We live in a “now” society. Patience and perseverance are things of the past. There is an app for this, and a pill for that, right? It is also a society of choice: “Have it your way.” “Hold the pickles and extra mayo.” “I’ll take intubation but no compressions, thanks.”

So when I advise my patients on physical therapy for their chronic back pain and go into my standard explanation of strengthening core muscles and weight loss, I can see the look of disappointment on their faces. They don’t believe for a minute that what I am telling them may actually work. I warn them that it can take months to see an improvement, further compounding their belief that they need to find another doctor, one who can fix their problem, like now.

I also feel more and more like a tree-hugging, granola-crunching zealot as I advise on nutrition and exercise. Yes, it will cure many of your ailments. It will improve your mood, give you more energy, and help you sleep better. Is that not what everyone is after?

As with most things medical, the etiology is “multifactorial.”

Let’s look at the way Western society lives. People spend the majority of their time in a synthetic environment staring at screens of varying sizes and hearing clicks, beeps, and other electronic noises. Additionally, there is the food that is consumed by the average person, which is essentially man made.

Could it be that many Western medical problems happen because we are too far removed from our “natural” environment? How often do we hear natural noise, such as the babbling brook and the wind in the trees? Or just plain old-fashioned quiet? I urge my patients to steer clear of mass-produced food. Simple and basic, when it comes to staying healthy, usually is best. They are often surprised by this concept of less being more. How can that be right?

I look to my patients in their eighth and ninth decade and try to elucidate their secret. Often they have led basic lives with little in the way of medication and have remained active and eaten healthy basic food. I have one lady in particular who springs to mind. She always arrives on time, dressed to the nines, complete with hat matching outfit and hair and make-up in place. She is cheerful, never complains, and seems surprised that I am always remarking on her. She seems to never have expected things to be otherwise.

The interaction between people has also changed. A phone call is unusual now. Most business both personal and work related is handled via text and e-mail, again taking us further away from our natural forms of communication and affecting the relationships we have with one another. Just the other day while waiting in the reception at my three year old’s dance class, which consists of a small room that can accommodate about ten parents, I noted that each person spent the majority of the time staring at his/her smartphone, iPad, text phone, or laptop. No one spoke a word. The fact that prior to the class starting the flat screen behind the main desk was blaring “Monsters, Inc.” for the waiting children is perhaps where part of the problem lies.

Promoting a back-to-basics attitude in society with a less-is-more approach will not change things overnight. It is the intolerance to delayed gratification that likely got us here in the first place, after all.