

McNally & Associates

LEADERSHIP REFLECTIONS

Stop in the Fast Lane

In this *Leadership Reflection*, I'll summarize the key points from the excellent book *Stopping: How to Be Still When You Have to Keep Going* and offer an exercise to further your learning.

Stopping: How to Be Still When You Have to Keep Going

Dr. David Kundtz
Conari Press, 1998

Former priest turned therapist, Kundtz describes a technique called "stopping" to help people reflect on their lives and achieve spiritual renewal. It is a primer that aims to simplify the practice of contemplation. The book addresses people who are feeling overwhelmed and overloaded from the pace and volume of their life, what the author refers to as the "mountain of too much". Kundtz defines stopping as "doing nothing, as much as possible, for a definite period of time (one second to one month), for the purpose of becoming more awake and remembering who you are". Stopping is composed of remembering, awareness and contemplation. There are three types of stopping: stillpoints, stopovers, and grinding halts. **Stillpoints** are designed to take advantage of the unfilled moments in life (during a commute or in the bathroom) or at moments of stress with some deep breathing and quick recollection of your purpose. **Stopovers** are longer periods of time like an afternoon walk or weekend retreat. **Grinding halts** are the times when you stop for a week or more, to take a much needed vacation or attend a retreat. According to the author, typically grinding halts are taken at a time of significant transition and asking questions like "What are my watershed moments?" "What are the sea changes in the sea of my life?"

Kundtz demystifies meditation and spiritual practices. He describes the paradox of needing to stop in order to go, a concept many people struggle with when trying to make their lives more effective and fulfilling. He contrasts the concepts of stopping and slowing down, noting that slowing down doesn't work – it's not about having improved time management skills. The author uses a number of poetic references to explain his concept of stopping – beautiful, sparse, simple prose that expresses deep emotions and experiences. He talks about "finding the spaces between the notes" which I found to be a nice metaphor.

Coaching Exercise:

1. What insights do you have about yourself as a result of reading *Stopping*?
2. How could you incorporate "stopping" into your life?
3. Over the next three months, experiment with adding in some "still points" and "stopovers". After stopping, notice what you are thinking, feeling and sensing in your body.

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