

Timefulness Practices: Strapped for Time? Change Your Relationship to Time!

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Make time for the important things in life! Sarah Susanka, in “The Not So Big Life: Making Room for What Really Matters,” (2007), writes, “Simply paying attention to your passions will bring forth opportunities to pursue them,” (p. 210). She continues, “home (or the office) is the place that most closely reflects our inner state.” (p. 210). “Rushing makes it less likely that things are done with presence” (p. 224).

In the article, “Timefulness Practices: Strapped for Time? Change Your Relationship to Time,” Bo Forbes, Psy.D. and Yoga teacher, states,

“...we live in a culture that prizes productivity and speed. Before we know it, we’re embroiled in a perpetual battle with time, missing out on our connections to our deeper self and to others,” (p. 86).

Forbes suggests that we ask the following questions: Besides eating and sleeping, how do I allocate my time in a typical 24-hour period? Do the activities on which I spend most of my time nourish me, or do they feel obligatory? Do I put others’ needs first, only to suffer a resentment hangover? When I long for more time, what do I imagine doing with it?

The heart of these practices is yoking your awareness to the moment; each and every moment holds the potential for a transformative experience of time. Be mindful of transitions throughout your day, and create transitional routines or rituals that help you relax, savor, and slow time. The following are some concrete suggestions from Forbes:

- 1) *Upon waking*, savor the transition between sleep and wakefulness – that’s when dreams and intuitive impulses are more available to you. Set an intention to bring more awareness into your day.
- 2) *Before work*, take a moment to really say goodbye to loved ones. Relax and breathe when you stop at red lights or in traffic. Take a “mindfulness detour” and drive a scenic route or through a park.
- 3) *At work*, rushing from one task to another contributes to the illusion that nothing is ever enough. When you complete a task, take a moment to breathe deep and savor the sense of completion. As you inhale, welcome more energy into your body as you exhale, let go of what you’ve completed.
- 4) *Breaks/Lunch*, Decide to savor even the most menial tasks, and make time for natural breaks – a coffee break, a lunch break. Don’t rush your lunch, and don’t eat at your desk.
- 5) *Back home*, spend 15 minutes upon returning home to relax, change into something more comfortable, do a yoga posture like forward bend or supported child’s pose. Take time to greet the people you live with, or a pet, or just yourself.

- 6) *Before bed*, spend 2-5 minutes in 2:1 breathing, which calms the mind and readies you for sleep (exhaling for twice as long as you inhale). Let go the challenges and stresses of the day.
- 7) *Designate* some time every week for a hobby, sport, or something you enjoy that is unrelated from your usual routine.
- 8) *Disconnect* from sensory stimulation; take an hour away from the computer, cell phone, tv. Notice how doing this can make you aware of your body and breath. *Take Sunday off* – not just from work and errands, but from calls and emails, too.
- 9) *Reconnect* with nature, no matter the season. Spend time at the beach or trail, notice the birds, take a moment to look at the moon and stars. Nature proceeds at its own pace and can be a great model for your own schedule.
- 10) *Make eye contact* with everyone you encounter; connecting more fully with people you encounter adds richness to moments that are typically lost.

“Emotional contagion,” says Forbes, is a term in the study of neurobiology of social relationships, referring to the tendency to pick up and mirror the emotions of others. “Temporal contagion,” similarly, is the tendency to adjust their sense of time to those around them (p. 133). Forbes talks about the “productivity paradox” – “the more you muscle toward your goals, the more likely you are to derail the very things you’re trying to get done,” and, “When you can stop grasping, even if for a little while, you can access that state of flow, remain in the present, and enjoy and harvest the time that is available to you,” (Forbes, p. 134).

“The heart of these practices is yoking your awareness to the moment; each and every moment holds the potential for a transformative experience of time. In my work as a psychologist and yoga therapist, I’ve seen that transitional times (when you are between jobs, partners, stages of life, or even yoga postures) are full of possibility....Slowing down and giving these transitional times your attention can boost your immunity to temporal contagion while enriching your experience of time. Smaller transitions in your day, such as arriving home from work, are also threshold points that can help you experience time more deeply” (Forbes, 2007, p. 134).

Sources:

Forbes, Bo, Psy.D. (2007). “Strapped for time? Try Radically Changing Your Relationship to the Clock,” in *Yoga Journal*, September 2007, pp. 84-87, and 133-135.

Susanka, Sarah (2007). *The Not so Big Life: Making Room for What Really Matters*. New York: Random House.