



# Rethinking Time Management

BY DALE ALLEN

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**MAKING BETTER USE OF YOUR TIME AND  
USING YOUR TIME MORE CONSCIOUSLY**

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There is no refund on time—once you've spent it, it's gone.

Using your time more consciously will give you the edge you need to achieve more in your world...

Have you ever had those days when things just don't go according to plan? You find yourself going from meeting to meeting instead of leading, learning and delivering. You are conflicted because you don't want to miss a meeting, but going to meetings prevents you from getting stuff done.

During university, I had a summer job working at Hostess Potato Chip Factory in my hometown. I had never before worked in a factory and was truly excited to learn how things were made. The enormity of the factory was impressive and everything was new to me including working nights, the great money, the assembly lines, the smell of tons and tons of potatoes, and the complexity of the machines. It all wowed me. My job was to pack bags of chips into boxes and put the filled boxes on a palette.

## MEET YOUR COACH

*Dale Allen*



*Dale Allen's leadership journey began over 15 years when she first cultivated her expertise in developing individual and team leadership programs.*

*In 2004, she co-founded ConsciousLead, where she applies her passion and experience in leadership, human development and sports psychology to the corporate world. Dale has worked with over a thousand leaders to help improve their performance. She works with leaders at all levels, believing that individuals each play the greatest role in their own success.*

CONTACT US:

info@consciouslead.life

819-827-8000

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# THE POTATO CHIP FACTORY

In general, the potato chip factory was a good place to work and I enjoyed my co-workers. However, I remember one senior manager who wasn't so great. He would come onto the shop floor to give menacing "work hard or else" messages. One day he announced:

"You might think this is fun but it's not easy to get a position here. And it's almost impossible to get back in once you're out. You won't be hired back next summer if you don't meet your quotas. Furthermore, if you cross these lines you WILL be fired on the spot. There are plenty of students who want this job."

After he left, no one spoke. We all went back to our stations, hurriedly, confused and nervous. I was determined to keep that damn job and rock that quota. I still remember that day quite clearly. Everything started out okay and I was focused and determined but, before long, I started to notice that my old gloves had thin spots and the heat from the bags was burning my hands. Not only that but my machine seemed to gear up to another speed. I frantically tried to catch up but my hands were hurting and bags of chips were landing on the floor. All of this, combined with the recent menacing message from my supervisor, was pushing me over the edge of my comfort zone.

And then it stopped! My machine finally "had it" too and quit. As I was rushing to pack the bags from the floor into boxes, I found my rhythm again. My machine had stopped and I was beginning to feel calm. Just then, I looked up to see my supervisor looking down at me. He had stopped my machine. He didn't look happy. He told me to restart the machine to get caught up. I nod, yes, nervously.

Within minutes I am back up and running and in my potato chip boxing groove. Things are flowing smoothly and I am in a rhythm. Almost an hour has passed and my break time is moments away. I have caught up and I have dodged a bullet.

PHEW! When my manager comes to inspect my work, we both notice I have surpassed my quota. I am ahead of the game. The reward? "You can do even more tomorrow, Dale!"

We have all had some version of this experience. Life comes at us faster than we can manage, and we just don't have enough time to get it all done. Each week contains a finite 168 hours. But the hours we devote to our workweek are much more fluid. I ask my clients to take note of how much time in a day they spend mentally preparing for or thinking about work, commuting to and from work and being at work. It is a simple exercise to build awareness about how much mental attention and physical attention are geared toward work. On average, people realize about three-quarters of their waking hours are spent thinking about or doing activities related to work.

In our article on executive burnout, we quoted research that showed executives work approximately 51 to 55 hours per week and that number quickly rose as reliance upon smartphones grew. Smartphones snap our attention back into our work world at any time—weeknights, early mornings, weekends—often taking time away from rest, family, fun, and other personal activities.

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# THE COST

I don't need to tell you that our addiction to an "always-on" culture is very high. Many people regularly answer and send emails and texts outside of work hours and even while on vacation. We unconsciously forfeit our ability to be present due to fear of:

- Being punished by our boss
- Losing status, losing clients
- Being judged
- Delegating to someone else

***What are the real costs of the need to feed our "always-on" addiction?***

## **1. LACK OF SLEEP**

Many people I work with tell me "I can't sleep" or "I am fine. I really don't need much sleep." As your consciousness is raised throughout our time together, you may soon realize you have created a sleep cycle that is contrary to your natural rhythm. Have you ever woken up with "workmares?" Been jolted out of your sleep by reminders about an important meeting, presentation or work conflict?

- *Are you running off 4-6 hours of sleep a night?*
- *Do you wake up feeling tired?*

Sleep deprivation will cost you as it results in lowered stress thresholds, impaired memory, difficulties with concentration, decreased optimism, and reduced creativity. Do you really want sleep deprivation to negatively impact your concentration, positivity, creativity? When we unconsciously give our time away, it is challenging to see how we could work in other ways. How much longer will you let your outer world run your time?

## **2. LACK OF EXERCISE**

We move less and meet more and it is producing some pretty alarming numbers. The Association for Professional Executives (APEX) found that 43% of executives are considered obese. This is an all-time high! Half of all executives are now considered sedentary which is up from 32% in 2007. Several leaders have eagerly told me about the new employee surveys and new health surveys coming out in their organizations. Things are only getting worse. As conscious leaders, it is time for a change.



*Our health  
is of the highest value  
and we no longer  
want to exchange it.*

### **3. RELATIONSHIPS SUFFER**

No one has ever said on their deathbed “I wish I’d put more time in at the office.”

Still, our 24/7 modern (corporate) life demands high-level performance for sustained periods of time. Our relationships are often the first casualties of overwork. When you are driven to have an impact in your workplace you are often in denial about the deterioration of your relationships. I often hear excuses that seem to sanction overwork including “we need to send the kids to private school,” “the boss demands it,” “we have quality problems and I have to fight fires,” “I’m keeping us relevant,” and the list drags on. When we are leading consciously, we choose to notice the impact our choices are having on our lives and the lives of those we care about. We move from lacking awareness to leading differently.

### **4. OUR HEALTH**

Due to a lack of sleep and exercise, our inner world can start to crash, clouding how we experience and interpret our outerworld. With the demands of work and life stretching our will and our sanity, we can go from bright-eyed and bushy-tailed to burnt-out, in a SNAP!

We don’t need to be executives to experience stress, anxiety or depression. Our reactive way of leading and living is fueled through our interactions. Yet, we still seem to be waiting for more devastating proof to prod us into taking care of ourselves. Maybe another health survey or one more statistic will do the trick. In our circle of inspired leaders, we are committed to partnering with people like you who are interested in raising your consciousness and, in turn, improving your health. We study ourselves and take control of how we make decisions that affect the mental state of ourselves and others. Our health is of the highest value and we no longer want to exchange it for stress, fear, anxiety and depression.

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819-827-8000

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## 5. OUR IMPACT

I know you want to get ahead. I know you are passionate about what you do. I know you like the excitement of the hustle and I also know that you struggle with it at the same time.

When your habits keep you from sleep, exercise, meaningful interactions, healthy relationships your ability to make an impact is being affected. Your self-confidence drops and you start to doubt your abilities.

If you question your confidence, credibility, resilience even for a moment, I am honoured that you are reading this. Like me, there are countless others who want our impact to be the most positive, inspiring and authentic representation of us. This ebook can serve as a reference to help us deepen our consciousness, courage, creativity and choices and to know the difference between our "always-on" habitual ways of living and a more present, empowering, enriching way of using our precious time.

The way we choose to use our time significantly affects the quality of our lives. This ebook is about a process for change. It is about noticing your time through a different lens and about discovering conscious practices to minimize the stress, anxiety, and fear that rises when we feel like our time is not our own.



**So what is needed  
to make the CHANGES  
you desire to happen?**

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# CONSCIOUS COMMUNICATION

We need to change the way we communicate. This calls for conscious communication which is an integration of inner work (mindfulness, presence, attention, empathy) and outerwork (reframing how we express ourselves).

There are moments when I imagine I can stop time. You know, just put the world on hold. I get a bunch of stuff done. To-do list—BAM! Sleep—BAM! Exercise—BOOM! Cook a great meal—BAM! Then in my beautiful zen way, I snap my fingers and restart the world right where I left it... looking fine and feeling fantastic. While others run to catch up, I take a satisfied, serene walk through my workday. Then I wake up :)

I am starting to have more and more days that used to be just a dream. Days where I'm not chasing time and everything feels inflow, as though I have stopped time. But it wasn't always like that. I used to be "busy addicted"...

It used to be that my partner and I took the true love for our work and for our babies as "good" reasons for working our asses off. Our evening routine went something like this:

- Cook and eat a great meal together
- Work out
- Quick call to a family member
- Clean up
- Wash kids, get them ready for bed, read a book
- Cuddle with kids and pass out, unintentionally, in a sleep coma
- At 9 pm get startled out of sleep and run phone coaching appointments
- Up working until 1:30 am
- Up throughout the night with the kids
- Body's internal alarm clock waking us at 6 am

If you asked me how I was during that time, I would say "busy" wearing this new name as a badge of honour.

But here's where our to-do lists tend to break down: In those few hours before I fell asleep with the kids, I juggled and struggled with my inner-critic. "Can I skip the workout or the cuddle or both?" After all, I knew I was exhausted and emotionally drained. Sometimes I felt guilty and beat myself up over how I should be using that time to just relax and be present.

We have all experienced days with a similar look and feel. We have a list of to-do's and to-be's layered upon some running-on-empty, but the engine still miraculously runs. When we are emotionally conflicted, anxiety takes over, and it is this anxiety that contributes to feeling overwhelmed and out of time.

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info@consciouslead.life

819-827-8000

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# THE SECRET ABOUT TIME MANAGEMENT

If we employ a discovery process wherein we look for where we have a choice and what is actually manageable, we realize that time itself is NOT manageable!

The truth about time is as follows:

- Time manages us and not the other way around
- Time is indifferent to our needs or agendas
- Time passes as it would whether there is chaos, joy, productivity or lack thereof
- Time, as it relates to our human activities, is influenced by the moon and the sun and other known and unknown elements far beyond our reach and control

I remember a time when my partner and I were booked to speak to thousands, and we were meeting with our own coach for a 2-day coaching/planning/practice session to prepare. Everything was planned to the minute. However, my “always-on” and “running-on-empty” reality had caught up to me and I was starting to get sick. I couldn’t think. I didn’t want to talk or eat. I just wanted to rest

But, I couldn’t rest. We had just driven 1.5 hours for this coaching, and I couldn’t afford to be sick. I was frustrated and exhausted, committed and conflicted. My body wouldn’t let me off the hook. I was begging for more: time, sleep, and health. I needed more time but I also needed to have an impact. I was getting sick, but it ended up being such a gift. The present I was looking for was wrapped in a box I least expected. Since then, I have stopped trying to get back at the moon and the sun for not adding more hours to the day and I now focus on managing my energy. I am fascinated by the idea of getting more done in less linear time. How can you do this?

You can’t create more hours in the day, but you can integrate conscious communication practices into your life in a way that changes the speed and nature of your thoughts so that you become more present, more productive and more creative. To do this, you must re-focus your attention away from anxiety, stress, and overwhelming ways of thinking and living.

## Why does it work?

It works because the danger lies in not paying attention. Failing to pay attention directly leads to the feeling that ‘time flies’ or ‘you don’t know where the time has gone.’ If you don’t pay attention, you let others decide how they can use your time, which can sometimes leave us feeling a little short-changed.

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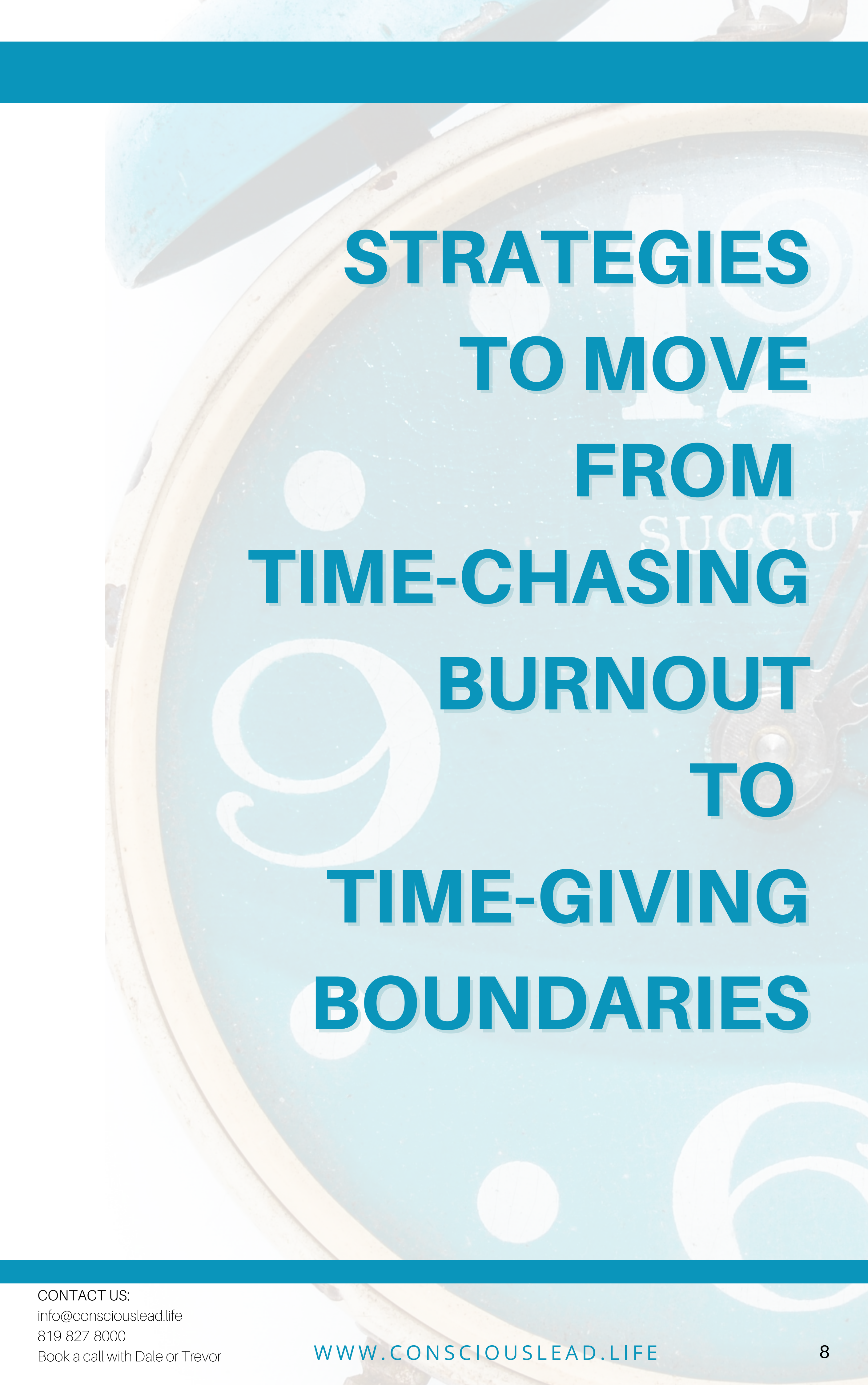
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**STRATEGIES  
TO MOVE  
FROM  
TIME-CHASING  
BURNOUT  
TO  
TIME-GIVING  
BOUNDARIES**

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[info@consciouslead.life](mailto:info@consciouslead.life)

819-827-8000

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# CONSCIOUS WAYS TO EXPERIENCE BETTER USE OF TIME

While you cannot “manage time,” the nature of your thoughts will change how you choose to use your time.

Conscious communication is more than just a way of speaking, it is a conscious practice that requires us to notice the thinking that precedes our **CHOICES**, which lead to our actions and the **RESULTS** that we experience.

Chasing the clock can lead to feelings of stress, guilt and fear. When we are constantly trying to keep up, get things done and negotiate daily living, we leave little time for conscious, healthy, presencing experiences.

In our coaching conversations, people regularly comment on how this feeling is heightened when priorities are conflicting (like cuddling with the kids versus working out). We are often on autopilot watching our time, energy and confidence slip away.

When we are emotionally conflicted, we experience more anxiousness, tension and pressure, which results in feeling like we have less time than we actually do. When we have the sense of feeling pressed for time, then our health, our sleep and our impacts are affected. Our nervous tension and fear drive us to succeed, yet productivity and happiness take a back seat.

The key, therefore, to achieving “to-do-list” success lies in being truly mindful of the energy you give to each of your projects and commitments. You need to give each of your commitments more moments of your full attention without guilt or remorse.

## Time Control Versus Peace with the Present Reality

You agree that you are not signing up for the divine work of changing the sun and the moon's effect on time, right? Good.

When in the chaos, try to align yourself with the reality of what is taking place from moment to moment. This means seeing events as they really are rather than believing in our interpretations of, or reactions to, those events. In reality, we might see that we do not need to engage or respond to the chaos at all. Hence, saving ourselves a lot of wasted time.

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819-827-8000

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# 3 CONSCIOUS COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES TO HELP RECLAIM YOUR TIME

Let's control our energy and how we experience the time we use.

## Purpose

- To remove the guilt and anxiousness associated with time pressure
- To raise awareness of how you can better enjoy the time you have
- To shift perspective, the LENS you currently look through, regarding your time use
- To practice a more conscious way of feeling more productive

## Innerwork

When it comes to how you use your time, shift from time management to energy management by listening to your inner voice that might be feeling anxious and fragmented by all the to-dos. Adjust your lens to align with the reality of what you can control and learn a language to quiet that inner voice and prevent it from fuelling anxiety and frantic ways of working and leading.

- Conscious communication is a beautiful way to manage your energy
- Listening to your inner-critic during these times of stress
- Learn from what you hear
- Use a language to adjust our thoughts so as to reduce the emotional reactions and perception of being time-poor



## Refocus your Lens

People who refocus their lens to align with the reality of what they can control:

- Experience a dramatic sense of self-confidence by knowing what is truly possible and commit with integrity to what they **CAN do**
- Are able to set goals and agree to tasks that can be accomplished more easily
- Let go of feelings of not keeping up by learning what to say "no" to, in a way that gets everyone's needs met at less emotional cost

## Innerwork

- Breathe, truly and deeply.

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- Pause. Close your eyes. Relax all the muscles in your face, neck, shoulders, arms, chest, back and belly. Keep that relaxed state. (You might want to sit for this but standing is fine too.) Take a breath in through your nose and focus your inner sight on 'watching' your breath come in through your nose and follow it as it flows down through your body to fill up your belly. As you exhale, watch the air leave your belly, up through the chest, throat and nose while allowing the body to relax with each exhalation. Repeat a few times. Can you 'see' your breath? Can you feel yourself relax a little more each time? You are the only one that can control that. Take control of your ability to relax.
- Start each day or a time-pressured moment by saying 'thank you' to yourself for one thing. No day is ever promised to us and this is something that I really do take for granted at times. Creating gratitude within each day can really help to put your time into perspective!
- Take (or retake) control of your day. Set a vision for how you want to EXPERIENCE the day. Write three descriptive words for how you will live today. Think about what you value and how you intend to run things today. (i.e. fun, focused, and follow-through) Do that now.

## Outerwork

When you feel time-pressured:

1. Write down and review the tasks of the day or the moment
2. Batch the things that you have said "yes" to into groups, e.g. at work: administrative, meetings, delivering, energy breaks; at home: cooking, blogging, working out, planning, kid pickup
3. Estimate the time you will spend in each batch, and choice-fully prioritize the batches, ensuring you include the YOU time.
4. Decide to say NO to some of the things on the list (at least for today). "If it's not a HELL YES, it's a HELL NO!"
5. Put the remaining batches in your calendar according to the time you have allotted. Stick to your times and/or adjust consciously.



# Conscious Communication Practice

When you are more conscious of your time, you choose to examine how you spend it. Think about the times you truly experience more joy. When you wrote down and reviewed your tasks, how did you feel? What does this reveal to you? How will you adjust if needed?

When you put tasks into batches and then into your calendar, did you put more in than you can handle? Does everything fit? What does this show you about time control versus aligning with reality? How will you adjust if needed?

Alignment with an assignment: When assigning tasks to batches, reflect on how the tasks meet the three descriptor words of your vision. What does this show you?

How will you address the things that don't meet your vision/values/needs, but that you agree to?

This is a common issue that comes up with the leaders I work with. The "have to/ should do" list that tugs at our energy and drags us down.

## Listen for Your Inner Critic

Conscious communication is not just about language. It is an awareness of how your thoughts lead to your choices. Your choices then lead to your actions, and your actions lead to the results. See how that works? In essence, your thoughts directly lead to the results you achieve.

I can see in myself and others that anxiousness and stress increase when we have conflicting priorities. This happens regardless of whether we are actually short on time or not. When we react to our thoughts about conflicting priorities, our stress response deepens.

### **The Benefits of Examining Your Inner Critic**

When I work with people on how to better listen to their thoughts, they develop an edge:

- They witness and acknowledge their thoughts that lead to their results
- They can choose to do things differently because of their ability to see where their thoughts are leading them



- They still live in 'reality,' but choose to live in a better way
- They more easily dissolve blame, shame and guilt cycles
- They are more present and experience more positivity

## **The Practice**

Calming your inner-critic by being present. Try this out:

When your to-do list gets overwhelming and you watch your thoughts and confidence unravel, go for a walk (physical or mental) and come back to the present moment by removing your inner critic's three seductive thinking habits:

1. Time Traveling
2. Blame Game
3. Playing the Game versus Changing the Game

### *Time Traveling*

Your inner critic loves to time travel by obsessing over past events and the future while keeping the present moment out of sight. We don't realize how much time we waste by repeatedly thinking or talking about what has passed, OR obsessing over what might happen in the future. Are you ready to slow down on the time travel and practice more presence?

### *Blame Game*

How much time do you waste by looking for someone or something to blame when your time seems to be slipping away?

### *Playing the Game Versus Changing the Game*

How many of you have felt like your day has been one interruption after another? How many times have you said yes to meeting after meeting, while questioning their value? How many times have you found yourself checking your smartphone or distracted by your to-do lists while in meetings? This is where thinking differently about choices can facilitate better use of your time—only say yes to meetings if they meet your vision and so on. Does this challenge your thinking?

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## Learn the Language of Your Inner Critic

Again, use conscious communication to be aware of this pattern. Your thoughts lead to your choices. Your choices lead to your actions, and your actions lead to your results. Your thoughts will lead you to experience time in a certain way.

Listen and look for LANGUAGE around your time use that implies guilt, shame or blame. Try this conscious communication practice:

1. In 1-3 sentences, write down your biggest time management issue. What is happening? Why is this a problem? How is it impacting you?
2. Reread what you wrote
3. Refocus your lens/perspective, while considering Time Traveling. Underline any words/phrases that deal with the past or future. Look out for words or phrases that imply "should/could" or "would have" (past) OR "won't be able to" or "will never" (future) or any variation..
4. Refocus your lens/perspective while considering the Blame Game. Become conscious of any language that implies blame or guilt for you or others.
5. Refocus your lens/perspective to see if you are Playing the Game Versus Changing the Game. Notice how you are feeling when you read for time traveling and blame. Describe how you feel. What do you notice? What are you learning as you examine and explore through this lens?

If you are like me, you desire to use your time in ways that fuel your energy rather than leave you feeling depleted, even with the tasks we have accepted that are less desirable.

- Perfect the Present and slow the Time Travel. Practice examining your thoughts to remove language that has you mourning the past or anticipating the future. How will you focus your thoughts now? How will you focus your time?
- Aim instead of blame. When the pressure is high, aim to stop the noise of the inner critic. Breathe (in the way previously described). Next, move to your vision for using your time (those three descriptive words previously described). Do this rather than spending any time defending, blaming or guiltling.

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## Change the Game

Taking mindful, rejuvenating breaks because breaks= time savers. This could be 1 minute, 5 minutes, or more. Rejuvenating breaks are ones where you choose to walk away from the task, to feel your body, pay attention to your emotions and get in touch with what drives you. This is the type of break that helps replenish both your mental and physical energy. Even a few moments of doing so, will help you complete tasks and feel less overwhelmed.

Befriend and embrace boundaries to protect against those who may interrupt you from your vision, including your own distracted mind. Figure out how much uninterrupted time you need and communicate it with kind conviction. This goes for your own distractible mind as well. Keep aligning to the task and your vision. This is one of the most challenging things to do. I have often wished I could "just say no" to certain things, meetings, people. Now, I change the game...

Please don't wait for more proof that you need to take care of yourself and that you need to consciously protect your time. When your time feels like it is not your own and your mind is busy chattering, deliberating or stressing, try to call upon something beautiful in your mind. Call on your inner tour guide: "To your left, you will see the beauty of light dancing across the sky at twilight. And to your right, see the misty beams of sun's fading glory illuminating every crevice and boulder on the mountainside..."

I often try to "put my world on pause" in order to savour the beauty I am experiencing in the moment. The beauty of completing a task is savoured as honouring what I said I would do. The break and the moment of reflection after an hour of focused work is my reward. Learning what was realistic helps me plan the rest of my day. No guilt. No shame. No blame. How much time can you save by dissolving your disempowering conversations and your inner chatter about how time-poor you are?

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Talk to an expert who is genuinely interested in helping you with time management. Book your **FREE INITIAL CONSULTATION** and we will discuss how conscious communication can elevate your impact.



## Could one conversation change your life?

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