



## To Make Time, Take Time

**If** time were an animal, it would be on the endangered species list. At least that's how it seems: Too much to do, too many places to be, too little time to do it all.

On the job, in school, at home, we are increasingly imprisoned by the perception that time is a scarce and limited resource. We rush from one commitment or activity to another and believe that we haven't a minute to spare. We yearn for more time, yet we often feel anxious and guilty when idle.

Is this how life is supposed to be?

No! Nor does it have to be.

But until we change our relationship to time, our lives will continue to speed away from us—at enormous cost to our health and to direct experience of ourselves and the world around us.

"There is no issue, no aspect of human life, that exceeds this in importance," says Jacob Needleman, author of *Time and the Soul*. "The destruction of time is literally the destruction of life."

When we learn to shift time, our relationships become more rewarding, our time spent alone is richer, our aging is more satisfying, our work is more fruitful and our stress and anxiety are less paralyzing, or even nonexistent.

To allow time to "breathe" more in your life, try some or all of the following suggestions from Stephan Rechtschaffen, author of *Timeshifting*, as well as others. See if your reservoir of time starts to refill.

**Pause.** Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Han suggests taking a deep breath before answering the phone. Other conscious pauses

**"If you are impatient with your microwave, you might think about what that says about your life."**

—Allison Quattrocchi

throughout the day—a moment of silence before each meal, sitting in the car a few minutes before entering the house after work—help us to "come home" to ourselves.

**Carve out idle time alone.** Greek philosopher Aristotle noted that "nature requires us not only to be able to work well but also to idle well." Just because you're not doing anything doesn't mean that nothing's getting done!

**Live as fully as possible in the present moment.** When we leave behind thoughts of the past or future, we can experience time more peacefully, says Eckhart Tolle, author of *The Power of Now*.

**Toss your schedule whenever you can.** Even better, *schedule* spontaneous time and then surprise yourself.

**Examine underlying reasons for your busyness.** What emotions would you experience if you weren't so busy? What would you wish for? Emotional work is challenging but essential if we are to stop running from our hearts.

**Play.** Whether you sing, wrestle, paint, shake your bootie—whatever—play helps us to step outside of ordinary time.

**Create time retreats.** Once a year or so, choose to do something for a week or more that allows you to shift into a different rhythm—something where you can just "be" without the need for doing anything.

**Spend time in nature.** We can't help but slow down in nature's unhurried pace. Watching a soaring bird or examining a flower can seem to stretch a minute into an hour.

We can learn to experience time more purposefully and meaningfully—so that it's not an enemy robbing us of the joy of life. We needn't be at time's mercy. When we change our awareness, we can actually experience the gifts of time. ✧

## 10 Fears That Keep Us From What We Want

*Fear often stands between us and our ability to make decisions, take actions, ask for what we want—even to know what we really want. It is the gatekeeper of our comfort zone. But as poet-philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "He has not learned the lesson of life who does not every day surmount a fear." Below are 10 fears that commonly get in our way.*

**1. Fear of being judged.** Needing approval from family or peers can keep us from going after dreams and goals.

**2. Fear of rejection.** Rejection just means that someone else has a different opinion.

**3. Fear of emotional pain.** Rather than incapacitate us, painful feelings can sharpen our sense of joy and gratitude.

**4. Fear of embarrassment.** Making mistakes publicly is awful only when we let ourselves feel ashamed.

**5. Fear of being alone/abandoned.** A strong sense of self-worth and what we can offer the world reduces this fear.

**6. Fear of failure.** A biggie for most of us and born of the notion that it's not OK to fail.

**7. Fear of success.** More responsibility, more attention, pressure to perform can be frightening when we don't believe in ourselves.

**8. Fear of expressing feelings.** An authentic life means being willing to express our true feelings to our loved ones, colleagues, adversaries—even ourselves.

**9. Fear of intimacy.** Emotional intimacy—really being seen by another—can be as scary as sexual intimacy.

**10. Fear of the unknown.** The unknown can be exciting and vast if we shift our fear to curiosity. ✧

## A Letter From *Christopher Ann Vallier* LCSW, JD



For many of us, time seems to have sped up to the point that we feel constantly at a deficit. “I don’t have the time” is epidemic. Even nature’s pace quickens this time of year, with buds and shoots hurrying to show themselves.

But time doesn’t have to be an enemy that we curse. The cover article for this issue looks at how we can befriend time, how taking time off often seems to create extra time. It’s no easy task and requires us to set aside our fight with the clock and begin to listen to our hearts, trusting that all will get done that needs to be done.

The page 3 article on nondefensive communication describes another battle we may be waging without even knowing it: the way we speak to others. The sidebar examines ways we can take the war out of our language.

The Vitality quiz provides some direction in assessing the difference between caring for others and caretaking, in which we take inappropriate responsibility for others’ emotions and actions. The Top 10 explores the fears that hold us back from living the life we want, while the back page article addresses that perfection-driven inner voice that wants us to believe that we’re not enough.

As spring begins to warm and awaken the sleeping earth, may you experience a renewed and expanded sense of time, of your language, of possibilities, of yourself!

## Are You Taking Care or Caretaking?



Though composed of the same two words, taking care and caretaking are vastly different in practice. Taking care is healthy caregiving—whether for children, spouses, friends or parents—that includes drawing appropriate boundaries, taking your own needs into consideration and knowing when to say no. Caretaking, on the other hand, is about rescuing, constantly placing others’ needs before your own and taking inappropriate responsibility for others’ emotions and actions.

The difference is in the intention: Are you in service (taking care) or is there a payoff (caretaking)? Payoffs are usually subtle. Care-taking may help you relieve guilt, feel better about yourself, or get attention or validation. But there is a cost to caretaking, as well:

Caretaking can result in resentments, emotional and physical depletion, and/or feeling disconnected from your inner self. Complete this questionnaire to discover how much caretaking you do.

### True False

- 1. I feel safer when giving rather than receiving.
- 2. I am “on call” to friends with problems at any hour of the day or night.
- 3. I’m great at being nurturing and compassionate with others, but not so great at giving it to myself.
- 4. I feel responsible for others’ thoughts, feelings, behaviors, problems, choices, well-being, health and destiny.
- 5. It’s more important to me to please other people than to please myself.
- 6. I hate to see others feeling sad or angry or jealous; I try to fix the situation so that they don’t feel bad any more.
- 7. I prefer to focus on the needs of others; if I focus on my own emotions and needs, I feel selfish and afraid that the other person won’t want to be around me.
- 8. I take care of other people by fixing their flaws for them. I just want to help them be the best they can be.
- 9. I feel unappreciated much of the time. I give and give and give, and no one ever notices or gives anything back.
- 10. I feel controlled by the needs of others, yet my needs are never met.
- 11. I often give unsolicited advice. I really want to help others see the light.
- 12. I give away my energy to others in order to be loved and accepted.
- 13. I grow resentful when others are not willing to “give” like I do.
- 14. I see other people as the source of my problems.
- 15. I don’t really know what I need and want—but I always know what other people need, want and should do.
- 16. I don’t wait to be asked—if I see that someone needs me, I just jump right in and help.
- 17. I’m often exhausted from taking care of everyone around me.
- 18. I’ve always been the Giver in my relationships.

It can be hard to differentiate between helping that truly helps and helping that actually harms. You may find that detaching with love is the most helpful approach. You can still love people without needing to fix them. If you have questions about caretaking or any other matter, please don’t hesitate to call.

## Taking the “War” Out of Our Words With Nondefensive Communication

You’re sitting down to dinner with friends, when one looks over and asks, “Do you *always* butter your bread that way?”

Ha, ha, you laugh. But inside, your story is going like this: *Who does he think he is, Mr. Manners? What’s wrong with the way I butter my bread? Jerk. He’s always so critical.*

Freeze frame.

If something as minor as buttering bread can provoke such feelings of defensiveness, imagine what can happen with emotional issues at home, boundary issues at work or ethical issues in our larger community.

What happens, says Sharon Ellison, M.S., is essentially war.

Ellison, founder of Powerful Non-Defensive Communication, teaches

that the way we communicate with each other uses the same principles and tactics we would use in physical combat, based on the belief that we must protect ourselves by being defensive. As soon as we feel any threat, either of not getting what we want or of being harmed or put down in some way, we choose from among the three basic defensive war maneuvers: surrender, withdrawal or counterattack.



“It’s a sad commentary on our use of human imagination,” Ellison says, “to realize that for centuries we have essentially used a war model as the foundation upon which we have built our entire system for spoken and written communication.”

O.J. Harvey studied this connection between language and violence when he was a psychology professor at the University of Colorado. Using random samples of pieces of literature from countries around the world, he tabulated the frequency of words that classify and judge people—the types of words that often provoke defensive reactions. Not surprisingly, he found a high correlation between the frequent use of such words and the incidence of violence.

The myth, says Ellison, is that defensiveness will protect us, that to be open is to be vulnerable and weak. On the contrary, it is being defensive that weakens us. Consider this: When you are defensive, do you feel safe? Competent? Confident? Do you learn well? Power struggles and unnecessary, destructive conflicts are the more likely outcome.

Ellison, who estimates that we use 95% of our communications energy being defensive, describes the six most common defensive reactions as follows:

**Surrender-Betray.** We give in but defend the person’s mistreatment of us, taking the blame ourselves.

**Surrender-Sabotage.** We cooperate outwardly but undermine the person in some way. Passive-aggressive behavior falls into this category.

**Withdrawal-Escape.** We avoid talking to someone by not answering, leaving the room or changing the subject.

**Withdrawal-Entrap.** We refuse to give information as a way to trap the other person into doing something inappropriate or making a mistake.

**Counterattack-Justify.** We let someone know she is wrong to be upset with us, explaining our own behavior and making excuses.

**Counterattack-Blame.** We attack or judge the other to defend ourselves.

Changing how we communicate as individuals—learning that we can protect ourselves and have greater influence without using a war-based language—will not only shift our own personal and professional lives, but can ultimately lead toward a more peaceful world. \*

## AVOID PROVOKING DEFENSIVENESS (TRY SOME NEW TACTICS)

**Make clear requests for specific actions, rather than using vague, abstract language.** “I just want you to treat me fairly” is likely to cause the other person to deny (defensively) ever having been unfair. Clarify exactly which concrete actions you would like for the other person to take, such as: “I would like you to give me as long a break as the other employees.”

**Avoid blaming and judging others.** The more people hear judgment and criticism, the more they tend to invest their energy in self-defense or counterattack. The more directly we can connect our feelings to our needs, the easier it is for others to respond compassionately.

**Ask questions to gather information.** The goal is to understand accurately what the other person means, believes or feels. Come from a place of true, neutral curiosity. Avoid assumptions, as well as questions that actually serve to convey your own opinion.

**Verify your observations and/or assumptions.** Avoid stating opinion as fact or trying to persuade others to agree. For example: “When I hear you saying you are in a good mood, and at the same time I see you rolling your eyes and shrugging, then I imagine that something is wrong but you don’t want to tell me. Then I feel frustrated, and I’m not sure if I should ask you more questions or leave you alone.”

**Avoid exaggerations using words such as always and never.** These often provoke defensiveness rather than understanding. Observations of others’ actions are best when free from evaluation or opinion, and when they simply describe actions. For example, rather than “You never do what I want,” try “The last three times I initiated an activity, you said you didn’t want to do it.”

**Listen deeply to the expression of feelings and needs beneath defensive or aggressive statements.** For example, if your teenager says, “Back off! I’m doing my best,” he may be feeling worried and needing acknowledgment for his effort. When we understand a person’s underlying needs and feelings, it is a lot easier to find compassion in our hearts. \*

## The Journey to Who We Want to Be Is Rooted in the Acceptance of Who We Are Now

# Enough With Not Being Enough!

*Not smart enough, not pretty enough, not strong enough, not talented enough, not loving enough, not disciplined enough, not brave enough...*

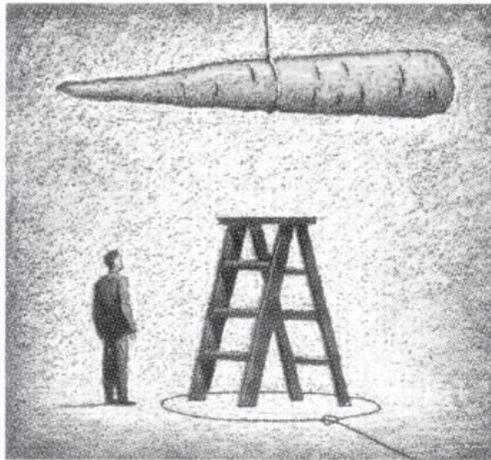
If you're caught in the "not enough" trap, nothing about you ever seems quite good enough. Standards by which you measure yourself become inhumane. Successes are rarely enjoyed, for you always feel as if you must do better. Perceived failures are magnified. Life becomes a quest for utter perfection—like the carrot dangling in front of a horse, it is chased but never truly experienced.

"If I'm 98% perfect in anything I do, it's the 2% I've messed up I'll remember when I'm through," begins a little ditty. The problem begins when we allow others—family members, our spouse, friends, a boss, popular culture—to define who we are or are not. Unfortunately, these roots of self-image stretch far back into childhood, when the negative messages we received from our parents imprinted us with a feeling of being stupid, fat, lazy, weak or otherwise inadequate.

But as adults, we can choose to truly accept ourselves—with all our strivings, quirks, faults and shortcomings—as being enough right now. The more we do that, the less vulnerable we are to the opinions of others.

Perfection makes liberal use of comparisons. The next time you get that feeling of not being enough, stop to examine the standard you are using to gauge yourself.

A playful way to look at the power of comparisons is this: Compare your own physical measurements to those of a per-



son who embodies ideal physical beauty by contemporary media standards. Dwell on the differences.

Then list all the achievements you've accomplished up to your current age. Be extra thorough. Now compare your list to that of composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart at age 12. By that time, Mozart spoke

15 languages and had composed numerous major pieces of music, including an opera. Dwell on the differences.

If you're *perfectly* miserable at this point, your job is to notice how negative comparisons affect your available energy for work, family, relationships—and for yourself. How do they block the real you from showing up?

Here are some more questions to ponder:

- How is it that if something is not perfect, then it is nothing?
- Is it possible to accept myself and treat myself in a loving and caring manner regardless of my accomplishments or lack of them?
- Why must I be outstanding or special?
- Why does failing at something transform me into being a failure?
- What would my life be like with more humane standards?
- Can I be satisfied with progress, not perfection?

Life is a never-ending process of learning and growing in skills, experience, wisdom and compassion. Most of us are not spectacular in any category. And yet each one of us is worthy, lovable, competent, effective, attractive and smart enough to live lives of contribution, caring and value. ✧

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