

Take a rest; A field that has rested gives a bountiful crop. — Ovid

# People who live longer find ways to unplug



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TODOR TSVETKOV/GETTY IMAGES

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"Life is short. Don't run so fast you miss it!"

This is the sage of advice given by Raffaella Monne, a Sardinian centenarian, when Blue Zones founder Dan Buettner asked if she had any words of wisdom for younger generations.

Great advice, but do we follow it? Most Americans complain that life speeds by too quickly and it's hard to slow down. Yet, Blue Zones longevity research has identified that people around the world who live longer, healthier and happier lives find ways to slow down or downshift throughout their day. We learned in the original Blue Zones that in order to downshift, the Seventh-day Adventists pray, Ikarians take a nap, and Sardinians do happy hour and socialize with friends.

Experts report myriad reasons why

Americans struggle with slowing down. One of the most predominant is our attachment to our phones and other electronic devices.

Although technology has made our lives less stressful in many ways, being constantly connected can have a serious negative impact on our physical and mental health. The American Psychological Association Stress America™ survey found that people who are constantly checking their phones experience higher stress levels, and those who check work email on their days off experience even more stress. The expectation with texts, emails and phone calls is that we're available 24/7 to anyone who wants to reach us.

How do we get off of the treadmill of feeling obligated to our smartphones and other digital devices?

An organization called Reboot suggests we start by picking a day to completely "unplug." This organization pro-

motes a National Day of Unplugging, which was March 1. You can choose any day of the week to unplug, and if you feel anxious about unplugging for a full 24 hours, begin with an hour and build upon it.

A good place to start is during mealtime with family or friends. Have you ever sat in a restaurant and looked at the number of couples and families on their phones? Have you ever done it? Why bother being with others if we are not going to communicate?

Mealtime conversations are an opportunity to connect in a meaningful way with friends and family. According to research, families that spend time together benefit in a multitude of ways: children perform better academically, engage in less risky behavior and enjoy improved confidence. All family members report building enjoyable memo-

**See UNPLUG, Page 9D**