

# Space, Time, Stillness, and Work-Life Balance

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## Abstract

Contemporary society is faced with the constancy of capitalism and the burden of always needing to feel and appear productive. However, this state of mind can be harmful to an individual's well-being, and it is crucial to find strategies to manage the chaos. This visual research project discusses how humans move through space and time and the implications capitalism has on that movement. It begins with a literature review that discusses previous studies and ideas about stillness and work-life balance. Next, the visual research consists of six images that portray moments throughout the day of a university student where it is possible to find stillness. Lastly, conclusions are made, and the importance of accomplishing work-life balance and stillness within contemporary society is presented as a crucial part of enjoyable existence.

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Movement through time and space is a shared experience amongst the human race. Our perception of space and time is arguably *a priori* which means that our understanding of space and time is foundational to our other forms of knowledge (Raymond 39). Although this idea is debatable, it is a fact that the humans alive today move through space and time as the earth continues to rotate around the sun. However, individuals experience movement through space differently depending on their current situation. For example, taking the train to work or driving a car bends our experience of movement through space and time (Raymond 38). One may look out a train window and see a blurred version of reality which looks entirely different when viewing reality sitting still in a chair. In contemporary society, moving through space is always fast-paced because the modern western lifestyle is designed to be chaotic and busy. There is little time to experience stillness while maintaining a capitalist lifestyle. Being productive and having a full schedule provides individuals with social capital and makes them admirable. These factors have contributed to how contemporary society moves through space and time and can result in mental burnout if one stays busy too long. However, there is an antidote to the chaos of contemporary society, which is stillness and a work-life balance. Stillness and a work-life balance can help carve out time in a busy schedule for moments to be present, resulting in a healthy relationship with the capitalist lifestyle.

## Stillness

One of the most effective ways to remove oneself from the ebbs and flows of capitalist society and enjoy movement through space and time is to find stillness in day-to-day life. The experience of stillness can help one remain present and makes time feel less fleeting. Nicholson argues that new technologies and faster-moving capital mean that life has sped up (427). Activity is no longer necessarily counter-cultural or resistant; it is also one of post-industrial

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capitalism's most essential and valuable assets. It is time to reassess the art of stillness (Nicholson 427). Nicholson understands the importance of finding moments to be still and more present in the current moment. By doing so, stillness can encourage both an active mind and an active, well-coordinated body (Nicholson 428). Stillness is an effective way to maintain a work-life balance and carve out time in the day. An example of finding stillness is meditation; it helps refocus the mind and relieve stress. It is crucial to find a way to find balance within the capitalist lifestyle to ensure that moving through time and space and living on earth is fulfilling and worthwhile. It makes life much more enjoyable when one takes time to be present and experience time in a single moment, rather than feeling the constant pressure of work schedules and time slipping away.

### **Work-Life Balance**

Maintaining the balance between the trials of a capitalist lifestyle and the need to find stillness is not an easy feat. Individuals are constantly bombarded with the message to be productive and stay busy in contemporary society. Taking time for ourselves or doing absolutely nothing can result in feelings of guilt and regret. However, it is essential to take time for oneself to reconnect and recharge, to continue to take on that busy way of life. Ellwood reinforces this idea in his article about the importance of making time for oneself: "Overall life satisfaction usually increases for those who are not rushed" (8). Although it might seem daunting to change up a busy routine, it is vital to ensure one will get the most out of moving through space and time. Ellwood explains that the best way to make time for oneself is to "block off the time you need for what is truly important. Make an appointment – one that is with yourself. It is an appointment you must keep no matter what happens" (9). Studies show that 74% of those who are not rushed are very or somewhat satisfied with their life, versus only 52% among those who feel rushed (Ellwood 8). The idea of finding a balance between capitalist lifestyles and one's personal life is called "work-life balance" (Dhas 21660). There are many ways to carve out time in the day for oneself. Dhas offers four tips on how to ensure one makes the best of their time at work and home:

1. Analyze the use of your time and decide what is important.
2. Leave work at work. Set a clear boundary between work and home.
3. Say "no" to stressful things that will only cause conflict later.
4. Make a to-do list (21662).

Depending on the individual, one might take different steps to maintain a work-life balance. How one finds balance and stillness differs from person to person. However, anyone living the capitalist lifestyle must adopt this idea to ensure that their experience of moving through space and time is an enjoyable one.

### **Visual Research**

The following six images depict moments in the day of the life of a university student and how it is possible to find moments of stillness. The blurred elements of the photographs illustrate how

life maintains its chaos around a sharp, in-focus subject that is still and calm. In accomplishing this visual research project, I found instances throughout the day when I remained still and observant of the present moment. Then, I captured an image representing how it feels to find a balance between calm and chaos. To do this, I created images drawing inspiration from Muybridge's "horse in motion" project and Sugimoto's "seascapes" (Raymond 41). The images combine the methods of short exposure and long exposure used by each photographer to convey the idea of finding moments of stillness while still existing in the madness of capitalist society. Too often, individuals forget to find moments of stillness and carve out time for themselves because the grind of capitalist society is seductive and distracting. However, when experiencing the capitalist trance, one may catch oneself realizing how much time has passed and because the individual failed to be present, it feels as if time slips away. It is important to remember that this lifestyle is not one to strive for. It is unwise to live a life being distracted and experience moving through space and time in a trance, forgetting to take in the surroundings and enjoy the current moment. Instead, it is essential to try and slow down and find stillness to ensure one experiences the present moment and is aware of this beautiful reality humans get to exist in. In the following passage, Raymond explains this idea: "In our experience, time does stop, often: We place our focus on an instant, a moment, perhaps a memorable or traumatic event. Although time runs continually, in our experience, it moves in fits and starts" (37). Raymond makes a good point here to illustrate the idea of finding stillness and how that is achieved. However, she describes it as happening "often." In contemporary society, finding stillness does not occur as often as it should, and that is why it is vital to have those moments of stillness, stop time and live in the current moment. The following images also illustrate Raymond's idea of "human time," which she explains is the experience between our bodies and the space our bodies inhabit (38). The images capture this idea through the blurred cars, people, and trains portrayed in the six images. One subject in the frame remains still, while the space around the still subject is blurry. The following images are six instances where a university student can find stillness throughout the day.

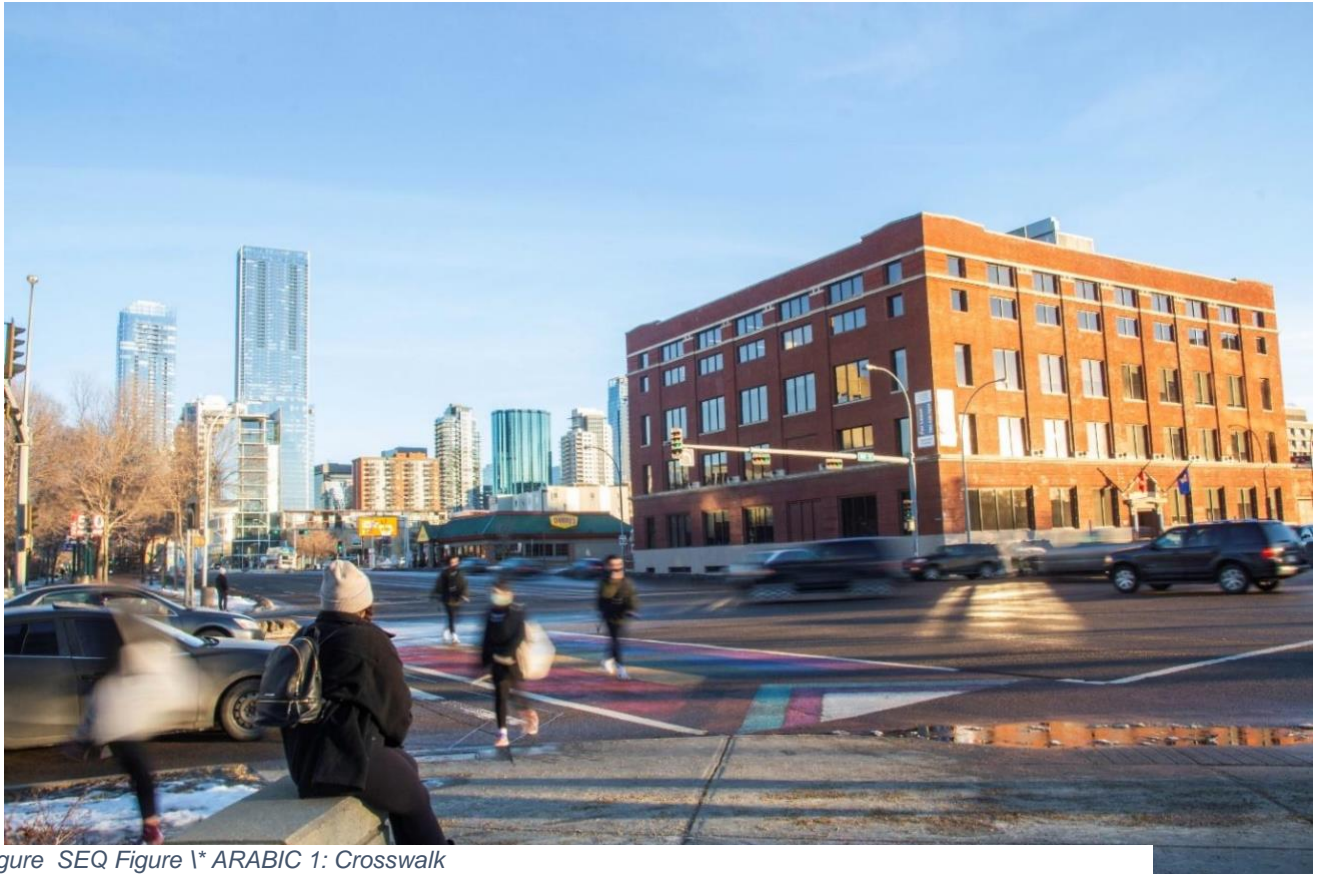


Figure SEQ Figure \\* ARABIC 1: Crosswalk

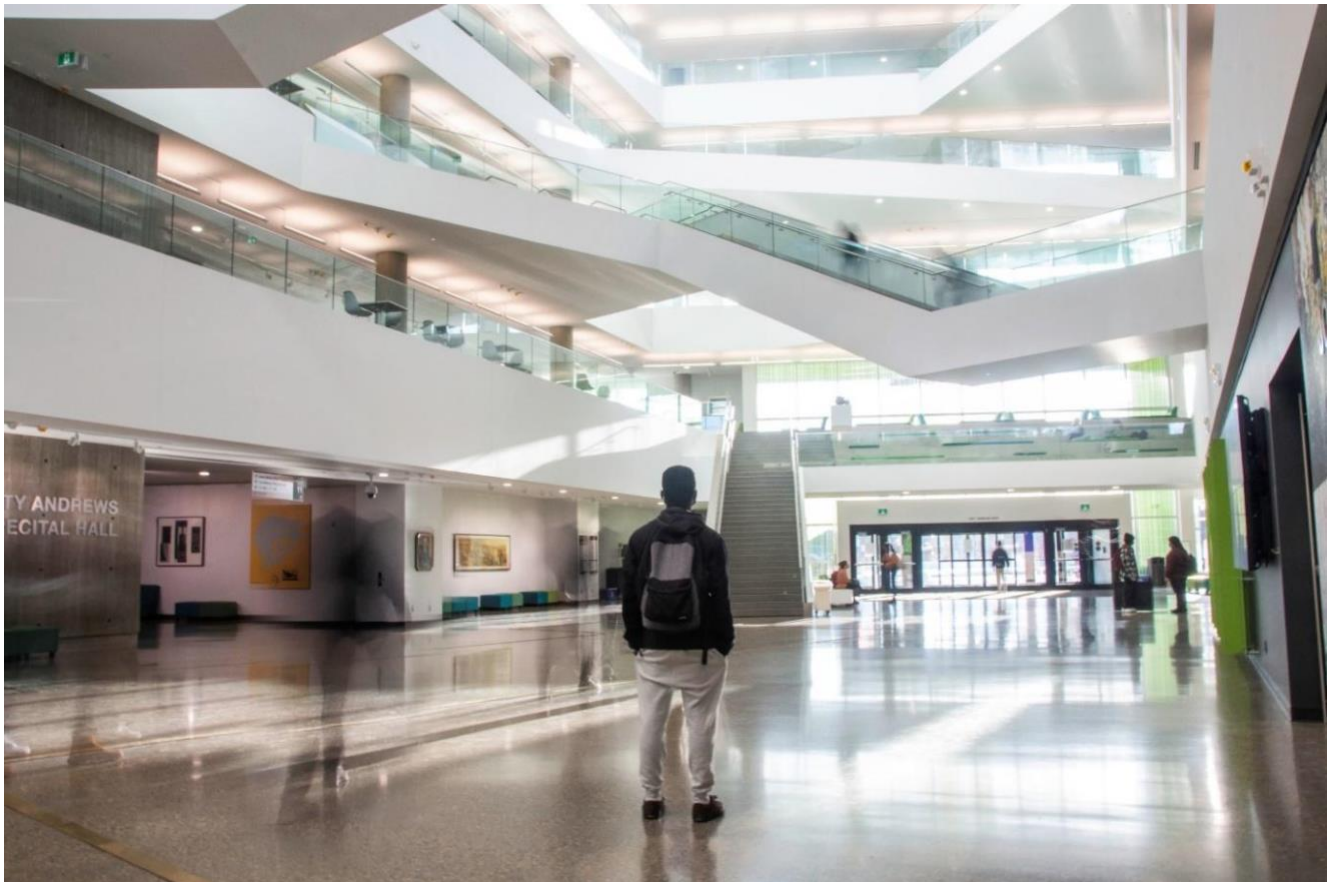
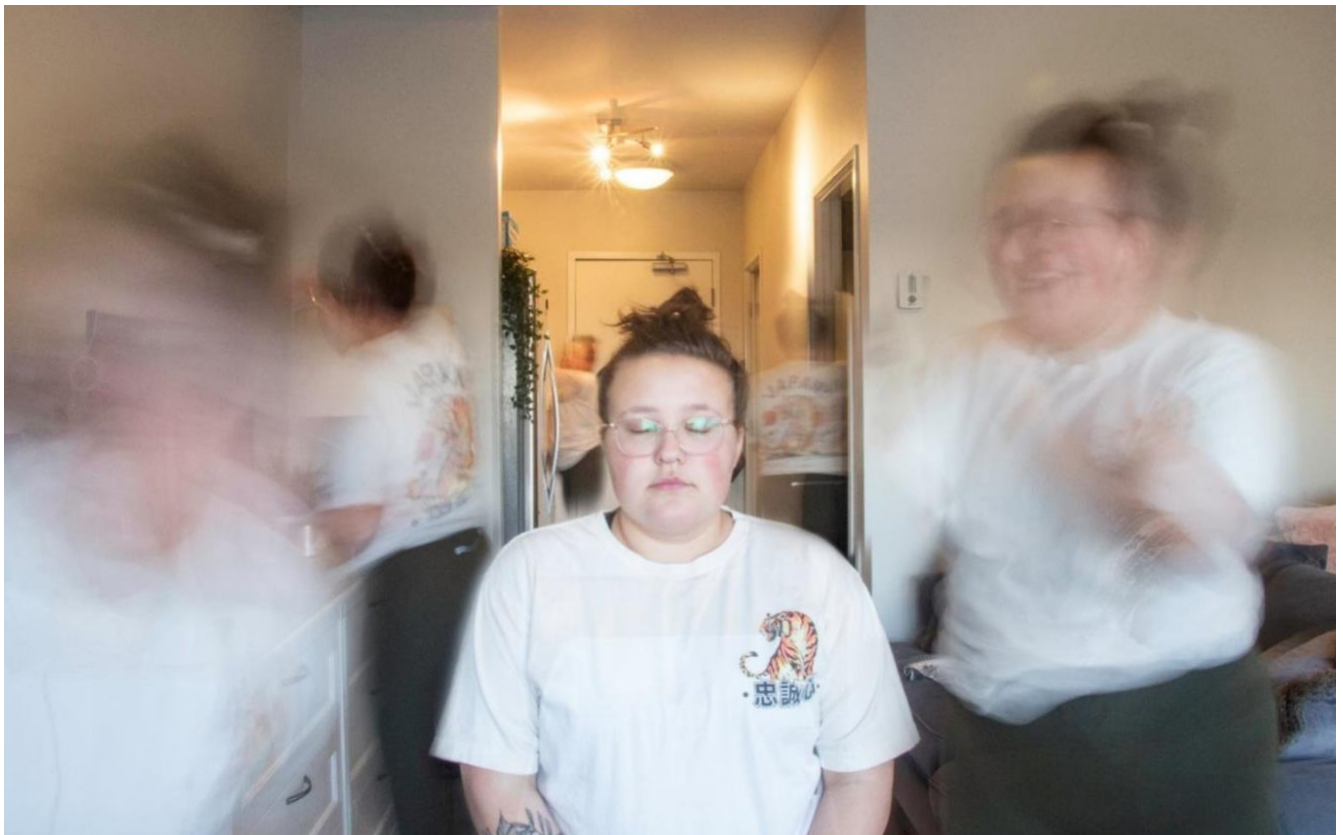




Figure SEQ Figure \\* ARABIC 4: Train Station





## Conclusion

Undoubtedly humanity continues to move through time and space constantly with no sign of stopping. There are moments through this movement that feel as if they are slipping away, but then there are also moments of complete stillness in which it feels as though time has stopped. In contemporary society, more moments slip away because of the demanding nature of capitalism. People often forget to slow down and make time for themselves when they get caught up in the perpetual busyness of society. However, it is vital to make time to be still and reflect on those moments of busyness to prevent going through life too quickly and allow time to pass by. Stillness and work-life balance are great strategies to slow down the ever-fleeting construct of time. Finding moments to slow down time and appreciate what this reality has to offer is a good reminder that time is not stopping for anyone, and the inevitable end of our current existence is looming in the future. It is vital to remain present and cherish every moment of this life; it will make it more enjoyable in the grand scheme of things. The experience of living in a capitalist society makes moving through time and space challenging, but there is always time to stop and find a moment of stillness.

## References

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