

Between the Rush: A Letter to Stillness

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Stepping away from the 9-to-5 grind gave me an alternative perspective that I'd been missing, one I hadn't paid attention to.

I live in the blur of deadlines and meetings, consuming coffee not for pleasure but for fuel, and days that melt into one another like watercolors in the rain. The 9-to-5 isn't just my job — it has become my entire field of vision, blocking out everything beyond the next task, the next promotion, the following urgent email that would inevitably ping into my inbox.

I didn't see the world. I didn't see anything, really, except the narrow tunnel of productivity that society had convinced me was the only path worth walking.

Then I took a break.

Not by choice, perhaps, or by a choice I didn't even realize I was making. But suddenly, there was nothing to chase. No morning alarm dictates the rhythm of my day — no performance reviews looming on the horizon. No ladder to climb, rung by exhausting rung.

And in that stillness, something extraordinary happened.

Photo by [Gerson Cifuentes](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Everything I'd Been Missing

Suddenly, I started noticing stuff. Like, really noticing.

Those photos on the wall? I swear they weren't there before, but obviously they were. I'd have walked past them hundreds of times without actually seeing them. Now I'm looking at each one — this slightly crooked frame here, the way the sunlight hits that glass there. Real moments that someone cared enough to hang up and remember.

And people. Actual people, not just background noise. That person at the corner table is scrolling through her phone with a worried look on her face. The older gentleman with an older partner or friend is taking his sweet time stirring his coffee, like he's got all day and nowhere else to be. When did I stop seeing that we're all just winging it?

Then there's the coffee: God, the coffee.

I used to down it like medicine — fuel to get through the next meeting. But now? I'm actually tasting it and watching the steam curl up from the coffee cup. Feeling the warmth in my hands. Taking that first real sip and thinking, "Damn, this is actually good." Nothing fancy

about it, just... present. Just there.

Why It Hit Me So Hard

I don't know why all this meant so much to me. It wasn't like I was suddenly happy or anything — though yeah, there was some of that. And it wasn't just relief from not having to deal with work stress, even though that felt good too.

It was something bigger. It was as if I'd been living my life with blinders on, and someone had just taken them off. All this time, life was happening right in front of me, around me, everywhere — and I was too busy chasing the next thing to notice any of it.

You know that feeling when you find an old photo you forgot about, and suddenly you're hit with this wave of "Oh man, I remember that day"? It was like that, except instead of remembering the past, I was finally seeing the present and like, really seeing it for the first time.

The Prison of Productivity

The 9-to-5 isn't inherently evil. Many find purpose and fulfillment in structured work. But somewhere along the way, I had confused motion with progress, busyness with importance, and the urgent with the meaningful. I had traded my peripheral vision for tunnel vision, my wonder for worry, my presence for productivity.

In that relentless focus on what came next, I had missed what was right in front of me. Every day. For years.

Learning to See Again

Taking a break didn't solve all my problems — it actually revealed new ones. Questions about purpose and direction that the comfortable chaos of constant work had conveniently obscured. But it also gave me something I hadn't realized I'd lost: the ability to be present in my own life.

Now, even as I navigate whatever comes next, I carry these moments with me. The photos on the walls. The strangers who aren't strangers when you really look. The coffee that tastes like possibility when you slow down enough to notice.

The world was always there, patient and beautiful and heartbreakingly temporary. I just had to stop running long enough to catch sight of it.

The Gift of Pause

If you're reading this while stealing moments between meetings, while your coffee grows cold beside a keyboard, while the photos on your own walls fade into background noise — I want you to know that the world is waiting for you, too.

Not with grand gestures or life-changing revelations, but with simple coffee and afternoon light and the quiet presence of other people figuring it out alongside you.

Sometimes the most radical thing we can do is stop. Look around. And remember that we are already exactly where we need to be to begin seeing again.

The break doesn't have to be permanent to be profound. Sometimes, all we need is permission to pause long enough to remember that we are human beings, not human doings — and that the world has been quietly holding space for our return to wonder all along.