

# Removing the Road Blocks on Your Journey

by Mary LoVerde

## **Byte Me!**

A powerful way to find more balance is to focus on ways to remove the roadblocks along the way. What is a big barrier for many of us? Technology. Both too much and too little emphasis in this area can cause a major traffic jam.

**Too Little:** When someone says *windows* in a word association game do you answer *drapes*? Is *byte* something you hope your three-year-old will stop doing at preschool? When your computer consultant sends you an e-mail informing you, “On Friday I will be there to install new software” do you secretly make little voodoo dolls in her image? Don’t get the idea that everyone is a perfectly competent computer genius. According to the Wirthlin group, a Washington DC polling firm, nearly one in five VCR/DVD owners have failed one of the basic tests of the new information age: setting a digital clock. Eighty-eight percent of Americans own a VCR and the number 12:00 is blinking endlessly on 16 percent of those machines. Although technology was designed to make our work easier, for some of us we have built a twenty-first century Achilles’ heel into our lives.

**Too Much:** Perhaps your weak spot is just the opposite: you’re a whiz kid with total dependence on technology. According to a USA Today Digital Dependency survey 60% of respondents around the world say that can’t live without their devices and nearly four out of ten say the loss of their digital PC data would be an “unmitigated disaster.” Mess with their computers and they become high tech wrecks.

If only we could get control over technology. Fat chance! But we can work to not only remove it as a roadblock but harness it to connect us with what is really important.

**First, identify your shortcomings.** Too much technocompetence? Then act. Pick one night a week and don't get on line. (Sent a chill down your spine, didn't it?) Leslie Charles, author of *Why Is Everyone so Cranky* wrote, "I'm logged on and I can't get off." Come on. You can do it. Read a book. Play tennis. Toss the ball with your child. Let go. The world will go on and Saturn and Jupiter will stay in orbit.

Not enough technosavvy? Take a class. Hang around people who love this stuff. Make friends with the computer guru in the next office or the fourteen-year-old boy in your neighborhood. Get on a first name basis with a computer doctor, just like you have a dentist or internist. Get one that makes house calls and has afterhours emergency numbers. You might not ever love it like all those people who have blogs, but with a little help from our friends technology does not have to be a big rut in your way, either.

**Next, choose living over surfing.** Home--even vacation--is no longer a sanctuary with e-mail, pagers, and cell phones. I recently read a Time magazine article about moms who are opting out of the rat race and quitting their jobs because they cannot find a balance between work and home. In the middle of the article was a full-page T-Mobile ad for Black Berry, showing a man lying on the beach, e-mailing his clients, and the headline read, "Blur the line between 'the office' and the beach!" How ironic is that?

The CEO of a large furniture manufacturer described his company's new chair that boasts a built-in phone jack, an electrical outlet to plug in a laptop and modem, and a swivel tray to hold the computer. He said,

“ We wanted to create something that could be used in the living room, where people could spend time with their families while working.”

Huh? It's the *living* room, not the *working* room. Exactly how do you spend time with your family when you are wired to the rest of the world? Pick one. Be at the office *or* be at the beach. Be on line *or* be with your family. The efficacy of personal computers and all their digital cousins should create more time for the important things in life, not fragment us.

**Choose to be realistic.** The washer and dryer quit. The refrigerator goes on the fritz. The car breaks down. Computers will too. (But isn't it weird with a computer, when it freezes up you just turn it off and then back on again and it mysteriously works just fine. That never happens with the vacuum cleaner after the kids have sucked up the bottle of glue.)

Examine your own life and identify the technological roadblocks on your journey. Count how many minutes you talk in chat rooms and compare that to how many minutes you spend talking face to face with your partner. Could a one-day workshop spruce up your skills and reduce your technophobia? Are you using technology to live your mission or does it simply create busywork? Remove those stones in the road and enjoy your journey!

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