



Outback

Team Building & Training

Time Management Workbook

"A New Look at an Old Problem"



Time Management Workbook

Welcome to the Time Management Workbook – A New Look at an Old Problem

Get more out of your day with the “Time Management” Workbook. From practical tools to help you declutter your life, to creative methods for fighting procrastination – the guide takes a new look at old problems. You will learn how to take time management more seriously, make practical changes to become more efficient, and set up new systems to ensure the changes last. You can’t control time, but you can control how you use it.

By completing this workbook you’ll gain:

- An awareness of why time management issues arise
- A new way to look at time management
- A strategy to prioritize your day
- An understanding of what motivates you and how to use that knowledge effectively
- A tool to help you declutter your life
- Practical ways to say ‘no’ to some ‘now’ requests
- Practical tools for dealing with unexpected events that steal time throughout the day
- A simple tool to help you create doable planning schedules
- Insight into how to prevent yourself burning out or rusting out
- Top tips for managing yourself

To get the most out of this workbook, you’ll need to:

- Make time management a priority for you
- Commit to finding the time and space to tackle the activities... It’s how you’ll get a handle on your time management



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Section One: Understanding Time Management

"How did it get so late so soon?" ~ Dr. Seuss

Here's the thing about time management: you already know everything you need to manage your time.

Don't believe me?

I'm going to guess you already know how to make a to-do list (write things you want to do and strike them off as they get done). You already know how to prioritize (do the most important things first). And you already know how not to procrastinate (do the thing you're putting off).

If you agree with that, then you might be wondering if I already know everything I need to manage time, what's the point of this workbook?

That's a key question, because if you already know how to manage your time, but still find the day spinning out of control, then there must be a bigger question to ask.

And that question is this: why aren't I doing the things I know will help me with my time management?

And that is the focus of this workbook.

Because time management isn't about tools and techniques (although I'll have some for you in this workbook). Time management is about developing a mindset that allows us to use the tools and techniques we already know. It also means having the ability to develop others that can help.

In short, time management isn't about managing time. It's about managing something else. So if you're ready to think about time management differently, then grab a comfy chair, a pen, and hold an open mind. This isn't just time management, this is a new look at an old problem.



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Step one: the time management myth

What's that you say? "I've got meetings, projects, staff to manage, and tasks to get done. I don't need a new look at an old problem. I need tools to help me manage a workload that's growing out of all proportion."

Maybe. But before we accept that conclusion, let's try a little thought experiment.

Let's say, you meet the time management genie. Unlike a traditional genie, the time management genie only has one wish to grant. And it's this: while everyone else keeps living a 24 hour day, the time management genie grants you 26 hours in your day.

Here's the question: what will you do with your extra two hours?

Think about it. Will you spend two extra hours in bed? Maybe spend two hours pursuing a hobby? What about two hours more with the kids? Or maybe you split them up: spend an hour extra at work to get a jump on the next day, and an hour reading a book?

Now imagine it's four months from now. What are you doing with your extra two hours now? Still playing with the kids? Still reading books? What about a year from now? Five years? What's happened to those extra two hours now?

If you're anything like me, those two extra hours will eventually get filled up with normal everyday life. Six months from now, they're not helping with my time management, they're getting filled with work and life, just like the other 24 hours.

Step two: reality check

Though we don't always think of it like this, time is a human construct.

Hours are made up ideas that help us measure the cycle of the sun. The rising and setting of the sun is the basis for our measure of day and night. I'd suggest time management is a myth because it suggests time is something we can manage. Which, of course, we can't. Time management sounds like we have some control over time. Which we don't.

All we have control over is ourselves. And since we can manage ourselves, time management is really about self-management.

Put it like that, and now things really can start to change.



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Section Two: Taking Yourself Seriously

"Amateurs sit and wait for inspiration, the rest of us just get up and go to work."
~ Stephen King

Step one: the three most important things to change

Before we go any further, let's stop for a moment and think about what you'd like to get out of this workbook.

In the box below write out the three most important things you'd like to change about the way you manage yourself. Is it that you want to prioritize better? Motivate yourself more? Keep yourself from burning out? Whatever it is write it out and keep it in the forefront of your mind as you tackle the challenges throughout this workbook.



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Challenge

Write out three things you'd like to change about the way you manage yourself.

Step two: decluttering

The best way to make sure nothing changes in a busy, packed, and stressful life is to add more things to do.

Self-management isn't about adding more things to do, it's often about taking things away to leave room for the stuff that matters.

And before we can decide what can get the old heave-ho, we need to figure out what matters.

Here's a simple life grid to do just that.

What I do that matters to me	What I do that used to matter to me



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What I do that doesn't matter to me	What I don't do that matters to me

In this table, I'm defining *matters to me* as anything I think about, spend time or money on, and anything that I invest emotion in.

That means flicking through cars on the internet because I'm thinking of buying a new one *matters to me*. It also means worrying about not going to the gym also *matters to me*. And moving ahead in my career definitely *matters to me*.



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Challenge

Complete the life grid above, then answer the following questions:

How can you eliminate or reduce spending time on things that used to matter to you?
Can you stop doing things that don't matter to you?

Would doing the above make more time in your life for the things that matter to you and the things that matter to you that you're not doing?

Step three: self-motivation or keeping your interest going

If self-management were as easy as working out what matters to us, then you wouldn't need a workbook.

That's because knowing what matters and doing something about what matters isn't the same thing. But before we get into that subject, here's a silly puzzle for you.

Imagine a town with a graveyard at its centre like the one below.



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In this town, when people want to get from one side to the other, they often cross through the graveyard.

One night, a man drunk after a night on the town cuts through the graveyard and falls into an open grave. He tries to jump out, but can't. He tries to climb out but can't. When he realizes he'll be missed, he decides to sit it out and wait for his friends and family to come and find him.

Half an hour later, another man equally drunk falls into the same grave. It's too dark to see the first man so the second man does all the same things. He tries to climb out and jump out, and finds he's stuck too. But the first man that fell in taps the second on the shoulder and says, "There's no point trying, there's no way out." With that, the second man jumps out in one leap and runs all the way home.

Question: what did the second man have that the first man didn't?

If you said stilts, a pogo stick, or something similar you'd be wrong. If you said fear, because he thought he'd seen a ghost – you'd be right.

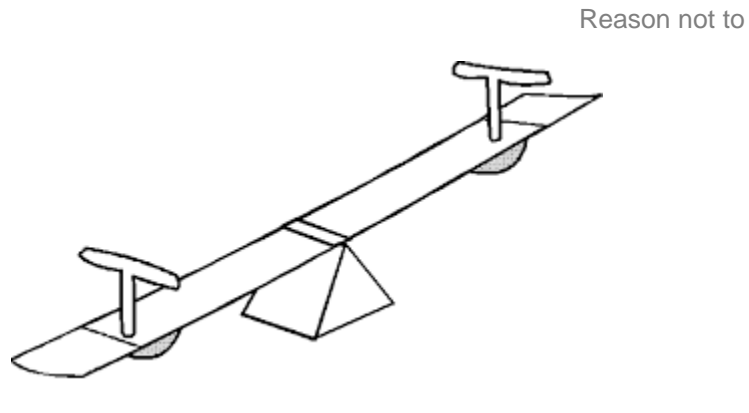
But what's important is what that fear gave him: a reason.

If you want to change something about the way you manage yourself it takes more than acknowledging what matters to you. It takes a reason to make those things priorities in your life.

The seesaw below is one way to think about self-motivation.



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If we have more reasons to do something than reasons to not do it, we do it.

If we have more reasons to not do something than reasons to, we don't.

The secret to getting things done is finding more reasons to do something than reasons not to.



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Challenge

Make a list of the things that matter to you that aren't happening in your life. For example attending less meetings at work, making a promotion a priority, leaving work on time.

List all your reasons to do that thing and your reasons to not.

Reasons to	Reasons not to

If you want to do this thing, take the time now to challenge your reasons to not do it.

For example, you might feel there are too many meetings at work that take up too much time. You keep going because you feel if you didn't, others might think you don't care about the company. You could challenge that idea by asking if others feel there are too many meetings. If they do, you could suggest a better and more streamlined approach to the workday.



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Step four: "toward" and "away from" motivation

Before we leave self-motivation, there's one myth I'd like to dispel.

Many of us feel there's only one way to motivate ourselves: you set a goal and march toward it, right? Well, that may be true for some people, but it's not true for us all.

People who set a goal and work diligently toward it are what's often referred to as *toward motivated*. As the name suggests, what these people do is work toward making something good happen. When you were at school, they were the people who got assignments done weeks ahead of schedule because they wanted the time and space to make sure they got a good grade and weren't swamped near the deadline.

But that's not the only way to be motivated. *Away from* people are the ones who pull all-nighters before an assignment is due. They're the ones with coffee on an intravenous drip. The ones who run to class with the paper in their hands and set it on the prof's desk seconds before the deadline. *Away from* people are motivated by making sure bad things don't happen. In fact, they tend to only spring into action when the risk of something bad happening looms large.

Fun as it may be, *away from* motivation can be stressful. If you find yourself *away from* motivated, but would prefer to take action before a crisis looms, think about your reasons for wanting to act sooner in the challenge above.

Bring the problem you're trying to avoid closer.

If you get projects in at the last minute at work, think about how that might look to your colleagues or your boss.

Avoiding a reputation problem at work means you now have a good reason to start on the project early.



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Section Three: Making it Practical

"The least productive people are usually the ones who are most in favor of holding meetings." ~ Thomas Sowell

Step one: setting goals & prioritizing

The seesaw we looked at earlier is a simple way to think about how to find reasons to do the things that are important. But that begs a bigger question: How do I know what's important? Or put another way, how do I prioritize?

In this section, I'd like to offer you a way to tackle the enemy of organization: little or no prioritizing. We've all had a busy day where it feels like you're running around like a chicken with its head cut off. You spend the day rushing from one task to the next, and then come five o'clock you find out nothing much got done at all.

Sound familiar? Then try this thought experiment.

You have a vase, some rocks, some gravel, some sand, and some water just like in the picture below.





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Ready for the question? Here it is: what order should you pour in the materials to best fill the space in the vase?

If you said rocks, then gravel, then sand, then water – you'd be right.

The point I'm making is to attend to the rocks in your day/week/life first. Next deal with the gravel and sand. And fill the gaps in your time with the smaller things (water).

This way, you focus throughout your day on the rocks, the things that are most important.

Rocks could be big projects, or an important phone call. Gravel might be sending out a proposal. Sand is like the tasks others ask you to do in a day. Water might be emails.

It's different for everyone, but keeping an eye on the rocks in your day is a simple way to help sort out what needs to be done, from what could be distractions.

Challenge

Identify the rocks, gravel, sand, and water in your daily life.

Then, commit to organizing yourself around your two biggest rocks tomorrow.



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Step two: a new look at Eisenhower's Quadrant

Eisenhower may never have developed the grid that bears his name. The man who said, "If it's urgent, it's not important and if it's important, it's not urgent," would never have agreed anything could be both urgent and important. But that doesn't mean we should ignore the tool. In case you're not sure what I'm talking about, here's Eisenhower's Quadrant:

Not important but urgent	Important and urgent
Not important and not urgent	Important but not urgent



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Challenge

Fill out Eisenhower's Quadrant (above) for your professional life. Place the tasks you do in the appropriate quadrant.

In which quadrant do you spend most of your time? Does that work for you?

If not, what steps do you need to take to spend more time in the lower half of the quadrant?

Step three: dealing with time bandits

But of course, some of the things that make it hard to commit time and space to a task are small distractions that steal your time during the day: what I'm calling time bandits.

Time bandits come in many forms. Here are a few you might be familiar with:

- Emails
- Meetings
- Phone calls
- Requests from colleagues
- People who stop by your desk for a chat

Your time bandits might be different, but they'll still steal time during the day.



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The good news is every time bandit has a solution. Your solutions will be specific to you, but to get you going here are a few options for the list above:

Time bandit	Possible solution
Emails	Handle them at specific times during the day rather than as soon as they come in.
Meetings	Check to make sure you're needed in the meeting. At the end of a meeting, try to avoid follow up meetings that aren't needed.
Phone calls	Don't be afraid to tell people now isn't a good time to talk and you'll call them back as soon as you can.
Requests from colleagues	Let colleagues know you have work to do and will handle their request later in the day. If you can, give them a time frame they can expect you to handle their request. It's possible they may ask someone else.
People who stop by your desk for a chat	Be honest and let them know you have a lot going on. Offer to meet them for lunch or during a break.



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Challenge

Try it for yourself! On one side list your time bandits, on the other side list possible solutions that fit your style.

Time Bandit	Possible Solution



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Step four: the art of saying "no"

At the start of this workbook, I said self-management isn't about doing more, it's about doing less. That means sometimes saying no.

Of course, that's a hard thing to do. Saying no can mean we come across as unhelpful, and unwilling to help out the team. And that's saying nothing about how uncomfortable it might feel to say no.

Sometimes "no" is the right thing to say, but are there ways to say it without using the word at all?

Well, yes there are. Take a look at the list below. Is there a phrase or approach that you feel you can use?

- "I know someone who can help with that..."
- "I can do it at 3pm / Tuesday / later, is that OK?"
- "I'll call you right back"
- "What I can do for you is..."
- "I have to do a thing for Bob and Sarah, can I get to you after that?"
- Telling them the truth about how busy you are



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Challenge

Commit to using one of the phrases or approaches above next time someone asks you do something you'd rather not or don't have time for.

If none of the above work for you, what phrase can you think of that gets your "no" across?

Step five: practical planning – planning backward

"Planning isn't tough! You just need to set a goal and take care of each step along way."

This kind of planning, often called planning forward, can help some people, but it's also vulnerable to changes because when we come across something we haven't thought of, the plan can fall apart.

All good plans need to have the following components:

- Objectives
- Available resources – financial, human, materials, IT, etc...
- Key tasks with key personnel for each task
- Timelines
- An effective communication process

But a backward plan takes these elements and asks, "What do I need to do a week before the end of the task to make sure I get to the stage I need?" Of course, you don't have to plan backwards by weeks, you could do it by hours, days, or months – whichever makes most sense for you.

Some of the advantages of backward planning are:



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- It avoids mistakes in the first few steps that can occur in a planning forward approach
- It helps identify milestones that can be overlooked when planning forward
- It helps identify potential problems that can be overlooked when planning forward
- It helps establish realistic timelines for tasks

Challenge

Write a backward plan for a task you are facing.

Section Four: Keeping It Going

"The best thing about the future is that it comes one day at a time." ~ Abraham Lincoln

Step one: keeping yourself in balance

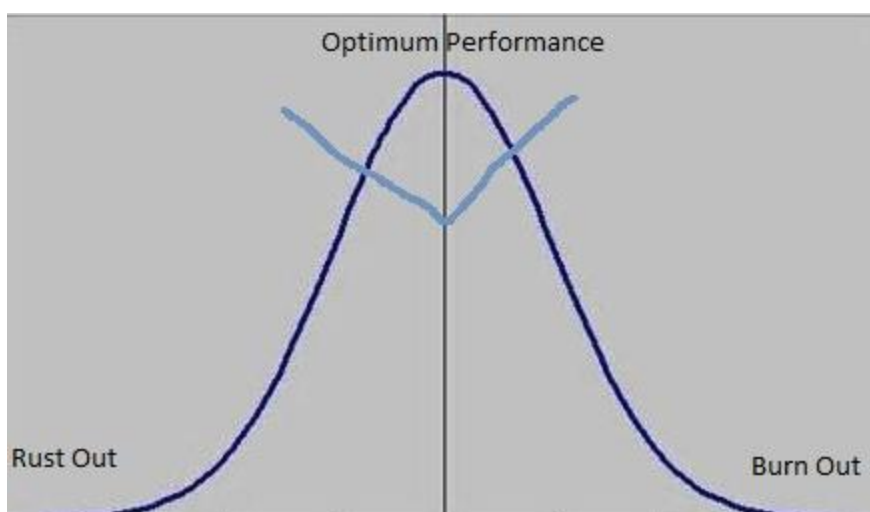
A key skill to managing yourself is keeping yourself balanced enough to avoid burning or rusting out. We all know burn out – that all too familiar place we go when we're doing so much we become so stressed and less and less effective. We may even end up getting sick.

Rust out is the other end of the scale: we do so little that everything ends up being a massive chore.

On a graph, it looks like this:



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Keeping yourself in balance means taking care to stay in the optimum performance or “V” range on the graph above.

Keeping inside the “V of Well-Being” is a skill that comes with practice. It has two steps.

1. Developing the awareness to spot when you tip out of the “V”
2. Having practical strategies to help you slip back into the “V”

For example, the first thing that happens to me when I tip into burn out is I get short with the people I care most about.

When I notice that, I go for walks in a forest or the mountains. That always seems to lighten my load and makes me feel like me again.



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Challenge

1. Identify the cues that you're tipping out of the "V of Well-Being"
2. What strategies can you think of that will help you slip back into the "V"?



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Step two: feeling effective and rewarded

Setting and reaching goals can be hard work. Keeping yourself motivated can be even harder. That's why rewards are a great way to keep yourself motivated.

Thing is, rewards only work if they fit who you are, what you like and what you've accomplished.

Here are some things to keep in mind when planning rewards:

- **Meaningful:** Is it meaningful, and motivating to you?
- **Fair:** Is it fair considering what you did to get it? Bigger goals generally deserve bigger rewards.
- **Focused:** Do you know why you're rewarding yourself? You'll feel better about your reward if you know exactly what you did to earn it.
- **Timely:** Did the reward come at the right time? Rewards should be frequent enough that they keep you motivated, and should take place soon after you complete your goal.

To help you develop rewards that'll work for you, think about the following:

- What kinds of things do you like to have?
- What things do you love to do?
- Who do you like to spend your time with and what do you like to do together?
- How do you like to get away from it all?
- What makes you feel proud or happy?
- How would you spend a free afternoon?
- How would you spend \$20 if you found it?



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Challenge

When you've thought about rewards that might be meaningful to you, complete the following table so you can have rewards ready when you need them. You deserve it!!

When I do this	I'll reward myself with



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Step three: working with what works

Self-management isn't something you do and never have to address again. It's a constant building of habits that help you get what's important to you done.

So, don't forget to take the time to notice what's working for you. When you say no to a last-minute meeting. When you spot yourself tipping out of optimal performance and taking the time to step back.

Celebrating those successes is part of what makes the journey enjoyable and successful.



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Section Five: Three Tips for Success

"The bad news is time flies. The good news is you're the pilot." ~ Michael Altshuler

And finally, here's three tips to help you make self-management work for you.

#1

Self-management 9:01 a.m.

At the start of your day, take the time to set your agenda for the rest of the day. What are your rocks? When will you work on them?

#2

Time limits

Give tasks time limits and set short five minute breaks within those time limits. Your productivity will increase if you know there's a break on the horizon.

#3

Avoid technology slavery

Emails and calls may come in all the time, but that doesn't mean they have to be addressed right away. You have an inbox and voicemail for a reason. Don't be afraid to handle calls and emails on your terms.



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