

Sands of Time: Thoughts on Time Management

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In our professional and personal lives we often focus on "time" as a commodity to be managed. Our lives revolve around schedules, planners, calendars, and "To Do" lists. We believe that if we can learn to control time better, we can get more done and if we get more done, we will somehow be happier. Thus, the *management of time* becomes yet another task to accomplish in our already busy lives. So how do you manage time without creating yet another task? First understand your approach to time.

- How to **DO** more—the focus is on accomplishment and what is *urgent*.
- How to **BE** more—the focus is on balance and what is *important*.

Each of these *Time Management* approaches is predicated on our personal perception of time. There are three basic perceptions of time, the first focuses on *doing* more, and last two focus on *being* more:

1. **Time is linear in nature.** One second precedes another; there is a past and a future, but in linear time, there is rarely a "now." We concentrate on what has happened in the past, rehashing what happened or how we should have responded, or we concentrate on the future, preparing for what is to be. *Time* is a thing or a commodity to be used wisely or squandered.
2. **Time is qualitative and is focused on the "now."** The focus is on attaining balance with the physical world and places an emphasis on being in the moment. Many of us have experienced this sensation when a single moment in time can take on dimensions much larger than a mere second or two, and they are the moments that we carry with us for a lifetime.
3. **Time is circular in nature.** Morning precedes night, which precedes morning. In this view, all things that have happened before will happen again, and the past, present and future are all one. They do not exist separate from the others.



Each of us makes a choice on how we perceive time, which affects how we live our lives. That choice occurs somewhere on this continuum between DOING and BEING, and the choices we make, create a rhythm in our lives.

Each of us has a rhythm that is influenced by the rhythms that surround us. For most of us, our daily rhythm is a driving beat that often leaves us feeling exhausted and tense. We often look to weekends and vacations as a hopeful time of recovery, but instead, the weekend is an extension of the rhythm of our life.

The rhythm of our life is so powerful that we search for tools, systems, and programs that can be applied to regulate the tempo and maintain control.

Our secret hope is that by controlling the events that now seem out of control, we can find the time to DO even more or DO it all. The myth of “having it all” is pervasive and seductive.

In Western Society, we embrace the idea that *time is linear in nature*. Thus, traditional *time management* makes us think in terms of *time spent*, *time saved*, or *time borrowed*. However, feeling as if we are constantly losing something, does not lend itself to living a life with options and choices. It only drives us in a direction of feeling as though we have to maximize our use of this thing called *time*, because if we waste it—it is lost to us forever.

The reality is that we don’t actually lose time, we lose the *balance* in our lives. The lack of balance causes stress, which affects the choices we make. Each of us has the opportunity to affect our *perception of time*, which affects our personal rhythm. Recognizing our own rhythm gives us the opportunity to establish balance, and that is the essence of true *time management*.



Balance is achieved when we are able to concentrate on what has value. What has value is what is important to us and it defines who we are. The importance of being *all that we are* at any given moment causes us to focus on balancing those things that define us.

There is no time like the present to begin to focus on what is important. Despite the stress and the anxiety that ordinary life can bring, you can create a space—at time for reflection, on where you have been, where you are going, and thus, on what is important.

No matter what your *time management* approach has been in the past, you can elect to make choices in your life that provide the balance to focus on what is important—the result may be the best thing you can give yourself.

*"We can make our lives sublime,
and departing leave behind us, footprints on the sands of time."*

Hymn to the Night, by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow