To Stop is to Succeed

YOU WILL NEVER *FIND* TIME FOR ANYTHING. IF YOU WANT TIME, YOU MUST MAKE IT.
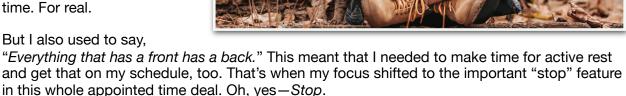— CHARLES BUXTON

Henry Miller said, 'Work according to program and not according to mood. **Stop** at the appointed time!'

I focused for a good while on the *"appointed time"* part of the story. Not so much on the program and mood part. Honestly, for me the two are inseparable and I don't do other people's dichotomies.

Anyway—time.

I used to say, *"You can't make time, but you can decide how to move."*

Come to find out, that was only half true. You can make time. For real.

But I also used to say, *"Everything that has a front has a back."* This meant that I needed to make time for active rest and get that on my schedule, too. That's when my focus shifted to the important "stop" feature in this whole appointed time deal. Oh, yes—*Stop*.

The importance of stopping, and what it means to your performance, cannot be understated.

I also value experimentation, and I've always been my own guinea pig. The data is in. As a result of my sometimes ruthless experiments on myself, I've been advocating that **to stop is to succeed** for a long time now. The data has been encouraging.

Learning to respond with mindfulness and self-compassion before pushing something that I've labeled as beneficial until it becomes counterproductive, has become an important skill.

You never need to push something so hard that you end up feeling a lack of efficacy and with it, the damning effects of felling like a counterproductive blob. Before that happens, pump the breaks. Stop.

Instead of pushing, take another step toward unconditional self-acceptance. Be honest with yourself about what you're willing and unwilling to do. It's a feature of self-compassion and much more productive than 'program'.

Be mindful of what you're going through. Extend some kindness to yourself. Be honest about what is essential to you and focus on that **one thing**.

Here's a bit of what I learned when I stopped being my own task master:

- I do not have to be in the mood to do something in order to do it, but I don't have to tolerate the pain of tediousness either.

- I accept that ambiguous work periods are more overwhelming than the work itself.

- Unclear or inessential tasks *need to go* because I am very capable of making a positive decision between alternatives. The choices are there, and I am the one who makes the determination.

- I don't push myself until I'm "*running on empty*." I pull myself toward stillness.

- I have a starting point, a method for handling interruptions, and a way to re-engage after a break. When I'm done, I'm done whether the clock says so or not.

To stop is to succeed because to stop is to listen to your needs speak.

There's another step to take. And it also concerns time.

I had a job once that taught me an important lesson about myself and my relationship with time.

Remember "*You can't make time, but you can decide how to move*"? Well, the lesson was that physical restriction in my workstation is counterproductive for me. For every minute of interruption, there were 2 minutes of lost movement.

Working in a small base of operations with periods of heavy employee traffic encroaching into my space slowed down my activity. 5 minutes of interruptions wasted 10-15 minutes of my time.

If this happened only 3 times a day, I would *just smile and wave, boys*. Because the better part of an hour got forfeited. And it added up. In a 40 hour work week, I lost 3.75 hours.

I calculated that my boss paid me an additional $3200 a year to stand there and wait for people to get out of my way. It didn't take long for us to come up with a solution.

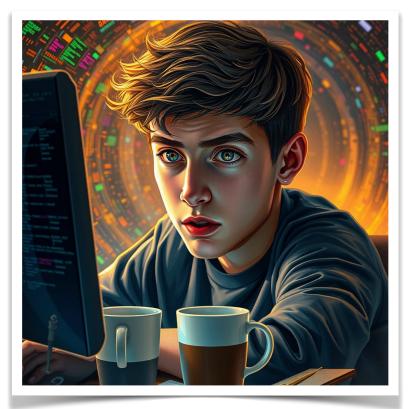Solving my wasted time problem totally brought home the importance of this next step.

Lost time was *gone* and I couldn't make up the time. And I tried. Time doesn't work like that.

Time is a measurement of movement—I couldn't make up lost time but I could literally make time. Oh, yes—*make time*. Like a wizard.

- **You create time when you realize that efficacy and efficiency can work together to produce harmony between doing things right and doing the right things.**

- Efficiency that doesn't enhance my experience of efficacy amounts to nothing. It extinguishes time. Little wonder that efficiency is so readily attached to the tyranny of productivity and purpose.

- And then there's busy work. Keeping busy. I'll talk to you later—I'm busy. Busy busy busy. You get the point. Being busy rarely correlates with being effective

- **You make time by creating rituals, routines, and habits that provide for focus.** For me and my neurodivergent fam, that means gently setting ourselves up so that our focus isn't *hindered.* And setting ourselves up so we don't get caught up in the overload of dysregulated hyper focus.

> *Focus can then translate into sustainable positive momentum, especially for the neurotypical person. I'm neurodivergent, so creating habits hits different. It didn't happen overnight, but I have rituals and routines that keep some of the chaos at bay. At least long enough so that I'm not always looking for my wallet and keys. And I have ways to help myself during periods of hyper-focus, an amazing tool if you know how to use it. Too often, it is in fact a highly impairing symptom. For all of us, small steps are valid in creating new habits. Please remember that. And remember that it's not a perfect situation.*

- **Creating time is supported by the decisions you make.**
  - You look **at** thought, not *through* thought.
  - You recognize the choices before you for what they are.
  - You do what is essential and do only that which is crucial, fundamental, and most valuable. This all takes practice, especially for those of us who are avid rabbit hole enthusiasts.

- **You make time by committing to one thing for the day.** By prioritizing that one thing for the day, for the week, all inessentials are cast off. I'm ruthless about what is inessential and needs to go. Ruthless productivity is in that mix. Not toxic productivity. I'm not a damn robot.

- **You make time by embracing the basic rest–activity cycle (BRAC).** This ultradian rhythm lasts approximately 90 minutes. It produces levels of energized focus and activity, then it's followed by rest. Look into it. It's kept me from burning out on more than one occasion.

Now I have time.

Time to embrace new, small, sustainable beginnings.

Time for my adjacent possible—possibilities for innovation and change that are right in front of me, waiting to be explored.

Time for a good book. Time for a walk. Time for a podcast. Time for me to sit still with my breathing.

Time for active rest to recharge. Time to be human and not burned out.

Time to live life as much as possible, unapologetically.

Time for increased opportunities to find experiences that matter.

Make time. You got the power, you crazy wizard you!