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# IN A NUTSHELL:

## The Problem

The average human lifespan is absurdly short – if you live till 80, you only get about 4,000 weeks of life. This is the crisis of our human existence:

- ambitious plans, yet practically no time at all to put them into action.
- To get around this incredibly limited amount of time, we are obsessed with the concept of time management, believing it will help make our lives more valuable.
- However, modern time management notions usually achieve the opposite, leading us to obsess about doing as many things as possible and feeling guilty or anxious when we cannot.

The reality of our human limits is the big elephant in the room:

- There are hundreds of time management books out there, but all of them only talk about time from a productivity standpoint.
- None of them talk about the stark facts about the shortness of life and how to address this crisis, instead pretending that we can just ignore the subject.

## The Idea

This book is an attempt to help redress the balance – to see if we can't discover, or recover, some : to the outrageous brevity and shimmering possibilities of our four thousand weeks.

- This book is an and a toolbox of practical ideas for doing so, drawn from the work of philosophers, psychologists, and spiritual teachers who all rejected the struggle to dominate or master it.
- It sketches a kind of – while also, it turns out, being better for sustained productivity over the long haul.

# DEEP DIVE



## The Problem

- trying to do more, better, faster.
- It's one of the most highly valued and sought-after qualities in modern society.
- opposite it leads to even more "busyness".
- There is technically an endless list of things you can do.
- What "matters" or what's "important" is subjective.
- important, meaningful or obligatory. It's a never ending loop.
- Ironically, getting more things done faster simply generates even more things for you to do.
- yourself spending on the least meaningful things."
- In other words,
- This is because the more you believe that you can get everything done, the less you will question whether any given activity is the best use of your time.

## The Idea

- **not**
- Instead of trying to clear the decks, decline to clear the decks. Focus instead on what's truly of greatest consequence.
- Break the illusion that you can make time for everything, and accept the truth

## Take Action:

How many things do you have scheduled tomorrow?

Challenge yourself to remove tasks from your list, and commit to not doing them.

## Chapter 3. Facing Finitude

### The Problem

"Finitude": What we can actually achieve and do within our lives has a severe set of limitations.

One of them is time: assuming you live to be eighty, you only have about four thousand weeks.

In fact it is less than this because of reality:

- You only get four thousand weeks if you actually live till you're eighty, and that's far from guaranteed.
- 
- you have are limited within the tight range of your current circumstances.
- Because time is limited, every choice you make closes off the possibilities of countless others.

### The Idea

To live a full and authentic life, you have to realize that you don't actually possess or control your time. Embrace the reality of your limitations and use it as your lens for making choices with your time.

and cannot experience everything:

- Focus on enjoying the tiny slices of experience you do have time for.
- Free yourself from the burden of regret on (imagined) missed opportunities.
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## Chapter 4: Becoming a Better Procrastinator



3. \_\_\_\_\_, and order them by priority.

make a decision around that?

## Chapter 5 & 6: Attention and Interruptions

### The Problem

Distractions are a fact of life that hurt our limited time. But we go about trying to master distractions the wrong way:

- Trying to become completely immune to distractions and achieving complete control over your attention is impossible.
- Getting rid of the symptoms does not address the root – that we distract ourselves because we do not want to confront the reality in front of us. (e.g. when the work in front of you is boring and tedious, your mind naturally wants to escape through distractions regardless of what techniques you use)
- By trying to brute force our attention we are missing a far greater damage to our lives – the fact that even if we “win” against distractions, it doesn’t make you any happier. Instead you feel even more pressure, whether from external

still gone.

Modern day distractions have far deeper consequences than just the time we spend on them

- Because the distractions have an agenda – action, opinion, or bias in subtle ways.
- They affect your values, choices and judgement – which have a far greater and more lasting impact on your life.
- To make matters worse, these changes happen over time and you often don’t

- You can be getting everything done, overcoming distractions, and being super productive every second with your time – but it's all meaningless if your attention is spent experiencing stress and dissatisfaction just to achieve that.

Take Action:





## Chapter 8: You Are Here

### The Problem

We are obsessed with "using" time well without realizing it creates false expectations:

- Time is treated as a means to an end, rather than something to be experienced.
- The result is that we are always living mentally in the future, believing "real" happiness or satisfaction is always around the corner... but in reality never reached.
- Or we commoditize our time, such as the "billable hour" making us measure intangible things in terms of money (e.g. how much is watching your son's play at school worth?)
- **'ō d** *get my workload under control/get my candidate elected/find the right romantic partner/sort out my psychological issues, then... I can relax, and the life I was always meant to be living can begin."*

### The Idea

Even if we're mentally in the future, we are in fact, only ever living in the moment:

- The past is already gone, and the future doesn't actually exist yet.
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### Take Action:

Take 15 minutes today to be in the present moment – through a mindful focus exercise, walking meditation, or focusing on your breathing. Use the sense of calm

make some changes.

## Chapter 9: Recovering Rest

### The Problem

We feel pressure against enjoying leisure time only for the sake of pleasure:

- We equate leisure or idleness with no future goal as laziness and wasting time.
- It begins to feel as though you're failing at life, in some indistinct way, if you're not treating your time off as an investment in your future.
- The consequence of justifying leisure only in terms of its usefulness for other things
- that it begins to feel vaguely like a chore and further degrades the value of it.

This also affects our attitude toward rest:

- Increasingly, we deny ourselves the chance to rest—becoming anxious when we
- Instead we tend to put off rest until the very last moment to "make the best use" of our time... without understanding the intangible penalties to our mental and physical health.

### The Idea

Just like some religions or organizations, you need to enforce time for leisure and rest:

- True leisure and rest should not be bound to some productive "usefulness" but done for its own sake.
- This is called an "Atelic Activity", where value isn't derived from its telos, or ultimate aim.

### Take Action:

Give yourself \_\_\_\_\_ this week to *devote entirely* to a restful or leisure activity... that has *nothing to do* with any future goal or responsibility.

- reading a book, taking a nap, going for a walk
- spend time on a hobby you already have, or develop a new one



## Take Action:

What's something you're always rushing to do? Washing the dishes? Getting dressed? Taking a shower? Today, assign yourself three times the amount of time you regularly spend on that activity and don't allow yourself to stop until that allotted time is over.

## The Problem

Practicing patience is hard because it feels passive:

- The more you wait, the longer it seems like you'll have to continue waiting.
- In our modern society waiting is equated to wasting time, so much that it can create feelings of physical painful or mental discomfort for many people.
- On the other hand, impatience is like a drug addiction because it holds off the pain of having to wait for a result that's out of your control.

## The Idea

present moment.

- Patience is not simply doing nothing, it's the ability to resist the urge to hurry.
- When you are impatient, you're racing for a quicker result – which is often far from the best result if only you had patience to let reality take it's course.
- Ironically, because you have better awareness of the problem.

The 3 Rules of Patience:

- - Problems are opportunities at learning experiences, and not just "to be dealt with". That means that the process of dealing with problems are are actually the essence of life and what makes it meaningful.
- - Just like compound interest, incremental (e.g. daily) progress is much more sustainable and has a far larger impact than big one off efforts that you can't repeat consistently.
- - Nothing is every truly original. All inventions are inspired from other ideas. Trying to be unique for the sake of being different is a trap. The only way to be truly original is to invest enough effort to build a foundation in something to the point that you reach your own boundaries.

## Take Action:

Try out "Rule #2: Embrace radical incrementalism" this week.

Pick a project or action that you need to spend time on and instead of binging a few hours at it in one shot, spread it out to strictly small bite-sized sessions each day. For example, writing your report in strictly 15 minute sessions each day. When the 15 minutes are over, you stop – no matter how much you want to keep going!

## Chapter 12: The Loneliness of the Digital Nomad

### The Problem

Isolating ourselves in order to gain more control (e.g. becoming a "digital nomad") has a

- Every gain in personal time freedom is at the cost of a corresponding loss in how easy it is to coordinate your time with other people's.
- The digital nomad's lifestyle lacks the shared rhythms required for deep relationships to take root.
- This degrades the quality of your life, as you will miss valuable shared social connections and interactions – instead, spending most of your "free" time by yourself. In the long run this is generally harmful to any healthy relationships.

### The Idea



# Chapter 14: The Human Disease

## The Problem

To be human is to be challenged by our limits. To believe otherwise is doomed to fail:

- Time can never fully be mastered no matter how hard we try.
- We will never fully be "on top of things" as there will always be more demands on our time.
- This struggle can never be won or resolved, because life is simply about making choices with our limited time.

## The Idea

Accepting the full reality about the limitations of our time will give us what we truly want... to actually live your life meaningfully:

- \_\_\_\_\_ that matter to you, for its own sake, right now, in this moment.

To understand where you stand, you can ask yourself the \_\_\_\_\_ :

1. Where in your life or your work are you currently pursuing comfort, when what's called for is a little discomfort?
2. \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix: Ten Tools for Embracing Your Finitude

- Keep two to-do lists, one "open" and one "closed".
- number of entries, ten at most. The rule is that you can't add a new task until one's completed.
- Establish predetermined time boundaries for your daily work.

### 2. Serialize, serialize, serialize.

- Focus on one big project at a time (or at most, one work project and one non-work project) and see it to completion before moving on to what's next.

### 3. Decide in advance what to fail at.

- Nominate in advance whole areas of life in which you won't expect excellence of yourself, and focus your time and energy more effectively.
- to aim to do the bare minimum at work for some aspects of life (say, two months) and then switch so that in the long run they all get a chance in the spotlight.

left to complete.

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- To combat digital distractions,
  - 
  - to grayscale.
  - Choose devices with only one purpose (e.g. the Kindle e-Book Reader).
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- Pay more attention to every moment, however mundane.
  - Dive more deeply into the life you already have and the things you're already doing.
  - Don't be afraid of doing the same things differently, like taking a different route to work, going for unplanned walks, and taking up drawing or journaling.
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