



Why Busyness Is Actually Modern Laziness, by Rasmus Hougaard and

Action addiction is an advanced sort of laziness. It keeps us busily occupied with tasks. The busier we keep ourselves, the more we avoid being confronted with questions of life and death. As we keep ourselves occupied with tasks, important or not, we avoid facing life. We keep a safe and comfortable distance to the issues that are sometimes hard to look at. Have we chosen the right career? Are we present enough with our children? Is our life purposeful?

With all our activity we believe we get closer to something bigger. We might not know what it is, but we keep working at it. It's like climbing a ladder as fast as we can, hoping to get to the top. And someday we get there. We reach the top in the form of a job promotion or a newly acquired house. But what's the point of reaching the top of the ladder only to realize it's leaning against the wrong wall?

One time, the Dalai Lama was coming to town. More than 10,000 people were coming together to see him. Over 500 volunteers, dozens of security people, and masses of journalists had to be coordinated. The man behind it all, Lakha, was a little man in his late 70s and an old friend and study mate of the Dalai Lama. When I asked him, "Hi, Lakha, are you busy?" he turned, looked at me calmly and said, "There is lots of activity, but I am not busy." His presence spoke louder than his words. Lakha was overseeing a massive project with numerous deadlines and details to manage. There was lots going on, but it did not get to him. He was not busy.

On that day I realized clearly that busyness is a choice. We may have deadlines, projects, and activities, but we have the freedom to choose whether we become action addicts and busy-lazy, or just observe the experience of many activities. It's a choice. And the ability to make that choice comes from developing a clear mind, free of action addiction.

Nowadays we tend to all be busy, overburdened, and perhaps stressed. It is part of our identity. If we are busy we are important. If we are stressed, it's because we are committed and working hard. It's in the DNA of our modern societies. If we are not busy and stressed, we are not trying hard enough. Something is wrong with us. But Lakha showed a clear alternative; having many activities and being highly effective and productive, but maintaining mental clarity and calm -- not giving in to action addiction. Not being existentially lazy.

