; Marcus Aurelius, human work according to nature. They jointly recommend neither halving tasks nor always replying later. We compare questions without inventing agreement. A contemporary decision may help without claiming every author recommended it. This honesty leaves room for acceptance, disagreement, and another pace, without requiring someone to prove belonging to all traditions at once.

Slower life among actual duties begins with proportionate participation. An excess promise may be removed, a task completed quickly, assistance sought, or change unavailable for now. Clear subjects, actual conditions, and affected people’s agreement matter. Attentive action need not look leisurely. Necessary speed need not become shame, nor every form of busyness proof of worth. A finite task can remain finite, an unavailable option named, and a completed act allowed to end. This offers accurate conversation about time without guaranteeing calm, liberation, or complete control over shared life.

## What this means in practice

Choose an ordinary task whose conditions can be discussed without risking necessary care or requiring professional intervention. Name the accepted duty, time, and people awaiting participation. Separately note a new request or outcome not yet promised. One example need not assess an entire life.

Clarify an available change: task order, contact time, declining an addition, or an agreed contribution’s limit. If conditions cannot change independently, speak with those affected first. Silence is no consent. Promise neither greater calm nor productivity in return for a change.

Perform only the agreed, manageable act; it may be quick. If necessary assistance is unavailable or conditions unsuitable, postpone the exercise, choose another example, or end it. Historical ideas of duty require neither bodily neglect nor coercion of another participant.

Afterward describe facts: a promise clarified, task completed, limit remaining, or agreement not yet reached. Invent no absent feeling. Revise the proposal or stop further attempts. The practice certifies no spirituality, has no established efficacy, and requires no report to somebody else.

## Key quotation

> *Do thine allotted task!*

Bhagavad Gita III. Exact four-word imperative in Edwin Arnold’s translation, 1900. Addressed to Arjuna within religious reasoning about action; it does not authorise every assignment imposed on a contemporary reader.

## Connections between traditions

| Approach | Question’s subject | Comparison | Limit |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bhagavad Gita III | Action, nonattachment, religious duty | Finite act and excess outcome promise | Imposed tasks are not all justified; liberation is no work habit |
| Tao Teh King 63.2 | Difficulty while easy; greatness while small | An available advance clarification | No prevention of every difficulty |
| Tao Teh King 63.3 | Lightly made promises | Timing needs understood scope | No established management method |
| Marcus Aurelius V.I | Human work and common nature | Participation remains beside a wish to slow down | Severe comparisons recommend no bodily neglect |
| Original environment question | Uneven time and assistance | Personal change distinct from conditions’ arrangement | Inward calm replaces no external agreement |
| Original exercise | Subject, time, consent, and actual act | One bounded reconsideration | No test of feeling, spirituality, or efficacy |

## Primary sources

1. **Bhagavad Gita III**, The Song Celestial, Edwin Arnold’s translation, 1900. Complete chapter III freshly read in this task, including Arjuna’s opening question and the action/sacrifice/nonattachment context. Short imperative checked exactly. Religious liberation and historical order become neither outcome guarantees nor justification of coercion.

2. **Laozi, Tao Teh King 63**, James Legge’s historical translation, Gutenberg electronic edition 216; print exemplar year not established. Complete 63 and adjacent 64 actually read; substantive support limited to 63. Sage imagery and absolute language supply no empirical guarantee of eliminating difficulty.

3. **Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, fifth book I**, Meric Casaubon’s historical translation. Electronic edition 2680 notes comparison of 1634/1635 editions, alterations, and paraphrase: neither George Long’s rendering nor a first-print facsimile. Complete named section and editorial version notes read. Self-address concerning nature and common work establishes no current sleep or workload norm.

Short Russian renderings are United Wisdom’s translations of the named English versions. Contemporary scenes and the exercise are original; sources retain different grounds and establish no efficacy for the exercise.

## Tags

United Wisdom, slower life, obligations, pace, speed, hurry, time, attention, consent, deadline, promise, responsibility, assistance, care, conditions, dependency, work, action, duty, nonattachment, Bhagavad Gita, Arnold, Tao Teh King, Legge, Marcus Aurelius, Casaubon, Stoicism, small beginning, common work, boundary, reflection, choice

## About the authors

Andrey Zarinsh is the author and founder of United Wisdom. He explores inner transformation, the unity of traditions, intercultural dialogue, and contemporary spiritual discipline. Instagram: @andrey.zarinsh.

Maria Evilkut is a co-author of United Wisdom. Alongside her research, she seeks to test these ideas in practice and observe how principles of unity and mutual understanding work in real life between people and cultures. Instagram: @ilkutki.