A person with long hair

Description automatically generated with low confidence

When There’s Not Enough Time

November 28, 2021

Well hello Friends. I hope you guys had an amazing week!

For those in the U.S., I hope you had a wonderful Thanksgiving and that you got to spend it with the people or doing the things that really matter to you.

I had a relaxing day, and I loved every minute of it.

But yesterday, I looked at the calendar and realized it’s almost December! I say it every year, but I honestly don’t know where the time went.

And I felt that familiar panic when I realized there’s only a month left in the year. And it’s a **super busy** month. Which means I won’t have much TIME to finish the things I wanted to get done this year.

Before I go any further, I want to point out that all those things I’m telling myself about time are just stories I’m telling myself. They’re not true.

They’re just things my brain makes **time** mean. It’s how I tend to think about time as it relates to defined periods of time and my goals.

This made me think about what the things we tell ourselves about time. Specifically, why so many of us today believe we don’t have “enough time” or why we’re constantly feeling “pressed for time.”

And that’s what we’re going to talk about today. So let’s dive in.

We all have a different relationship with time.

For me, the time issue came up for me because of where we’re at in the year.

I like to be goal-oriented and there are certain points in the year when I naturally look back and evaluate how I’m doing with my goals. I do this to evaluate whether “I’ve used my time wisely.” And for me July and December are the two times of the year when I do this.

But my outcome is usually completely different for me in July than it is in December. And it has to do with how I look at time.

In July when I look back to see how I’m doing against my goals, I feel motivated. Even if I have mixed results or even if I haven’t even started on them yet.

That’s because I’ll tell myself things like “Well, I may not have gotten to that yet, but I still have six months left in the year.”

And I’m making that mean that I still have plenty of time left in the year to get things done. This makes me feel motivated. And I’m usually inspired to dive back in with renewed focus and energy.

But in early December, it’s a completely different experience for me.

Now we’re at the end of the year. So, when I look back to see how I’m doing against my goals, I tend to feel panicked because I don’t have ‘a lot of time left’ to go after that goal. I tell myself that the ‘year is basically behind me and it’s too late’ to do get anything accomplished.

This makes me feel demotivated. And that usually means I don’t do a thing about my goals. I just try to sweep them under my mental rug, so I don’t have to think about them and I tell myself “I’ll add those to the list next year.”

So, I’ve got this container view of time. Instead of viewing time as a continuum that’s ongoing, at least when it comes to my goals, I view time in buckets and tell myself that my goals need to be accomplished in that amount of time.

Of course, none of that is true. But it sure sounds true. At least to me.

The truth is we can start our goals anytime. And what difference does it honestly make if we accomplish them within the calendar year or not? It’s completely made up. And yet, it’s something I’ve done my whole life.

Can you relate to this?

With my clients I’ve noticed this usually comes up with weight loss. Like ‘do I have enough time to get to my goal weight before swimsuit season?’ and if not, ‘oh well, there’s not enough time so bring on the cupcakes.’ Right?

Or for you, the time thing might be different.

You might be a parent with several kids, all of whom are involved in activities. And that, coupled with your job and daily life might have you in a constant state of feeling like ‘there’s not enough time’ to get everything done. Or to maybe tackle some of your personal goals.

And while you’re legitimately busy, you might still find yourself endlessly scrolling Instagram. Or getting lose in binge-watching the new seasons of Selling Sunset which I did myself on Wednesday night.

What about THAT time? The vegging out time?

It’s always interesting to me how I can feel there’s ‘not enough time’ to do the things I want to do because I’m ‘so busy’ and yet ‘did I really just spend four hours watching Selling Sunset?”

What other things could have done with those four hours if I had made a conscious choice of how to spend the time versus just plopping down in front of Netflix.

It’s an interesting question.

According to the book **Pressed for Time**, we live in an age of paradox when it comes to time.

We work as much as (if not less than) people did half a century ago and most of us at less physically taxing jobs. And yet we experience more ‘scarcity of time’ than we have at any point in human history.

The book calls this ‘the time-pressure paradox.’ And says that it’s driven by three things:

1. The rapid pace of technological change (so all those sexy little gadgets and techy inventions that steel our time)
2. The acceleration of social change (constantly shifting business, family, and societal structures)
3. The acceleration of the pace of life (driven in large part by the tech and social change)

There are endless books, software programs and tech devices that promise to help us improve our relationship with time. To help us improve our productivity and organization so we can have ‘more time’ for the things that matter.

And while some of those things might give us some relief, they won’t fully solve the problem.

Because the root cause of your time-perception issue is your brain.

Time pressure comes down to believing that we don’t have enough time to do what we want to do. And that sentence says it all.

**Enough time. To do. What we want to do.**

According to research, we can find the source of our problem in our own mindsets.

After all, think about the way I twist my brain when it comes to time. I have this very limited view of time as a container. And I tend to view my ability to accomplish things as whether or not I can do it within that container of time.

Like getting promoted within the calendar year.

Or losing weight before swimsuit season or my next birthday.

But time is a continuum. So where did that idea even come from?

Why don’t I view NOW as the perfect time to START anything? And who cares WHEN I finish? Whether it’s within the next few months or few years. Why does the container of time mean anything to me?

It’s something my brain came up with earlier in my life and it got programmed in and now I have all this pressure I put on myself to achieve things by x date.

It’s stressful.

And while at times it can be motivating, I’d venture to say that way of thinking about time is more limiting than empowering.

And what about the busy working mom who never has the time to get the gym but still manages to stay up to date on the latest seasons of The Real Housewives.

Again, not judging. I just lost four hours last Wednesday night to Selling Sunset. So instead of getting to the gym, I just vegged out with a glass of red wine (or two) and got lost in the dysfunctional glamorous lives they live.

Here’s a four-part approach to getting underneath your own time scarcity issues. And by the way, this works for any other challenge you have.

**#1. Notice what’s happening when you’re feeling rushed or pressed for time**

When you feel that anxiousness or demotivated feeling, get in touch with is causing it. What’s happening?

**#2 Examine what you’re thinking**

Do what we call a thought download. It’s easy. For each specific situation when this comes up, just take a minute, and write down everything you’re thinking about that situation is causing you to feel rushed or pressed for time.

For this, I like to do one sentence per line.

And just keep writing until you run out of thoughts. There’s huge value to seeing these thoughts down on paper.

**#3. Be curious about your thoughts.**

Now review your thoughts. Don’t judge them. Instead, be curious about them. And look for where you’re telling yourself things that simply aren’t true when it comes to time.

Like for me, as I examined my own thoughts about time and goals, I realized that I was looking at time as a limited container. As if time had specific start and end points and so, I would only allow myself to start important big things if I felt I had enough time to completely finish it within that contained window.

But once I became aware of that thought and examined it, I realized it not true. Its arbitrary way of thinking about time that got programmed in at some point. But it’s not a particularly helpful way of looking at it.

For example, if my goal was to lose 20 pounds, there’s just as much value in starting that journey NOW instead of waiting until January 1st, when, in my old way of looking at time as a container, I’d have the whole year to accomplish it. Sure, if I start on December 1st, I might only lose 5-10 pounds by end of the month instead of the full 20 but that’s okay. I’m just further ahead when Jan 1st rolls around, right?

Another example is how I told myself there wasn’t time to go to the gym on Wednesday, but I didn’t give a thought to spending four hours binge-watching a full season of Selling Sunset on Netflix. Now this one wasn’t too hard to figure out.

And honestly, it had zero to do with time. Not having the time was just an excuse. The truth is I didn’t want to go to the gym, right? So, for me, when I’m facing something hard that I sorta don’t want to do, I’ll usually soothe myself by doing something that FEELS good. And for me that day, it was about some serious Netflixing time. So, my telling myself it was about time scarcity wasn’t even true.

I was just avoiding going to the gym.

That’s the value of noticing when you’re feeling pressed for time and examining the thoughts behind it. Because what you’ll be able to identify the stories that you’re telling yourself about time.

You’ll have your own beliefs to uncover. Because we all have our own ways of looking at time.

**#4 Decide what you want to believe instead.**

Now that you know what you’re thinking and you took the time to examine where your thoughts are leading you astray, you can simply choose some new thoughts you want to have about time.

It’s just about deciding new things you want to believe. And when you feel your old-time scarcity thoughts coming up, just shift into one of the new ones you come up with.

For me, I’ve decided to change how I think about goals and time.

Instead of looking at time as a container, which I didn’t even realize I was doing until I did some self-coaching last week, I have a new approach I’m going to use instead. Now, if there’s something big that I want to do, I’ve decided to tell myself “I can start anytime I want” or “Now is the perfect time to get started.”

These thoughts shift me out of my time scarcity or time as a container narrative and into empowerment and motivation.

That’s because with these new thoughts, I’m no longer thinking about whether “I’ll get it done in time” or whether “there’s enough time.” And instead, I’m “focusing on the goal or outcome” itself. So, in this new scenario, it doesn’t matter when I start or finish. Only that I DO.

**Bottom line, be aware of how you’re spending your time if time scarcity is a regular thing for you.**

Here, it’s helpful to journal for a week or two, taking note of the hours each day that you spend doing mindless or buffering activities.

Like Netflixing. Facebooking. Talking on the phone.

Many times, when we don’t have enough time to get to the things that we say we want to do, it’s because we’re spending time doing things that we don’t even realize we’re doing.

It’s amazing how fast an hour of watching Netflix goes by, right?

But the important question for you to ask is, “is that how you want to spend that hour?”

Maybe it is. We all deserve a little downtime. But just be sure you like your reason for doing it and that it’s not keeping you from doing something else that might be hard or uncomfortable or tedious but that you might think is actually more important.

With practice, you can change your relationship with time. And when you do, life gets a lot more peaceful. And we all deserve some of that.

Until next time, make it a great week my friends.