

Steal Back Your Time

Most of us spend too much time on what is urgent and not enough time on what is important. ~ Stephen Covey, *The Seven Habits of Highly Successful People*

More often than not, we think we don't have time, not because we don't have the time we need, but because we're not spending time on what's really important to us. We're living a kind of passive, reactive life of meeting deadlines, obligations, and expectations, rather than a proactive life of standing up for what we really want and need and organizing our lives in support of that. Consequently, most of us are living lives of stifled potential and dreams only fantasized about instead of acted upon. In our society, a successful adulthood pretty much means being able to tick off the required set of boxes – well-paying job/career, big house in a sought-after neighborhood, coveted car, good looking marriage, and kids who are all set to check off those same boxes. But what I've noticed and experienced is one of two things happening. We manage to get all those boxes checked and still feel unhappy/unfulfilled. Or, we spend all our lives in the single-minded pursuit of getting all those boxes ticked, hoping that once we do our happiness or fulfillment will finally arrive. In this latter scenario, we tend to blame our unhappiness/lack of fulfillment on not having checked all the boxes, without investigating whether or not there might be other, even better options for us. Options that actually serve and support us in living our potential, rather than experiencing our days as merely a series of tasks, obligations, and commitments all in the name of getting and keeping those boxes ticked. And by the way, there's a reason I keep referencing the word "box."

"The feeling of being hurried is not usually the result of living a full life and having no time. It is on the contrary born of a vague fear that we are wasting our life. When we do not do the one thing we ought to do, we have no time for anything else--we are the busiest people in the world." ~ Eric Hoffer

That's not to say that we'll ever be free of the need to perform tasks, meet obligations, and honor commitments, but what do you think would be better – doing those things in the context of allowing ourselves to unfold our potential and live with intention, joy, and purpose? Or doing these things in the context of pursuing material benchmarks of “success” mostly in the absence of experiencing a sense of joy and fulfillment? To most of us, the 1st scenario sounds much better, even more logical, and yet, so often, we find ourselves living the 2nd scenario. We do this because let's face it, in many ways, it's a lot easier. Not only is it the path of least resistance, because of our society, it's often the only path we know or are prepared for.

But what if you're ready to begin opening your heart and soul to other options? What if you're ready to begin experiencing the deep richness of life as you engage the process of unfolding your potential? There are many ways of beginning, of course, probably as many as there are people. One of the best places to start is to find ways to begin making time for what's important. And one of the easiest ways to do this is to become aware of, in clear, quantifiable terms, how much time we spend on activities like watching television and surfing the net and/or connected to social media. This awareness is crucial because when we're able to see, in actual numbers, how much time we're allowing to be taken (i.e. stolen) from our lives, we'll be in a much better position to figure out how to set limits on how we engage with these activities so that we can divert time we didn't think we had towards doing things and being in spaces that truly nourish us and help us thrive. Things like resurrecting or reconnecting with those unspoken dreams for our lives we still secretly harbor. So, I want to share with you this simple worksheet that includes the two most common time stealers. And I added a couple of extra rows just in case you want to use it to track other activities.

Time Finder Worksheet ~ Part One

Television	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Total
Episodic programs								
News								
Movies								

Internet	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Total
Email								
Social Media –								
YouTube								

Blank/uncategorized row for any additional activities you'd like to monitor, such as reading, phone chatting, etc. Social media = Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, Snapchat, Goodreads, etc

Time Finder Worksheet ~ Part Two

The following are some points to contemplate as you review your experience with the Time Finder worksheet:

- *Of the television programs, how many are re-runs? If you are watching re-runs, I don't have to tell you that you can definitely steal back some time there.*
- *If someone paid you \$100/month to give up watching any **one** of the television programs and social media platforms you currently watch/engage with, which ones would it be? Maybe you can divert that time to something more meaningful?*
- *How many hours of news do you watch? If it's at least 1 hour, can you see a way to cut that time in half?*
- *On average, how many movies do you watch a week? Could you cut one of them out?*
- *If any of your emails are subscriptions, which ones are making an **identifiable** difference (tangibly helping me create/live the life I truly want) in your life? How much time could you steal back if you eliminated the ones that do not?*
- *How many hours do you spend watching YouTube? If at least 1 hour, can you see a way to cut that time in half? Maybe starting with the ones that do not make an **identifiable** difference (tangibly helping me create/live the life I truly want) in your life?*
- *If you tracked any other activities, ask yourself the following: If this activity is not making an **identifiable** difference (tangibly helping me create/live the life I truly want) in my life, can I see a way to cut time with this activity in half?*