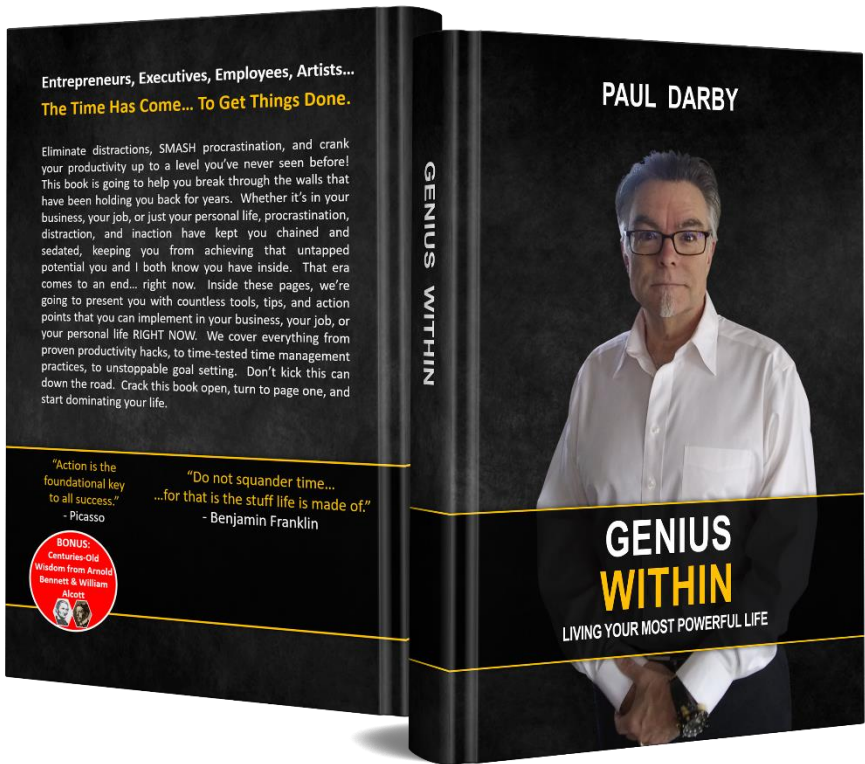


GENIUS WITHIN

By Paul Darby



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The Time Has Come... To Get Things Done.

Eliminate distractions, SMASH procrastination, and crank your productivity up to a level you've never seen before! This book is going to help you break through the walls that have been holding you back for years. Whether it's in your business, your job, or just your personal life, procrastination, distraction, and inaction have kept you chained and sedated, keeping you from achieving that untapped potential you and I both know you have inside. That era comes to an end... right now. Inside these pages, we're going to present you with countless tools, tips, and action points that you can implement in your business, your job, or your personal life **RIGHT NOW**. We cover everything from proven productivity hacks, to time-tested time management practices, to unstoppable goal setting. Don't kick this can down the road. Turn to section one and start dominating your life.

SECTION ONE: PRODUCTIVITY HACKS

Some Stats:

The average US office employee spends only 2 hours and 53 minutes on productive work daily. 85 percent of workers report being actively disengaged in the office, costing US companies \$550 billion from lost productivity. The average employee spends 13 hours a week attending to emails, which means that 28 percent of the workweek is taken by emails alone.

Clearly this economy has got a bit of a problem...

This section will cover a series of proven productivity hacks that will help you get your butt in gear and start getting things done.

Don't just read.

Apply.

Let's get started:

Cultivate self-discipline

Self-discipline helps you stay focused in order to reach your goals. It's a crucial asset for any team member because it helps them get things done and creates a can-do attitude that

In a working environment where employees are encouraged to develop and practice self-discipline, the need for supervisory intervention is greatly reduced. Here are some ways to help cultivate self-discipline at work:

- Make sure your employees know exactly what is expected of them. If they need to improve at any aspect of their job, let them know. Spend time helping them understand how they can adjust their focus and priorities
- If you see any examples of self-initiative and self-discipline, praise the individual

publicly and offer your support when necessary.

- Encourage them to visualize the results that their efforts will have on the team and the organization. This will help them see past the small details and have something worth striving for.
- Condition them to give their best at work and build ownership of tasks. When they become owners of certain tasks, they have more freedom when making decisions which, in turn, improves self-discipline.

Set self-imposed deadlines

When tasks don't have an exact deadline, it can be tempting to push them back until eventually nothing gets completed. Encourage your team to set self-imposed deadlines. These deadlines create a false sense of urgency, helping your employees keep on task and avoid procrastination.

Self-imposed deadlines also create a manageable level of stress, so that your team members can focus and meet their goals. They're the perfect choice when your team often deals with open-ended projects or tasks.

Develop strong time management skills

One of the hallmarks of productivity is efficient time management. Teach your team to skillfully manage their time by organizing their life and responsibilities in such a way that they dedicate fewer neural resources for their work. Here are some tips to help you out:

- Encourage them to develop a routine and actively use calendars and task lists.
- Let them set their limitations. They shouldn't be afraid to say no, especially when accepting a task means overextending themselves. A realistic

workload will help them reduce stress and have better focus.

- Encourage them to get into the habit of practicing organizational skills both at work and in their personal lives.

List crucial results daily

Crucial results are essentially a list of tasks that should absolutely be completed during the day. Usually, crucial results are tasks that are critical in moving a project or goal forward. Ask your employees to list their top 3 crucial results at the beginning of every day. This would help both of you plan out each day and ensure that attention is given to the most important tasks.

Declutter and organize

Messes may seem harmless, but having too much clutter on your desk and work space can lead to emotional distress and chaos. Clutter distracts

you, bombards your mind with stimuli, and creates feelings of guilt.

Having less clutter will help you focus and waste less time. In fact, studies show that having less stuff can actually reduce your anxiety levels and increase your productivity. Check out the tips below to declutter and organize your workspace:

- Ask your team members to toss out old papers on their desk and create organize documents according to level of importance. Invest in a paper shredder.
- Keep personal items, trinkets, and decorations to a minimum.
- Get rid of bulky furniture and ensure that everyone has a clear path to enter, exit, and navigate around the office.
- Organize digital files. Delete old files on your desktop or store them in the cloud or an external hard drive. Have a labeling

system for your folders. Unsubscribe from irrelevant or non-essential email lists.

Create to-do lists

To-do lists give structure to your team's workday and provide them with a plan that they can follow. It's very satisfying to check off the tasks on the list once you're done with them. Make sure that these to-do lists are prepared the night before, so that you can start the day by looking at all the tasks that need to be done.

There are plenty of apps and organizational platforms that allow you to assign tasks, organize workflow and track work progress. By using digital to-do lists that can be shared and edited by the entire team, you can easily monitor everyone's work in one place.

Schedule your day

There are many ways to create a schedule. One of the most effective ones is to break your day into chunks of time, whether by 15 minutes or a full hour. Block your day into equal chunks of time and assign tasks for each one. This makes it easier for you to track progress - if you can't accomplish a task within that period of time, you'll know it's an area you'll need to pay more attention to.

As much as possible, try tackling the tasks that require the most focus or mental power in the morning, preferably as soon you get into the office. It's easier to complete these items when you're still fresh and full of energy.

Consolidate tasks

Rapidly switching back and forth between two tasks adversely affects your performance at both.

When you consolidate similar tasks, you can eliminate distractions and stop multitasking and switching tasks every now and then, both of which are actually antithetical to productivity.

Group or batch similar tasks and work on them at a specific day of the week or time of day. For example, you can answer all your emails in the morning and leave your afternoon free to do other tasks. You can also try completing small tasks such as updating social media or following up with a supplier within a 30-minute block to have more time for other more important work.

Prioritize tasks

Prioritizing tasks involves taking into account which tasks to focus on and choosing which tasks to put off for later or not do. Remember that there are tasks that you can delegate or complete in some other way.

Although prioritizing responsibilities is a huge part of being a leader or manager, it's not an easy endeavor, especially when the work is piling up. Nonetheless, keep in mind that if everything is important, then nothing actually is. If your employees are spending all day jumping between tasks, trying to complete all of them, they're wasting precious time and energy. Instead, focus on key tasks and assignments and get them off your to-do list.

Don't multitask

Contrary to popular belief, multi-tasking is not an efficient way to complete work. Trying to do so many things at the same time is more likely to result in lost time, inefficiencies, and disappointing results. If you want to get things done and done right, commit to your schedule and complete one task at a time.

Research shows that multitasking lowers ones IQ and reduces one's performance. It's a proven productivity killer. It's better to do one task and get excellent results instead of three tasks with mediocre outcomes. If you find your focus drifting towards another task or screen, resist temptation and give what you are doing your full attention.

Remove distractions

Distractions are a constant no matter what type of work you are doing or which industry your company is in. Social media, interruptions from coworkers, smartphone notifications, or outside noise can all damage team productivity because of attention switching. Each distraction causes you to switch your focus and it will take some time to regain the level of productivity you had before you got distracted.

Try the following recommendations to reduce the amount of distractions while you are working:

- Invest in noise-canceling headphones.
- Turn off your phone and social media notifications. Avoid texting or answering personal phone calls while you are working on key tasks.
- Only answer emails during a specific time of the day
- Stay away from uncomfortable or noisy work spaces. Move to a quieter environment, if possible

Keep meetings brief

Meetings have a real place in any business. They help make sure that everyone's on the same page, and help leaders and managers keep track of what's happening in the office. However, long or pointless meetings are a huge waste of time and

accomplish nothing. You'll most likely find that most employees dread going to them.

Here are some tips to remember if you want to keep your meetings short and simple and avoid wasting people's time and energy:

- Keep things brief. Have a specific goal for each meeting and make sure that all discussions focus on that agenda.
- Consider having a standing meeting to keep everyone's attention on the discussion.
- Make sure that only the people who need to be there are actually present. Don't bring in unnecessary people because that just leads to more time wasted for everyone involved.
- Remember that meetings are a two-way discussion. Try to avoid turning them into lectures. Give people a time limit when

they do speak and never let anyone monopolize the entire meeting.

- If you don't have anything to talk about, don't hold a meeting. Too many businesses waste time holding meetings at a specific day of the week just because everyone's already so used to them.

Use the cloud

Cloud-based apps are a great choice if you are looking to improve your team's productivity. They are also ideal when you have remote workers or if you offer flexible work opportunities for your team members.

While not all tasks can be done on the cloud, there are definitely some that can be done there for streamlining. Here are some examples of cloud-based apps that you can benefit from:

- Use a cloud-based app for your company's custom databases. This would make it easier for sales teams, for example, to view and monitor sales and inventory as well as input live sales and updates into the system even when they're on the road.
- Project management apps can help improve team and customer communication when your team is working on multiple projects.
- Upload documents and documentation on the cloud to make them easier and more convenient for everyone to access. As much as possible, steer clear from using emails to send out documents since this creates multiple versions. Have the original accessible to everyone.
- If you're having a tough time figuring out who's responsible for what, use a cloud-based task management app to make your life a lot easier.

Automate

If you are spending a lot of time on repetitive tasks every day, remember that there are other solutions that you can try to manage your time better. Automating helps improve business productivity by reducing the need for human input on simple, repetitive tasks. It's also the perfect option if there are tasks that need to be done but are beyond your direct expertise.

Here are some examples of tasks that can be automated for increased productivity and efficiency:

- Marketing tasks including reminder emails, follow up messages, and targeting specific customers for particular promotion
- Appointment scheduling and other administrative tasks
- Paying bills and updating records

- Approving common requests
- CRM updates
- Aggregating data for creation of business intelligence reports

Improve email management

One of the top guidelines to live by when it comes to dealing with emails is to never open them unless you actually have the time to respond. Opening emails when you don't have time to answer them takes away your focus on your current tasks. Plus, you'll have to spend time reading them again when you get the time to respond. Instead, let them sit on your inbox until you can actually focus on them. Aim to respond to email within two minutes or less.

For internal communication, consider using group chats and instant messaging tools to reduce your team's workload. Experiment with different

applications and platforms to determine which one works best for you and your team.

Limit mobile notifications

Your phone creates a world of distraction that can easily lead to minutes, if not hours, of wasted time. Unless you are actually using your phone to work, such as when you are promoting the company on social media, it's better to keep it away from your sight and turn off notifications from distracting apps. This will help you focus better on what you're working on.

Use the “do not disturb” mode on your phone to stop notifications from bother you while you're working. Another great tip is to block websites on your computer if you find yourself getting constantly distracted by your personal social media notifications and activities. There are browser extensions that you can use for this.

Manage your energy

Having the right mental state will ensure productivity at work. In order to be physically and mentally ready for a full day of work, you should have the energy needed to face the challenges that come your way. Here are some great habits to give you more energy:

- Eat healthy food to boost your brain power and avoid energy crashes. Avoid junk food and make sure that you observe a balanced diet.
- Regular exercise will keep you alert and energetic everyday. Exercise also reduces stress hormones and promotes growth factors in the brain required for new neural connections.
- Listen to your body's needs. For example, if you need protein every morning to be ready for work, then make sure that you have it.

- Make sure that make the most out of your mornings. It's the time of the day when you have the most energy and when you are most focused. Schedule the tasks that require more mental energy for this period.

Have a good night's rest

A good night's sleep is unparalleled. It can be tempting to sacrifice sleep in order to reach your goals and complete your tasks. This might work for you in the short-term. After all, you're spending more time working.

However, in the long-term, the lack of sleep will catch up with you. Sleepless nights often lead to inability to concentrate, impaired working memory and logical reasoning, higher stress levels, and adverse health effects. If you are not healthy, then you are most likely not productive. Make sure that you get 7 to 9 hours of sleep every

night. If you can't manage that much every night, take a short nap during the day.

Relieve stress

The leading cause of stress for American adults are pressures and fears at work. Excessively stressed employees are not good for your organization. However, when stress is managed wisely and used to motivate the team, it can be good for productivity. Your goal should be to combat burnout before it occurs.

Here are some ways for you to help your employees relieve excessive stress:

- Encourage them to prioritize their physical, emotional, and mental health. This also means that you should ensure that your company culture is communicative and healthy. Ensure that

there is an open dialogue between you and the rest of your team members.

- Adopt a stress relief routine that includes regular movement. For instance, encourage them to step outside for a walk after lunch or giving them 10 minutes to stretch or walk around after their coffee break.
- Take some members of the team with you if you need to go offsite.
- Everyone should be entitled to paid time off.
- Lead by example and show your employees that you value the things that would keep stress at bay, such as good sleep, exercise, and relaxation.

Stand more

Although standing at your desk doesn't burn more calories than if you are sitting, standing up more does help reduce your risk of developing

certain health conditions such as shoulder and back pain, heart disease, obesity, cancer, and premature death. Encourage your team to stand more by offering to get standing desks for those who are interested in them.

Another way to get your team to stand more is by holding standing meetings. These offer a great way for your team to focus on the agenda and also be able to disperse quickly. Just make sure that you have a preset agenda for all sessions. This would give the participants a better idea of what to expect so that they can prepare beforehand.

Implement a workplace wellness program

Having a workplace wellness program is an effective way to show your employees that care about their long-term health. After all, when your employees aren't taking sick days, they are present at work and being productive. This also

translates to lower healthcare and insurance costs for your organization.

Make sure that your wellness program aligns with the company culture for consistency. Here are some great tips to help you build an effective wellness program for your team:

- Collect feedback from your employees to ensure that you are implementing the most popular ideas. Use a survey to collect their ideas as well as to identify the barriers and concerns that prevent them from leading a healthier lifestyle.
- Look into creating or using a corporate wellness app. This would have several functions such as keeping track of sleep, counting daily steps, or getting motivational tips.
- Make sure that the program is optional so that you're not alienating some employees

while you are trying to pursue better health for everyone.

- Look for activities that would incorporate your team's friends and families. They are an integral part of your employees' lives and will help keep them more accountable and motivated.

Take breaks

Breaks are important for employees no matter what organization or industry they belong to. They are a vital part of the creative process of getting things done. Even a few minutes to walk around, chat with a colleague, go to the restroom, or get some coffee can do wonders for their productivity. Breaks give your brain some time to rest so that you can focus better when you return to your desk and your pending tasks.

Lunch breaks, in particular, should always be a part of your team's day. Excessive workload can

result in sustained stress, worker burnout, and inefficiencies. Lunch breaks can serve as a mental cleanse where people can rest, recharge, and reset so that they can be just as productive in the afternoon.

Be optimistic

Happy people are more productive. An entire body of research shows that employees who are happier are significantly more productivity than those who are not. Make sure that you cultivate optimism in the office so that your employees have something good to look forward to everyday. Negativity should have no place at work so learn to see opportunities in tough and challenging situations.

Foster a healthy work-life balance

Every organization is different so what a work-life balance for you may be completely different

from what it looks like for another organization. Find a good balance that works for your organization to show your employees that you prioritize their needs.

For example, you may realize that your employees are more productive when they spend less time in the office. You can also offer flexible work schedules or an unlimited vacation policy. If you operate strictly on a standard 9-to-5 schedule, find other ways to accommodate your team's personal needs. Furthermore, make sure that there is an open system of communication in the office.

Follow the Pareto Principle

The 80/20 rule, also known as the Pareto principle, the law of the vital few, or the principle of factor sparsity, states that in any project, 80 percent of the results come from 20 percent of the effort. It was created by Vilfredo Pareto, an

economist, who saw that 80 percent of the land in Italy was owned by 20 percent of the people. He started seeing the same thing in other parts of his life as well, and came up with the principle.

If you choose the right things to focus on, then 80 percent of the results you get could come from just 20 percent of the solid work you're doing. Focusing on the most crucial 20 percent can ensure that you are getting the results that you want. To manage and prioritize all of the tasks on your list, use an app or a web-based platform to keep you on track.

Try the Pomodoro Technique

Another Italian, Francesco Cirillo, invented the Pomodoro Technique in the 1980s. Named after a tomato-shaped kitchen timer, the Pomodoro Technique helps you cultivate intense focus to get a lot done in a short period of time. The Pomodoro Technique is powerful takes into

account the limits of the human attention span to get people to focus on a single task.

By building in periodic breaks, it ensures that you can work at a higher intensity for more of your day, and ultimately get more done. To use the Pomodoro Technique, follow a short set of steps:

- Set a timer for 25 minutes (does not need to be tomato-shaped)
- Work
- Take a 5-minute break when the timer goes off, and add a checkmark to a piece of paper
- Repeat
- When you have four check marks, take a longer break of 15-20 minutes

Use the 2-Minute Rule

Most people interpret this rule as completing any task at work that requires 2 minutes or less right

away, the 2-minute rule can actually kill employee productivity if you take it at face value and don't implement it correctly. To use the 2-minute rule properly, create a to-do list that includes all your tasks and activities for the day.

When you are creating this list, you'll realize that there are certain small tasks that seem like they can be done in a couple of minutes. Do them as soon as you can. However, make sure to come back to your list and finish it. Don't get bogged down in these small tasks and let them stop you from getting the more crucial tasks done for the day.

Schedule less time than necessary

There is definitely some benefits to gain from giving yourself less time than you think you'll need. Work will expand to fit the time you've set aside for it. What this means is that if you schedule an hour for a specific task, you're more

likely to use up that entire hour, even if you don't actually need the full hour to finish the task.

On the other hand, giving yourself less time will force you to get the work done in that time, so you can move on to the next task more quickly. You'll realize that giving yourself a shorter deadline will make sure that you go through your list of tasks more quickly.

Procrastinate productively

Procrastination isn't all bad when use that time to clean up, complete some of the smaller tasks on your to-do list or even take a quick break to rest and reset. These things can reset your mind, give you more energy, and reinvigorate your productivity.

You can also use procrastinate productively by thinking about why you're putting off the task. Some people will try and put off tasks because

they're perfectionists and would rather not do it instead of doing it poorly. Other people may find some thrill in being able to finish a task just in the nick of time.

Have daily morning huddles

Every morning, schedule a 15 minute huddle with your team to go over each person's crucial results for the day. A regular morning huddle will ensure that everyone is on the same page and will let you know where your help is necessary.

If you're finding it tough to allocate the time to this, schedule individual sit-downs with members of your team to review their work from the previous week and set expectations and objectives for the week. This will also allow you to come up with short-term goals and have enough time to revisit them. Consequently, you'll be able to better manage and measure your productivity at the end of the week.

Visualize workloads

When employees are unclear about what they're supposed to do, you'll see a lot of duplicate work or efforts. It can also result in certain tasks not getting done because one team member assumes that someone else is responsible for them. Both are forms of waste.

Visualizing work, priorities and assignments makes it clear who is working on what. Here are some of its crucial benefits:

- When an employee sees a list of tasks next to his or her name, which everyone can see, it can incentivize them to work harder and smarter so that their work is done on time.
- When they complete one task, having a well-defined list that they can access at any point allows them to move onto the next

item on that list right away, without having to wonder what they should do next.

- It gives you an ability to see which employees may require your assistance, which employees could handle more work, and who is performing better than expected.

Enable remote work

Remote work often results in more work done in less time which, in turn, boosts your team's productivity. Remember that even though a formal office works well for providing collective resources and energy, it can also be a source of productivity loss for many people. Your employees will often get interrupted by other people, while they are in the middle of work, to attend to certain issues or questions that may not really be urgent.

On the other hand, studies show that remote workers are more productive. They work more hours, take less sick leave, perform better, and are typically more engaged at work. Whether you offer employees certain days to work from home, or let them work on a schedule that they determine, remember that flexibility boosts both morale and productivity.

Delegate properly

One of the most common complaints about delegating work is that it gives the manager or leader more things to do. On top of doing their own work, they also have to supervise someone else's work. However, this isn't delegating at all. If you assign a task to a team member and then supervise them closely while they are working, you're micromanaging.

Delegating properly means that you'll have more time to spend on your own work. The important

thing to keep in mind is that you should match the right task to the right person. They should have the skills needed to complete the job. Furthermore, you should be able to trust them and leave them to get the job done right and on time.

Equip your team with the right tools

While you need to make sure that your team has the right skills for the job, the tools that they use also play a significant role in overall business performance. Choose the right set of tools to make their work easier and create a streamlined workflow.

Here are some examples of tools that can simplify your team members' work.

- Time and productivity tracking apps make it easier to monitor your team's hours and productivity with activity rates, so your

organization can enhance workplace efficiency.

- Collaboration apps promote and streamline teamwork. Being able to work together in real-time can do wonders for team chemistry, and also allows the free and natural flow of ideas.
- Communication apps do a terrific job of keeping conversations organized and messages easier to keep track of.

Use productivity metrics

In today's knowledge economy, businesses deal in ideas rather than widgets coming off an assembly line. Because of that, the traditional formula for productivity is no longer applicable. You can't just divide output by input to measure employee productivity.

To precisely and properly measure productivity for your team and organization, you'll need to use

productivity-measuring tools. Choose tools that allow you to track, simplify, and manage projects across your entire team in an intuitive and user-friendly way.

Efficiency vs productivity

Efficiency involves doing the same tasks with less resources. This means that in order to improve efficiency, your organization should consider reducing the amount of time and resources spent in producing a specific product or service. Essentially, improving efficiency entails streamlining.

On the other hand, productivity is intrinsically tied to performance. It involves doing more with the same amount of resources. Unlike efficiency, an improvement in productivity brings about a corresponding increase in the output of a certain product or service.

Cut out undeniable waste

A lot of managers make the mistake of saddling their teams with tasks and responsibilities that waste precious energy. While it is true that all jobs come with a certain level of administrative work, there should be a clear balance between doing crucial administrative duties and wasting time. Your goal is to ensure that your team is able to focus their time on valuable work.

Plan for the unplanned

In every workplace, team, and organization, nothing is absolutely certain. Estimating time and durations isn't always accurate, even with the best tools at hand. Although tracking time will help you determine how and where your team's time is spent, productivity is a product of working efficiently as much as it is a product of delivering results given a fixed amount of capacity.

To ensure productivity, manage expectations well. Don't overcommit because the work will continue to pile up. Your team will rush to meet deadlines and will most likely commit a bunch of careless mistakes. This doesn't mean that you want them working at a relaxed pace. Instead, you should have enough time to allow your unexpected commitments and tasks.

Incentivize performance

Performance incentives encourage employees to work harder and deliver great results. Offering them praise and rewards in front of their coworkers is a great way to ensure that they're doing their best no matter what tasks they're working on.

Some examples of performance incentives that drive productivity are the following:

- Offer paid vacations or tickets to popular events for top performers.
- Offer financial incentive when employees need to work longer hours
- Extra hours worked in a given week can add to time off in the future
- Reward results and achievements with annual bonuses or perks
- Reward effort by awarding points to employees, which they can exchange for gift cards and merchandise

SECTION TWO: TIME MANAGEMENT

Some Stats:

Full-time employees work an average of 8.5 hours per weekday and 5.4 hours on weekends. 20% of the average workday is spent on doing high-priority matters, while 80% of the average workday is spent on things that have little value or no value at all. The average employee spends 2 hours per day being affected by distractions.

Between you and me... I think those numbers are WAY over-optimistic.

The problem is likely much worse.

But fear not. In this section, we're going to present you with a whole arsenal of time management techniques you can use to take back control of the minutes in your life, starting right now.

Track your time using a time management software

Like money, time can be wasted if not managed properly. In order to identify which areas you need to improve, you have to know where your time actually goes. This is important, for there's a big difference between intuitive time and reality.

When choosing a time management software, it should include important features such as:

- Timesheets
- Project management
- Time estimates
- Manual time tracking
- Multiple timer option
- Export and archive option
- Time reports
- User management
- Notifications
- Reports and analytics

- App Integration
- Smartphone compatibility

Set Time Limits

Another way to increase efficiency in your work is by setting a time limit for every task. For instance, if you started writing an article at 8 am, you should make it a point to finish the whole thing by 10 am. Having a buffer for each task prevents you from procrastinating and can avoid the habit of eating the time for other tasks.

Plan ahead

A happy-go-lucky attitude won't lead you to anywhere. To have a productive day, week, or even a month, you need to plan in advance. For example, if you want to have an organized week, create a daily to-do-list, outlining the specific tasks you should be working on each day. Planning ahead. Planning ahead will help you to

stay focused on your priorities. It also allows you to focus one task at a time, rather than just randomly jumping to another when you don't feel like doing the other.

Another thing to consider is that your energy and creativity will fluctuate throughout the week. You must carefully consider where you should put low-priority and high-priority tasks.

Take action

Once everything's set, it's your job to follow it religiously. Remember that planning will become useless when no action is present. Once you've started a new day, make it a point to execute immediately. Take action, and make sure to finish what you've started.

Outsource your work

Let's face it: You're not a superhero. You can't possibly do it all by yourself. Lighten your load by finding a helping hand, or even better, a set of

hands. Delegate smaller, time-consuming tasks to freelancers.

Of course, outsourcing can be a gamble at first. For some, they tend to become skeptical to delegate a task to someone. One reason is that they're afraid that they might sabotage the work. Another reason is that they're worried that things won't be handled the same way.

Trust will play an important role when finding someone to delegate your tasks with. You need to identify which freelancers are considered trustworthy and are really capable of handling the job. One way to do this is by looking at their CV, analyzing their work history and contacting their references. This will help you to decide whether they are worthy enough to take on the job.

Focus first on the most important tasks (MITs)

Normally, our brains are in its most active state in the first hour or two. With that in mind, it would be logical to do the heavy stuff first when you still have the energy. Doing the MITs first will make the rest of the day more productive and efficient. When you prioritize the most important tasks first, it eliminates a big portion of your workload. Additionally, once you've finished these MITs, you can use that feeling of accomplishment as a motivation to keep going for the remainder of the day.

Avoid doing half-work

Half-work is basically any work that is done inefficiently due to unnecessary distractions. Whether you're laser-focused or not, we can end up doing half-work without even noticing it. Here are examples of half-work:

- You're making a report when suddenly your hand involuntarily picks up the phone. Now you find yourself browsing Facebook for the past 30 minutes.
- You're 2 weeks in on a new diet that you're doctor recommended. However, the next day you've switched a new eating program because of its life-changing testimonials you've read online.
- While having a business trip, you suddenly feel the urge to stop by at every souvenir shop nearby.
- To avoid becoming inadvertent, we need to create some work isolation. What this means is that we confine ourselves by separating other tasks from our current one. This form of isolation allows us to finish what's in the top of our to-do-list. Having work without interference will lead to more fruitful and rewarding results.

Wake up early

Another reason why most of us end up being unproductive throughout the day is that maybe you're waking up at the wrong side of the bed. Do you have a habit of sleeping-in 'til late in the morning? Why not wake up ahead of the usual, say, an hour early? A former U.S. navy seal, Jocko Willink, decided to wake up 4:30 am in the morning every day. His reason? "It is much, much better to go through life attacking days than it is to go through life getting attacked by days. Don't let that happen. Go on the offense."

Of course, you probably aren't a person who eats war for breakfast. Yet, we can imitate his mindset. Wake up early, get more things done. Here are some benefits of being an early bird:

- Enhances productivity
- Reduces stress levels
- Improves sleep quality
- Provides a more positive outlook

Put intervals between tasks

Jumping immediately from one task to another might seem to be a foolproof way to save time. However, results can be counterintuitive. The reason is that our brains can only stay focused for a short period of time. Once you've done with a task, pause. Give yourself time to relax. Allow having buffers in-between tasks or meetings. This will allow you to freshen up for the next activity.

Get organized

These might be a little out-of-topic for the business category, but it can still be very beneficial on a practical scale. Did you know that on a survey by Pixie Lost & Found, a review company, they found out that the average American spends 2.5 days every year looking for their lost items? Additionally, Americans spend over \$2.7 billion annually in replacing these items.

These statistics may seem irrelevant, but remember that we highly value time. Time spent finding misplaced items is still wasted time. To avoid wasting time and money, be organized.

Organization starts at your home. Arrange your things in a way that it can be easily accessed and are within your reach. The same thing goes to your work desk. At the end of each day, clean your workspace. When you inject organization in any aspect, your environment will become neat but will also save you a lot of time and resources.

Follow the Pareto's Principle

Though commonly used in sales, the 80/20 rule, also known as the Pareto Principle, can also be applied to time management. In its true definition, the rule states that “80% of a company’s sales come from 20% of its customers.” If we would convert this to a time-management approach, we can say that “80% of

our results come from 20% of our actions.” How can we use the 80/20 rule to our own benefit?

To generate ‘bigger sales’, you need to initiate a process of elimination. Looking at your tasks, analyze which of those are of paramount importance. For example, let’s say you have 12 tasks every day. However, upon looking closely, you noticed that out of the 12 in your to-do-list, only 4 are considered vital. Why not focus on that 4 essentials, and leave the rest for later. It may seem unnatural at first, but once you’ve got the hang of identifying high-priority tasks, it would be much easier for you to scale up the effort on these MITs.

Use an online calendar

Calendars have long been a prerequisite for time management. However, a calendar from your local supermarket won’t really suffice as a tool for time-saving. Fortunately in this modern era, online calendars have taken time-management to

new heights. More and more companies are using online calendars to book appointments, schedule meetings, create events, set up reminders and scheduling recurring events. They also provide accessibility because you can access it across multiple devices at a time.

Here are the top online calendars that you should definitely check out:

- Google Calendar
- MyStudyLife
- TimeTree
- Outlook Calendar
- Cozi Family Organizer
- Jorte

Stop being a perfectionist

When doing anything, it's always good to remember: perfection, in its literal form, is non-existent. As imperfect human beings, we make imperfect output. But though not having the absolute form of perfection, we can be perfect if

we strive to be exceptional. Being exceptional at anything means that we strive to be outstanding in anything we do.

However, this isn't something that can be achieved overnight. It requires time and patience. It also involves a lot of failures and setbacks. However, failing repeatedly can help you to learn from your mistakes, motivating you to be better each day. Charge every downfall to experience. When you constantly look for ways on how to improve each day, you can be exceptional in everything.

Learn to say 'no'

Naturally, we don't want to upset anyone. So a lot of times we try to accommodate them all. However, you need to accept the fact that you can't always please everyone. You can only handle so much. When you think about it, you might already have a full plate on your work-related tasks alone. Of course, some would

consider us a helping a hand and a shoulder to lean on. In your part, you might have the natural desire to help out. But unless you have spare time on your hands, maybe it would best just to say NO.

Develop keystone habits

Charles Duhigg, author of “The Power of Habit”, defined keystone habits as “small changes or habits that people introduce into their routines that unintentionally carry over into other aspects of their lives.” We can acquire habits that are ‘life-changing’, or in other words, habits that transform you to be a better version of yourself.

Here are a few examples of keystone habits:

- Exercise.
- Taking naps.
- Writing a daily journal.
- Cleaning.
- Donating to charity.
- Spend quality time with loved ones.

- Playing an instrument.
- Painting.

Every keystone habit is like a pillar that supports a bridge. Having such habits strengthen your physical, mental and psychological state, improving your well-being.

Make the most out of your time

Waiting in line, on airport terminals, at train stations—several times we may find ourselves completely stationary, having no productivity at all. Why not take this opportunity to do something more worthwhile? Instead of checking your phone or casually reading a newspaper, take this time to answer emails, book appointments, or simply just stretching out. In fact, some people have even used these situations to learn a new language or skill, simply by reading or watching brief tutorials online. The point? Make the most out of your time.

Try using conference calls

Though not applicable to most forms of work, this can still be a real time-saver for people who usually work at companies. Instead of wasting your time traveling to your office to attend a brief 20-minute meeting, why not just arrange a conference call? If you're the team leader/head, your responsibility is to make sure that your team is as efficient as possible. Make it a point to utilize online conference calls for less-priority discussions.

Find sources of inspiration

We all hit rock bottom sometimes. Feelings of tiredness or having hints of depression can really affect how you manage your time. This is why we need a form of stimulus that can reinforce our desire to keep on grinding. Find sources of inspiration from talks, podcasts, articles, biographies and other relevant information that

can revitalize you, helping you to get back on track.

Bucket similar tasks together

It's important to remember that our brains contain gear-like processes that are designed for every situation. Every time we switch tasks, our brain automatically shifts to the appropriate thinking gear needed for that particular task. Of course, any machine that shuffles gears every now and then will eventually break down. Same is true with our brains. We can't simply adjust to a task that demands a higher form of cognition.

Yet, despite having a number of tasks on hand, you can still find ways to save more time. One way is to find a common denominator of every task you have. Surprisingly, you might notice that some of your tasks are mostly done in the same process from your other ones. For example, answering emails and phone calls can all be done by your phone. Knowing this, you can now then

allocate a specific time to do these things together, instead of doing them at different parts of the day.

Set priorities using the ABCDE method

Prioritizing is one of the primary elements when doing time management. If you feel stressed out with the amount of work you currently have, don't panic. In fact, don't just do a task because it's the easiest thing to be done. Instead, categorize your tasks according to the level of priority. There are a lot of methods designed to help you determine whether a task is of high-priority or not.

Popularized by Brian Tracy, these method has become the basis for some as they prioritize their schedule. Here's how the ABCDE method works:

- **A – “very important”**. These are the MITs of your business/organization. These tasks should be your highest priority, for it would be the basis of success for the business.
- **B – “important”**. These are tasks that are valuable as well, just on a lesser degree. Such tasks will lead to minor negative consequences when neglected.
- **C – “nice to do”**. These items are the ones that have no consequences at all, whether you do them or not.
- **D – “delegate”**. These are tasks that you can assign to someone, usually by outsourcing.
- **E – “eliminate”**. These are illusionary to-do’s that are in reality, actually junk. You should get rid of these ASAP.

Decide with the help of the 4D method

Another popular time management method is commonly known as 4D. The 4D method is:

- **Delete (Drop).** These are tasks that are extraneous and shouldn't be of concern. You can throw these straight down the bin.
- **Delegate.** These are types of tasks that you can hand over to people who know the role well. You can delegate tasks usually by outsourcing it to skilled workers, such as freelancers.
- **Defer.** These are tasks that aren't in a hurry. If there's something that can be postponed and have no major consequences, defer it.
- **Do.** These are of top priority. These tasks should be done right away.

Allot 18 minutes to reflect

- Peter Bregman, a best-selling author, popularized a book entitled “18 Minutes”, which talks about finding your focus so you can get the right things done. His book explains how we can combat distractions and gain productivity. Why is it called 18 minutes?
- **Morning (5 minutes)**. Start the day by thinking about what can be done to achieve success today. Then, take those things off your to-do list and schedule them into your calendar.
- **A minute per work hour (8 minutes)**. As you go about your 8-to-5 job, you need to refocus yourself. Set an alarm every hour. Every time the alarm goes off, reflect on what have you done the past hour. Ask yourself, “Have I spent the last hour doing something productive?”

- **Evening (5 minutes).** After you've turned off your computer, take a moment to meditate. Take a deep breath, and recap how your day went.

Set SMART goals

Not all goals produce rewarding results. Ill-considered plans are time-wasters that will only lead to merry chasing. To get work done the right way, create goals the right way. Work smart using S.M.A.R.T. goals. Cliché as it may seem, a SMART goal is the cornerstone of every successful business. So the question is, what does a SMART goal mean?

- **Specific.** Your goals should be well-defined, vividly outlines what you want to achieve. The key to being specific is knowing your “why”. Understanding your true motives ignite your will to stay on track. The more specific and amplified your

goals are, the more likely you'll succeed.

- **Measurable.** Your goals should be perceptible, or in other words, you can easily track its progress. You make your goals measurable by breaking it down to precise metrics. Measurable goals let you assess your progress, and most importantly, it lets you know when you've achieved it. However, when creating measurable goals, it's important to leave room for growth. This means that you should consider your limitations, and allocate a reasonable time to adjust.
- **Achievable.** We all know the saying 'Dream big, aim high'. True, we should set goals that push us beyond our comfort zone. However, we should avoid having lofty goals. Being over-ambitious will only lead

you to discouragement, eventually putting your goals down the drain. Achievable goals are initially overwhelming, but can realistically be completed.

- **Relevant.** Of course, we want our goals to be aligned with our priorities. This means that your greatest dream should always be linked to every goal you're trying to achieve. Every goal should serve as a stepping stone to your ideal vision of success.
- **Time-bound.** Every goal needs a deadline. Assign a due-date to every goal you make. This pushes you to your limits, positively forcing you to work even harder to reach it.

Identify your peak hours

You may have noticed that your mind works best in a certain part of a day. For some, they find out that they're laser-focused in mornings. Yet, for night owls, evenings are their strengths. In order to achieve the most efficient results, you need to discover what your peak hours are. Be aware of when your mind is the most active, and adjust accordingly. Working at hours that you're on top of your game is a real time-saver, and will definitely lead to more productivity, ending up to better results.

Shut down distractions

When was the last time you checked your phone while working? Let's be honest, we often get distracted from things that we regularly do. A usual 60-minute task can take up to 3 hours when exposed to these time-wasters. However, letting yourself be preoccupied with such things will only lead to unsatisfactory outcomes.

When doing high-priority tasks, make sure to turn on the “do not disturb” sign, literally. Set your phone to a setting that you know you won’t be bothered. Another good tip would be to ‘hide’ these distractions, or in other words, putting it in a place beyond your reach. You can do this by putting your phone in the drawer, in the lowest if possible. Also make sure to close any tabs regarding social media, online shopping or any other platforms that can tempt you to pause your work. How important it is to avoid such triggers!

Get enough sleep

As obvious of an advice it may seem, sleep is still the #1 factor that contributes to better time management. Enough sleep leads to a healthy mind. A healthy mind increases productivity. Finally, increased productivity produces better results in lesser time.

How much sleep do you really need? According to sleepfoundation.org, adults should have a

sleep range of 7-9 hours. If you're sleeping less than the ideal hours, then it's time to make a change. Don't deprive yourself with such precious rest!

Have a clock in front of you

You may be wondering why this is even included in the list. When you think about it, you always have a clock nearby. However, we're not referring to digital clocks in your computer or a widget on your phone. We're talking about a physical clock—with batteries. Having a physical clock visible to you affects you psychologically. Seeing vividly how time quickly passes by forces you to quicken your pace so you can reach your desired deadlines. Having an actual clock in front of you can also help you to realize how 'time is gold', and that you should value every second of it.

Take time for yourself

Besides sleep, you need to find more ways to condition yourself physically, mentally and emotionally. Include exercise in your weekly routine, or even better, on a daily basis. Also make sure to have free time each day to spend time with your loved ones, for this is important for your mental health. If you feel like you can do something more productive rather than taking these ‘breaks’, then you may need to change your outlook in life. After all, the bottom line of everything is, “Keep all things in perspective.”

Develop a sense of urgency

An important factor of time management is speed. This is why having a sense of urgency is vital for efficiency. Having a sense of urgency means that you’re fully present at the moment, In other words, you’re fully aware of your current situation and you take action to get things done as soon as possible. True, you should worry about

future events, but a sense of urgency will prevent us from obsessing of things that have not yet happened. Instead, you live by the moment, taking one split-second at a time.

A person with a sense of urgency recognizes how fast-paced the business environment is, so he strives to work on a faster pace.

To develop a sense of urgency, you need:

- **A proactive approach.** A proactive person is like a great chess player. In order to win, you need to think in advance. Same is true with dealing tasks. In order to manage time, you need to think ahead to see what needs to get done.
- **Discipline.** This is a battle of our minds. We need to set restrictions to ourselves, and we should obey them religiously. Despite having tons of distractions, being disciplined helps you to keep focus on what's at stake.

- **Optimism and determination.** Optimism provides motivation when things get rough, while determination strengthens your resolve to keep on grinding.

Stop procrastinating

We are all by nature, procrastinators. We all have the tendency to set aside things that we perceive to be something that can be done later. However, letting procrastination take control of your life will eventually overshadow any dreams of success that you want to achieve. In fact, it might lead you to higher form of procrastination that you should worry about. This is called chronic procrastination.

Chronic procrastination is the worst of its kind, for it becomes a personality trait. A chronic procrastinator develops a self-destructive habit of waiving off any task, no matter how urgent it could be. It's considered to be self-destructive because once they've realized that there's not

much time left, they start to panic. How can you avoid procrastination?

Here are some practical ways that can help:

- Recognize that you have the inclination to procrastinate.
- Write down the tasks you need to complete and when it needs to be done, then stick to it.
- Once tasks arrived, work on them immediately.
- Every time you finish a difficult task on time, give yourself a reward!

SECTION THREE: GOAL SETTING

Some stats:

93% of employees are unable to tie their actions to organizational goals. 37% of employees feel doubtful about their workplace's vision or strategy. 32% of employees want to track their progress they've made toward goals set by their manager.

Most of that's organizational, but the same problem exists in most people's personal lives as well. Too often we become sedated and content with the status quo, just floating aimlessly through life without giving ourselves any clear proactive direction.

This section is designed to put a stop to that.

Choose goals that motivate you

When it comes to goal-setting, you have to make sure that each goal you make motivates you. This means that you highly value each goal and achieving them has a real purpose. However, if you have goals that you have very little interest in or feel to be too irrelevant from your perspective, you probably won't put in the work to achieve them. Remember: motivation is the key to achieving goals.

To make sure that each goal is motivational, you must know the 'why'. Why is it valuable? Why does it need to be achieved? You can also ask yourself, "If I were to share this goal with my team, how can I prove to them that achieving this goal would be worthwhile?" Using motivational value statements help you to avoid feelings of doubt or uncertainty that a goal can be achieved. Instead, it gives you the drive to carry on.

Set specific goals

Let's say you order a pizza on the phone. If you give out unclear instructions on where you live, the chances of you eating a hot pizza will be slim to none. Similarly, setting vague undefined goals won't lead you to your desired outcome, and even worse, it would be a waste of your time, energy, and resources.

Goals that are specific are clear and well-defined. It should determine what you want to achieve and how you want it to end up. This is especially true when it comes to your company's vision. A generalized outlook won't define what needs to be done. Specific goals provide tangibility, giving you clarity on what you want to accomplish.

Set goals that are measurable

Goals should be measurable, or in other words, should be easy to keep track of. Goals that are gaugeable help you assess your current progress

and determine your degree of success. For example, if your goal is simply defined as “to reduce business expenses”, how will you know when you’ve achieved your goal? In fact, how would you even know if you’re actually making progress?

To set measurable goals, you must first identify the metric itself, then set a specific number you’re trying to meet or exceed. Breaking down your goals to bite-sized milestones help you monitor your progress and remind you to celebrate every small win. Dividing your goals in specific metrics also keeps you from getting overwhelmed. Instead, it motivates you to be persistent and maintain your momentum.

Create goals that are attainable

Every time you set goals, you need to make sure that everything’s within reach. This means that goals should not be so absurd that it would be impossible to achieve. Instead, our objectives

should be feasible and practical to achieve. Creating a goal that you know you won't be able to achieve will only demoralize yourself and dampen your confidence.

However, avoid setting goals that are too easy. Achieving something that you put a little effort into is worthless and inefficient. Furthermore, once you've got used to achieving such effortless goals, you'll start to develop a fear of setting goals that carry a risk of non-achievement.

Instead, create goals that are attainable yet challenging. This helps you to up the ante each time you set a goal. Moreover, it gives you great satisfaction every time you achieve one.

Make your goals relevant

Whether it's a personal or business goal, relevance should be the main concern. These are goals that matter to you, and it also aligns with other relevant goals. To make sure you have relevant goals, you need to look first in your

overall vision then divide your vision with successive goals. Then ask yourself, “Does my current goal fit my overall vision? Does it harmonize with my other goals?” These questions will help you examine whether your goal is worth pursuing or not.

Your goals should also serve as stepping stones to the company’s success. This means that your smaller goals create building blocks that help you achieve larger ones, thus, creating consistency towards your desired outcome. On the other hand, diffused and inconsistent goals will only fritter your time and energy.

Set time-sensitive goals

Napoleon Hill described it best when he said, “A goal is a dream with a deadline.” All goals should have a due date imposed on it. This is to ensure that work gets done on time and gives you the motivation to stay focused and achieve it.

Without a deadline, then your goal would be nothing worth more than a dream.

Working on time-sensitive goals increases your sense of urgency and pushes you to your limits. It may require strenuous effort on your part, but the satisfaction of achieving such goals is priceless.

Write it down

Dr. Gail Matthews from the Dominican University of California surveyed 267 people and found out that you are 42% more likely to achieve your goals if you write them down. Why is that so? It affects you psychologically. Physically writing down your goals provides tangibility, giving you a clear picture of what you want to accomplish.

The process of writing down goals on paper enhances your mental capabilities by forcing you to strategize, review your progress, and regularly brainstorm new ideas on how to achieve them.

Seeing your goals written down on a regular basis serves as a daily reminder for you to keep moving forward.

Create an action plan

Winging your way to a goal is a big no-no. You need to create a solid action plan to reach a goal. Sadly, this step has often been overlooked. Some people are so focused on the outcome that they forget to plan all the steps needed to achieve that goal. In fact, some even set goals without even knowing how to achieve them!

Here are the components of an action plan:

- A well-defined description of the goal to be achieved
- Outline of tasks that need to be carried out
- People who will be in charge of carrying out each task
- Milestones
- Deadlines
- Resources needed to complete each task

- Measures to evaluate progress

Having an action plan provides a clear direction of how you want to achieve each goal. It helps you to stay committed throughout each project. Moreover, action plans encourage you to prioritize tasks based on effort and impact.

Set organizational goals

Organizational goals are objectives strategically designed to improve the structure of a business and company as a whole. It outlines the anticipated results and guides employees' efforts. Setting specific organizational goals help the company to track its progress and determine which areas they need to focus on.

Organizational goals should always resonate with your employees. Having a clear understanding of the company's objectives enables them to determine their course of action

on how to contribute to achieving them. As an employer, you should make sure that your employees are equipped with the appropriate tools and resources needed to meet these organizational goals.

Setting organizational goals also boosts the workplace morale for it unites employees to work closely in achieving a singular end-goal. This workplace harmony will surely result in a higher level of efficiency and productivity.

Help employees identify job-specific goals

As managers, you may have defined expectations for each employee, but it shouldn't always be the case. After all, at the end of the day, they know themselves better than you do. What you can do is ask your employees to identify goals that are specifically associated with their jobs. When managers see how their goals harmonize with the company's objectives, they should then quickly

help them to develop action plans to achieve those goals.

Roles vary in the workplace. However, goals akin to productivity and efficiency are often very effective. As you work with your employees, make it a point to reduce errors, and boost productivity. This, in turn, will save more time, produce more sales, and improve your well-being.

Avoid competition

Achieving goals can sometimes be misconstrued as a form of competition, especially for employees who have similar roles and responsibilities. If left untreated, this can cause internal rivalries and will eventually lower workplace morale. To prevent this, managers should set consistent goals that encourage employees to work as a team, instead of being rivals. These goals should help them to

complement one another so they can work in a harmonious fashion.

Set goals aligned with the company's objectives

Every goal should tie in with the company's values and its overall growth strategy. You need to help your employees understand how their individual roles can make a great impact on organizational growth.

When they grasp things from the company's point of view, it helps them to become more focused and motivated to achieve their goals. This, in turn, will contribute to the advancement of the business and increase employee performance.

Reward employees who reached their goals

As things get busy, managers can sometimes forget to acknowledge the hard work of our loyal employees. In fact, they might be consumed so

much in their work that they fail to remember those who have finally reached their goals. When such efforts go unnoticed, they will start to feel that no one values their work and might even lead them to look for a job somewhere else.

Don't let another day pass by without giving recognition to your employees. Take time to assess the progress of each one, and commend them for their efforts. Even a simple "thank you for your hard work" is enough to keep them on their toes.

Every time an employee reaches a goal, be sure to give them the recognition that they deserve. This can be a form of a reward, bonus, certificate, or even just a public acknowledgment in your next staff meeting. Showing your appreciation honors the employees' efforts. Moreover, this is a good way to show the team that your company values such commitment and hard work. This, in turn, will motivate others to work hard so they can reach their goals too.

Support employees who fall back short

Not everyone has the same pace. Some quickly excel in their field, while some still struggle to find their strengths. Managers should be quick to assist such ones.

For instance, let's say that an employee fails to deliver upon the agreed deadline and goals weren't met. Instead of quickly expressing your disappointment, why not have a one-on-one conversation and discuss briefly what went wrong? Then, always end on a good note by encouraging them to try harder and address the matters immediately.

Establish BHAGs

In the book *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies*, Jim Collins and Jerry Porras first coined the term 'Big Hairy Audacious Goal' or BHAG (pronounced "bee-hag"). According to Collins and Porras, a BHAG is a long-term goal that's aligned with your

company's core values and purpose. However, compared to other long-term goals, BHAGs are bold audacious ambitions that may almost seem impossible to achieve, yet, it can be done.

There are 4 types of BHAGs:

- **Role model** - Designed to mimic other successful companies
- **Target-oriented** - Has a defined quantitative or qualitative goal
- **Common enemy** - Devised to compete with top companies in your industry
- **Internal transformation** – Focuses on the company's transformation

BHAGs are meant to excite people by letting them think outside the box, push themselves out of their comfort zones, and strengthen the workplace synergy. BHAGs stimulate progress within your company and keeps the momentum going. It is a compelling target that an organization should strive for.

Probably a great example of a BHAG is the famous declaration of President Kennedy in 1961: “This nation should commit itself to achieve the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to earth.” This, of course, became a reality when the first successful moon landing was made in 1969.

BHAGs not only excite people in the industry, but they appeal to the public as well. Consider SpaceX as an example. Their goal of “[enabling] human exploration and settlement of Mars” caught international attention. Yet, they didn’t captivate people for having such a ludicrous idea, but because they’re proving to the world that life on Mars is, in fact, possible.

What makes a good BHAG? Here are the key elements:

- It’s 50-70% achievable
- Must be clear and compelling

- Pushes the company's capacity
- Measurable
- Aligned with the organization's strategy
- Ideally 10-25 years long

How do you create a BHAG for your company?

Here are 3 simple steps:

- **Conceptualize.** Think of an outside-the-box idea; Don't be afraid to aim high
- **Test.** Gauge if it's really worth dedicating to for the next 10+ years
- **Commit.** Work on it immediately; break it down by creating milestones

A well-established BHAG unites the company with one clear purpose and vision. It also plays a big influence on current and future recruitment, for you are determined to select the right people that can turn this vision into a reality, and it also attracts the right people too. Furthermore, BHAGs help turn a company into a wonderful visionary for the future.

Keep track of your progress

How will you know if your new diet plan works if you don't check your weight? The same thing applies to goal-setting. You can only know if you're making progress if you're keeping in track with your goals. In fact, keeping track of your progress is highly beneficial and mentally stimulating.

As you finish a milestone, look at your progress. What changes have you noticed? As you measure your activity regularly, you will see improvements. Celebrate every small win, and use this as motivation to work harder.

Stay committed

Setting goals is not just a mere obligation for the sake of your business. Goal setting is an ongoing process, that's why a high level of commitment is needed. After all, goals aren't achieved overnight. You've got to put in the work and cultivate self-discipline. Always make sure that

the relevance, value, and necessity of each goal remains constant as time goes by.

Include Financial Goals

Of course, unlike any company, financial goals should be one of the main objectives of your organization. A wholesome financial goal can be raising \$10,000 for a charitable cause by donating 5% of profits from every sale or increasing sales by 20% to prevent layoffs.

When you regularly communicate with your team about your financial goals and how the company allocates its finances, there's a good chance that they would treat the financial goal as their personal goal. When employees understand how reaching the goal would benefit them and the company, they will be more hard-working, knowing that they've contributed something for a good cause.

Manage your time wisely

Time management is paramount if you want to achieve your goals. When you manage your time wisely, you will finish every milestone on schedule and reach every goal promptly.

Besides prioritizing, you can manage your time by conditioning yourself mentally. Peter Bregman, a best-selling author, popularized a book entitled “18 Minutes”, which talks about finding your focus so you can get the right things done. By using 18 minutes of your time each day, you can combat distractions and gain productivity.

Here’s how ‘18 minutes’ all sums up:

- **Morning (5 minutes).** Start the day by thinking about what can be done to achieve your goal today. Then, take those things off your to-do list and schedule them into your calendar.

- **A minute per work hour (8 minutes).** As you go about your 8-to-5 job, you need to refocus yourself. Set an alarm every hour. Every time the alarm goes off, reflect on what have you done the past hour. Ask yourself, “Have I spent the last hour doing something productive?”
- **Evening (5 minutes).** After you’ve turned off your computer, take a moment to meditate. Take a deep breath, and recap how your day went.

Another way to make sure you’re using your time wisely is by eliminating distractions in the workplace. Our phones can be a real menace for achieving goals. You won’t even notice that you’ve spent 3 hours of your day just checking your phone!

What you can do is to set your phone to a setting that you know you won’t be bothered. Some people even turn off their phones when needed.

Another good tip would be to ‘hide’ these distractions from you. You can do this by putting it in a place beyond your reach. This can be the bottom part of your drawer or inside the deepest pockets of your bag.

Also, make sure that your work area is conducive to productivity. Close any tabs regarding social media, online shopping, or any other platforms that can tempt you to bide your time.

Prioritize your goals

Goals have different needs, so you need to prioritize accordingly. Avoid skipping goals. Jumping from one goal to another will not only waste your time, but it will also prevent you from getting anything done.

You can prioritize tasks effectively by using the ABCDE method. Popularized by Brian Tracy, the ABCDE method allows you to gauge the

level of importance for each goal, so you can prioritize them according to its urgency.

Here's how the ABCDE method works:

- **A – “very important”**. These are the MITs (Most Important Tasks) of your business/organization. These tasks should be your highest priority, for it would be the basis of success for the business.
- **B – “important”**. These are tasks that are valuable as well, just to a lesser degree. Such tasks will lead to minor negative consequences when neglected.
- **C – “nice to do”**. These items are the ones that have no consequences at all, whether you do them or not.
- **D – “delegate”**. These are tasks that you can assign to someone, usually by outsourcing.

- **E – “eliminate”**. These are illusionary to-do’s that are in reality, actually junk. You should get rid of these ASAP.

Use a goal tracking software

We can’t always keep track of everything we do. We’re not robots. But this modern age of tech can help us to do so. Fortunately, we’re now living in a world where everything involves automation. These technologies help a lot of businesses to save more time, cut down expenses, and increase efficiency. We should maximize the use of such modern tools.

There are a number of goal tracking software that a lot of business owners and employees use to create goals and track their progress. Here are some widely-used platforms:

- Trakstar
- Weekdone
- 15Five
- Engagedly

- Asana
- Lattice
- JIRA

Using a goal tracking software not only helps managers to track their goals but to also assess employee performance. Also, as employees see their progress, it motivates them to work even harder. Using software also reduces your stress, helping you to take one goal at a time.

Set KPIs

A Key Performance Indicator or KPI is a metric value that indicates how effectively a company is in achieving its business objectives. KPIs help to evaluate the success of reaching their goals.

Here's how to create a KPI:

- **Write a clear objective.** Your KPI should be integral to the business. It needs to express something strategic about what your business is trying to do.

- **Share it with your employees.** Communication is paramount. Your employees need to understand the goals from your perspective and how their help can contribute to the success of the company.
- **Review them periodically.** Check-in your KPIs from time to time. This is essential to track your progress and assess the company's development. You can do this on a weekly or monthly basis.
- **Make sure it's actionable.** Divide KPIs to create short-term and long-term goals.
- **Modify to fit changing needs.** Organizations adapt to new practices. Modify KPIs to complement new changes.
- **Update objectives when needed.** Businesses evolve, and KPIs should too. Regularly check to see if KPIs are needed to be changed or scrapped immediately.

When companies utilize KPIs, it unites employees to work towards common goals. Information gleaned from KPIs can also help in developing future strategies for the business.

Create short-term goals

Short-term goals are subset goals that a company can achieve over several weeks or a few months. These goals serve as stepping stones to achieve long-term goals. Furthermore, achieving short-term goals creates a momentum of growth.

If you have a small business, here are some practical examples of short-term goals that can help:

- Prioritize sales and marketing
- Listen to customer feedback
- Automate administrative tasks
- Establish customer relationships
- Brainstorm ideas on how to compete with other industries

Short-term goals create measurable success, for you can see its results as they happen. Having short time-frames, it provides a sense of urgency for the team that boosts the level of motivation. As you achieve a short-term goal, it increases your success rate of achieving your long-term goals.

Lay ground-work for long-term goals

Long-term goals are targets intended for the future. This requires an extensive amount of time and careful planning. These usually range between 3-5 years and can even get up to 10 years to achieve. As entrepreneurs, your long-term goals should reflect not only for the growth of the business but your personal interests as well.

Here are some practical examples of long-term goals that you can set:

- Increase sales
- Expand to new opportunities
- Increase brand recognition

- Create a lasting legacy/reputation
- Host promotional events

Long-term goals give you a clear direction of where your business is heading. It gives the team a sense of purpose of having something great to look forward to. Moreover, it helps us to see the bigger picture of what's in store for the business. Achieving long-term goals creates a long-lasting impact that contributes to greater success.

CONCLUSION

This is it.

There's no more excuses.

You've just been equipped with a veritable boat load of hacks, tips, and tricks. An entire armory of weapons and tools that you now have at your disposal to tackle your distractions, SMASH your procrastination, and stomp out inaction once and for all.

Start finding ways and opportunities to implement these practises in your day-to-day life. Hold yourself accountable. And soon you'll be soaring high above your peers and competitors.

Enjoy your newfound freedom.

Bonus Section:
Two-Century Old
Wisdom on Productivity
from Arnold Bennett
and William Alcott

How to Live on Twenty- Four Hours a Day

by

Arnold Bennett

1908

|

THE DAILY MIRACLE

"Yes, he's one of those men that don't know how to manage. Good situation. Regular income. Quite enough for luxuries as well as needs. Not really extravagant. And yet the fellow's always in difficulties. Somehow he gets nothing out of his money. Excellent flat—half empty! Always looks as if he'd had the brokers in. New suit—old hat! Magnificent necktie—baggy trousers! Asks you to dinner: cut glass—bad mutton, or Turkish

coffee—cracked cup! He can't understand it. Explanation simply is that he fritters his income away. Wish I had the half of it! I'd show him—"

So we have most of us criticised, at one time or another, in our superior way.

We are nearly all chancellors of the exchequer: it is the pride of the moment. Newspapers are full of articles explaining how to live on such-and-such a sum, and these articles provoke a correspondence whose violence proves the interest they excite. Recently, in a daily organ, a battle raged round the question whether a woman can exist nicely in the country on L85 a year. I have seen an essay, "How to live on eight shillings a week." But I have never seen an essay, "How to live on twenty-four hours a day." Yet it has been said that time is money. That proverb understates the case. Time is a great deal more than money. If you have time you can obtain money—usually. But though you have the wealth of a cloak-room attendant at the Carlton Hotel, you cannot buy yourself a minute more time than I have, or the cat by the fire has.

Philosophers have explained space. They have not explained time. It is the inexplicable raw material of everything. With it, all is possible;

without it, nothing. The supply of time is truly a daily miracle, an affair genuinely astonishing when one examines it. You wake up in the morning, and lo! your purse is magically filled with twenty-four hours of the unmanufactured tissue of the universe of your life! It is yours. It is the most precious of possessions. A highly singular commodity, showered upon you in a manner as singular as the commodity itself!

For remark! No one can take it from you. It is unstealable. And no one receives either more or less than you receive.

Talk about an ideal democracy! In the realm of time there is no aristocracy of wealth, and no aristocracy of intellect. Genius is never rewarded by even an extra hour a day. And there is no punishment. Waste your infinitely precious commodity as much as you will, and the supply will never be withheld from you. No mysterious power will say:—"This man is a fool, if not a knave. He does not deserve time; he shall be cut off at the meter." It is more certain than consols, and payment of income is not affected by Sundays. Moreover, you cannot draw on the future. Impossible to get into debt! You can only waste the passing moment. You cannot waste tomorrow; it is kept for you. You cannot waste the next hour; it is kept for you.

I said the affair was a miracle. Is it not?

You have to live on this twenty-four hours of daily time. Out of it you have to spin health, pleasure, money, content, respect, and the evolution of your immortal soul. Its right use, its most effective use, is a matter of the highest urgency and of the most thrilling actuality. All depends on that. Your happiness—the elusive prize that you are all clutching for, my friends!—depends on that. Strange that the newspapers, so enterprising and up-to-date as they are, are not full of "How to live on a given income of time," instead of "How to live on a given income of money"! Money is far commoner than time. When one reflects, one perceives that money is just about the commonest thing there is. It encumbers the earth in gross heaps.

If one can't contrive to live on a certain income of money, one earns a little more—or steals it, or advertises for it. One doesn't necessarily muddle one's life because one can't quite manage on a thousand pounds a year; one braces the muscles and makes it guineas, and balances the budget. But if one cannot arrange that an income of twenty-four hours a day shall exactly cover all proper items of expenditure, one does muddle one's life definitely. The supply of time, though gloriously regular, is cruelly restricted.

Which of us lives on twenty-four hours a day? And when I say "lives," I do not mean exists, nor "muddles through." Which of us is free from that uneasy feeling that the "great spending departments" of his daily life are not managed as they ought to be? Which of us is quite sure that his fine suit is not surmounted by a shameful hat, or that in attending to the crockery he has forgotten the quality of the food? Which of us is not saying to himself—which of us has not been saying to himself all his life: "I shall alter that when I have a little more time"?

We never shall have any more time. We have, and we have always had, all the time there is. It is the realisation of this profound and neglected truth (which, by the way, I have not discovered) that has led me to the minute practical examination of daily time-expenditure.

II

THE DESIRE TO EXCEED ONE'S PROGRAMME

"But," someone may remark, with the English disregard of everything except the point, "what is he driving at with his twenty-four hours a day? I have no difficulty in living on twenty-four hours a day. I do all that I want to do, and still find time to go in for newspaper competitions. Surely it is a simple affair, knowing that one has only twenty-four hours a day, to content one's self with twenty-four hours a day!"

To you, my dear sir, I present my excuses and apologies. You are precisely the man that I have been wishing to meet for about forty years. Will you kindly send me your name and address, and state your charge for telling me how you do it? Instead of me talking to you, you ought to be talking to me. Please come forward. That you exist, I am convinced, and that I have not yet encountered you is my loss. Meanwhile, until you appear, I will continue to chat with my companions in distress—that innumerable band of souls who are haunted, more or less painfully, by the feeling that the years slip by, and slip by, and slip by, and that they have not yet been able to get their lives into proper working order.

If we analyse that feeling, we shall perceive it to be, primarily, one of uneasiness, of expectation, of looking forward, of aspiration. It is a source of constant discomfort, for it behaves like a skeleton at the feast of all our enjoyments. We go to the theatre and laugh; but between the acts it raises a skinny finger at us. We rush violently for the last train, and while we are cooling a long age on the platform waiting for the last train, it promenades its bones up and down by our side and inquires: "O man, what hast thou done with thy youth? What art thou doing with thine age?" You may urge that this feeling of continuous looking forward, of aspiration, is part of life itself, and inseparable from life itself. True!

But there are degrees. A man may desire to go to Mecca. His conscience tells him that he ought to go to Mecca. He fares forth, either by the aid of Cook's, or unassisted; he may probably never reach Mecca; he may drown before he gets to Port Said; he may perish ingloriously on the coast of the Red Sea; his desire may remain eternally frustrate. Unfulfilled aspiration may always trouble him. But he will not be tormented in the same way as the man who, desiring to reach Mecca, and harried by the desire to reach Mecca, never leaves Brixton.

It is something to have left Brixton. Most of us have not left Brixton. We have not even taken

a cab to Ludgate Circus and inquired from Cook's the price of a conducted tour. And our excuse to ourselves is that there are only twenty-four hours in the day.

If we further analyse our vague, uneasy aspiration, we shall, I think, see that it springs from a fixed idea that we ought to do something in addition to those things which we are loyally and morally obliged to do. We are obliged, by various codes written and unwritten, to maintain ourselves and our families (if any) in health and comfort, to pay our debts, to save, to increase our prosperity by increasing our efficiency. A task sufficiently difficult! A task which very few of us achieve! A task often beyond our skill! Yet, if we succeed in it, as we sometimes do, we are not satisfied; the skeleton is still with us.

And even when we realise that the task is beyond our skill, that our powers cannot cope with it, we feel that we should be less discontented if we gave to our powers, already overtaxed, something still further to do.

And such is, indeed, the fact. The wish to accomplish something outside their formal programme is common to all men who in the course of evolution have risen past a certain level.

Until an effort is made to satisfy that wish, the sense of uneasy waiting for something to start which has not started will remain to disturb the

peace of the soul. That wish has been called by many names. It is one form of the universal desire for knowledge. And it is so strong that men whose whole lives have been given to the systematic acquirement of knowledge have been driven by it to overstep the limits of their programme in search of still more knowledge. Even Herbert Spencer, in my opinion the greatest mind that ever lived, was often forced by it into agreeable little backwaters of inquiry.

I imagine that in the majority of people who are conscious of the wish to live—that is to say, people who have intellectual curiosity—the aspiration to exceed formal programmes takes a literary shape. They would like to embark on a course of reading. Decidedly the British people are becoming more and more literary. But I would point out that literature by no means comprises the whole field of knowledge, and that the disturbing thirst to improve one's self—to increase one's knowledge—may well be slaked quite apart from literature. With the various ways of slaking I shall deal later. Here I merely point out to those who have no natural sympathy with literature that literature is not the only well.

III

PRECAUTIONS BEFORE BEGINNING

Now that I have succeeded (if succeeded I have) in persuading you to admit to yourself that you are constantly haunted by a suppressed dissatisfaction with your own arrangement of your daily life; and that the primal cause of that inconvenient dissatisfaction is the feeling that you are every day leaving undone something which you would like to do, and which, indeed, you are always hoping to do when you have "more time"; and now that I have drawn your attention to the glaring, dazzling truth that you never will have "more time," since you already have all the time there is—you expect me to let you into some wonderful secret by which you may at any rate approach the ideal of a perfect arrangement of the day, and by which, therefore, that haunting, unpleasant, daily disappointment of things left undone will be got rid of!

I have found no such wonderful secret. Nor do I expect to find it, nor do I expect that anyone else will ever find it. It is undiscovered. When you first began to gather my drift, perhaps there was a resurrection of hope in your breast. Perhaps you said to yourself, "This man will show me an easy, unfatiguing way of doing what I have so

long in vain wished to do." Alas, no! The fact is that there is no easy way, no royal road. The path to Mecca is extremely hard and stony, and the worst of it is that you never quite get there after all.

The most important preliminary to the task of arranging one's life so that one may live fully and comfortably within one's daily budget of twenty-four hours is the calm realisation of the extreme difficulty of the task, of the sacrifices and the endless effort which it demands. I cannot too strongly insist on this.

If you imagine that you will be able to achieve your ideal by ingeniously planning out a time-table with a pen on a piece of paper, you had better give up hope at once. If you are not prepared for discouragements and disillusion; if you will not be content with a small result for a big effort, then do not begin. Lie down again and resume the uneasy doze which you call your existence.

It is very sad, is it not, very depressing and sombre? And yet I think it is rather fine, too, this necessity for the tense bracing of the will before anything worth doing can be done. I rather like it myself. I feel it to be the chief thing that differentiates me from the cat by the fire.

"Well," you say, "assume that I am braced for the battle. Assume that I have carefully

weighed and comprehended your ponderous remarks; how do I begin?" Dear sir, you simply begin. There is no magic method of beginning. If a man standing on the edge of a swimming-bath and wanting to jump into the cold water should ask you, "How do I begin to jump?" you would merely reply, "Just jump. Take hold of your nerves, and jump."

As I have previously said, the chief beauty about the constant supply of time is that you cannot waste it in advance. The next year, the next day, the next hour are lying ready for you, as perfect, as unspoilt, as if you had never wasted or misapplied a single moment in all your career. Which fact is very gratifying and reassuring. You can turn over a new leaf every hour if you choose. Therefore no object is served in waiting till next week, or even until to-morrow. You may fancy that the water will be warmer next week. It won't. It will be colder.

But before you begin, let me murmur a few words of warning in your private ear.

Let me principally warn you against your own ardour. Ardour in well-doing is a misleading and a treacherous thing. It cries out loudly for employment; you can't satisfy it at first; it wants more and more; it is eager to move mountains and divert the course of rivers. It isn't content till it perspires. And then, too often, when it feels the perspiration on its brow, it wearies all of a sudden

and dies, without even putting itself to the trouble of saying, "I've had enough of this."

Beware of undertaking too much at the start. Be content with quite a little. Allow for accidents. Allow for human nature, especially your own.

A failure or so, in itself, would not matter, if it did not incur a loss of self-esteem and of self-confidence. But just as nothing succeeds like success, so nothing fails like failure. Most people who are ruined are ruined by attempting too much. Therefore, in setting out on the immense enterprise of living fully and comfortably within the narrow limits of twenty-four hours a day, let us avoid at any cost the risk of an early failure. I will not agree that, in this business at any rate, a glorious failure is better than a petty success. I am all for the petty success. A glorious failure leads to nothing; a petty success may lead to a success that is not petty.

So let us begin to examine the budget of the day's time. You say your day is already full to overflowing. How? You actually spend in earning your livelihood—how much? Seven hours, on the average? And in actual sleep, seven? I will add two hours, and be generous. And I will defy you to account to me on the spur of the moment for the other eight hours.

IV

THE CAUSE OF THE TROUBLES

In order to come to grips at once with the question of time-expenditure in all its actuality, I must choose an individual case for examination. I can only deal with one case, and that case cannot be the average case, because there is no such case as the average case, just as there is no such man as the average man. Every man and every man's case is special.

But if I take the case of a Londoner who works in an office, whose office hours are from ten to six, and who spends fifty minutes morning and night in travelling between his house door and his office door, I shall have got as near to the average as facts permit. There are men who have to work longer for a living, but there are others who do not have to work so long.

Fortunately the financial side of existence does not interest us here; for our present purpose the clerk at a pound a week is exactly as well off as the millionaire in Carlton House-terrace.

Now the great and profound mistake which my typical man makes in regard to his day is a

mistake of general attitude, a mistake which vitiates and weakens two-thirds of his energies and interests. In the majority of instances he does not precisely feel a passion for his business; at best he does not dislike it. He begins his business functions with reluctance, as late as he can, and he ends them with joy, as early as he can. And his engines while he is engaged in his business are seldom at their full "h.p." (I know that I shall be accused by angry readers of traducing the city worker; but I am pretty thoroughly acquainted with the City, and I stick to what I say.)

Yet in spite of all this he persists in looking upon those hours from ten to six as "the day," to which the ten hours preceding them and the six hours following them are nothing but a prologue and epilogue. Such an attitude, unconscious though it be, of course kills his interest in the odd sixteen hours, with the result that, even if he does not waste them, he does not count them; he regards them simply as margin.

This general attitude is utterly illogical and unhealthy, since it formally gives the central prominence to a patch of time and a bunch of activities which the man's one idea is to "get through" and have "done with." If a man makes two-thirds of his existence subservient to one-third, for which admittedly he has no absolutely feverish zest, how can he hope to live fully and completely? He cannot.

If my typical man wishes to live fully and completely he must, in his mind, arrange a day within a day. And this inner day, a Chinese box in a larger Chinese box, must begin at 6 p.m. and end at 10 a.m. It is a day of sixteen hours; and during all these sixteen hours he has nothing whatever to do but cultivate his body and his soul and his fellow men. During those sixteen hours he is free; he is not a wage-earner; he is not preoccupied with monetary cares; he is just as good as a man with a private income. This must be his attitude. And his attitude is all important. His success in life (much more important than the amount of estate upon what his executors will have to pay estate duty) depends on it.

What? You say that full energy given to those sixteen hours will lessen the value of the business eight? Not so. On the contrary, it will assuredly increase the value of the business eight. One of the chief things which my typical man has to learn is that the mental faculties are capable of a continuous hard activity; they do not tire like an arm or a leg. All they want is change—not rest, except in sleep.

I shall now examine the typical man's current method of employing the sixteen hours that are entirely his, beginning with his uprising. I will merely indicate things which he does and which I think he ought not to do, postponing my suggestions for "planting" the times which I shall

have cleared—as a settler clears spaces in a forest.

In justice to him I must say that he wastes very little time before he leaves the house in the morning at 9.10. In too many houses he gets up at nine, breakfasts between 9.7 and 9.9 1/2, and then bolts. But immediately he bangs the front door his mental faculties, which are tireless, become idle. He walks to the station in a condition of mental coma. Arrived there, he usually has to wait for the train. On hundreds of suburban stations every morning you see men calmly strolling up and down platforms while railway companies unblushingly rob them of time, which is more than money. Hundreds of thousands of hours are thus lost every day simply because my typical man thinks so little of time that it has never occurred to him to take quite easy precautions against the risk of its loss.

He has a solid coin of time to spend every day—call it a sovereign. He must get change for it, and in getting change he is content to lose heavily.

Supposing that in selling him a ticket the company said, "We will change you a sovereign, but we shall charge you three halfpence for doing so," what would my typical man exclaim? Yet that is the equivalent of what the company does when it robs him of five minutes twice a day.

You say I am dealing with minutiae. I am.
And later on I will justify myself.

Now will you kindly buy your paper and step
into the train?

V

TENNIS AND THE IMMORTAL SOUL

You get into the morning train with your newspaper, and you calmly and majestically give yourself up to your newspaper. You do not hurry. You know you have at least half an hour of security in front of you. As your glance lingers idly at the advertisements of shipping and of songs on the outer pages, your air is the air of a leisured man, wealthy in time, of a man from some planet where there are a hundred and twenty-four hours a day instead of twenty-four. I am an impassioned reader of newspapers. I read five English and two French dailies, and the news-agents alone know how many weeklies, regularly. I am obliged to mention this personal fact lest I should be accused of a prejudice against newspapers when I say that I object to the reading

of newspapers in the morning train. Newspapers are produced with rapidity, to be read with rapidity. There is no place in my daily programme for newspapers. I read them as I may in odd moments. But I do read them. The idea of devoting to them thirty or forty consecutive minutes of wonderful solitude (for nowhere can one more perfectly immerse one's self in one's self than in a compartment full of silent, withdrawn, smoking males) is to me repugnant. I cannot possibly allow you to scatter priceless pearls of time with such Oriental lavishness. You are not the Shah of time. Let me respectfully remind you that you have no more time than I have. No newspaper reading in trains! I have already "put by" about three-quarters of an hour for use.

Now you reach your office. And I abandon you there till six o'clock. I am aware that you have nominally an hour (often in reality an hour and a half) in the midst of the day, less than half of which time is given to eating. But I will leave you all that to spend as you choose. You may read your newspapers then.

I meet you again as you emerge from your office. You are pale and tired. At any rate, your wife says you are pale, and you give her to understand that you are tired. During the journey home you have been gradually working up the tired feeling. The tired feeling hangs heavy over

the mighty suburbs of London like a virtuous and melancholy cloud, particularly in winter. You don't eat immediately on your arrival home. But in about an hour or so you feel as if you could sit up and take a little nourishment. And you do. Then you smoke, seriously; you see friends; you potter; you play cards; you flirt with a book; you note that old age is creeping on; you take a stroll; you caress the piano.... By Jove! a quarter past eleven. You then devote quite forty minutes to thinking about going to bed; and it is conceivable that you are acquainted with a genuinely good whisky. At last you go to bed, exhausted by the day's work. Six hours, probably more, have gone since you left the office—gone like a dream, gone like magic, unaccountably gone!

That is a fair sample case. But you say: "It's all very well for you to talk. A man *is* tired. A man must see his friends. He can't always be on the stretch." Just so. But when you arrange to go to the theatre (especially with a pretty woman) what happens? You rush to the suburbs; you spare no toil to make yourself glorious in fine raiment; you rush back to town in another train; you keep yourself on the stretch for four hours, if not five; you take her home; you take yourself home. You don't spend three-quarters of an hour in "thinking about" going to bed. You go. Friends and fatigue have equally been forgotten, and the evening has seemed so exquisitely long (or perhaps too short)! And do you remember that

time when you were persuaded to sing in the chorus of the amateur operatic society, and slaved two hours every other night for three months? Can you deny that when you have something definite to look forward to at eventide, something that is to employ all your energy—the thought of that something gives a glow and a more intense vitality to the whole day?

What I suggest is that at six o'clock you look facts in the face and admit that you are not tired (because you are not, you know), and that you arrange your evening so that it is not cut in the middle by a meal. By so doing you will have a clear expanse of at least three hours. I do not suggest that you should employ three hours every night of your life in using up your mental energy. But I do suggest that you might, for a commencement, employ an hour and a half every other evening in some important and consecutive cultivation of the mind. You will still be left with three evenings for friends, bridge, tennis, domestic scenes, odd reading, pipes, gardening, pottering, and prize competitions. You will still have the terrific wealth of forty-five hours between 2 p.m. Saturday and 10 a.m. Monday. If you persevere you will soon want to pass four evenings, and perhaps five, in some sustained endeavour to be genuinely alive. And you will fall out of that habit of muttering to yourself at 11.15 p.m., "Time to be thinking about going to bed." The man who begins to go to bed forty

minutes before he opens his bedroom door is bored; that is to say, he is not living.

But remember, at the start, those ninety nocturnal minutes thrice a week must be the most important minutes in the ten thousand and eighty. They must be sacred, quite as sacred as a dramatic rehearsal or a tennis match. Instead of saying, "Sorry I can't see you, old chap, but I have to run off to the tennis club," you must say, "...but I have to work." This, I admit, is intensely difficult to say. Tennis is so much more urgent than the immortal soul.

VI

REMEMBER HUMAN NATURE

I have incidentally mentioned the vast expanse of forty-four hours between leaving business at 2 p.m. on Saturday and returning to business at 10 a.m. on Monday. And here I must touch on the point whether the week should consist of six days or of seven. For many years—in fact, until I was approaching forty—my own week consisted of seven days. I was constantly

being informed by older and wiser people that more work, more genuine living, could be got out of six days than out of seven.

And it is certainly true that now, with one day in seven in which I follow no programme and make no effort save what the caprice of the moment dictates, I appreciate intensely the moral value of a weekly rest. Nevertheless, had I my life to arrange over again, I would do again as I have done. Only those who have lived at the full stretch seven days a week for a long time can appreciate the full beauty of a regular recurring idleness. Moreover, I am ageing. And it is a question of age. In cases of abounding youth and exceptional energy and desire for effort I should say unhesitatingly: Keep going, day in, day out.

But in the average case I should say: Confine your formal programme (super-programme, I mean) to six days a week. If you find yourself wishing to extend it, extend it, but only in proportion to your wish; and count the time extra as a windfall, not as regular income, so that you can return to a six-day programme without the sensation of being poorer, of being a backslider.

Let us now see where we stand. So far we have marked for saving out of the waste of days, half an hour at least on six mornings a week, and one hour and a half on three evenings a week. Total, seven hours and a half a week.

I propose to be content with that seven hours and a half for the present. "What?" you cry. "You pretend to show us how to live, and you only deal with seven hours and a half out of a hundred and sixty-eight! Are you going to perform a miracle with your seven hours and a half?" Well, not to mince the matter, I am—if you will kindly let me! That is to say, I am going to ask you to attempt an experience which, while perfectly natural and explicable, has all the air of a miracle. My contention is that the full use of those seven-and-a-half hours will quicken the whole life of the week, add zest to it, and increase the interest which you feel in even the most banal occupations. You practise physical exercises for a mere ten minutes morning and evening, and yet you are not astonished when your physical health and strength are beneficially affected every hour of the day, and your whole physical outlook changed. Why should you be astonished that an average of over an hour a day given to the mind should permanently and completely enliven the whole activity of the mind?

More time might assuredly be given to the cultivation of one's self. And in proportion as the time was longer the results would be greater. But I prefer to begin with what looks like a trifling effort.

It is not really a trifling effort, as those will discover who have yet to essay it. To "clear" even

seven hours and a half from the jungle is passably difficult. For some sacrifice has to be made. One may have spent one's time badly, but one did spend it; one did do something with it, however ill-advised that something may have been. To do something else means a change of habits.

And habits are the very dickens to change! Further, any change, even a change for the better, is always accompanied by drawbacks and discomforts. If you imagine that you will be able to devote seven hours and a half a week to serious, continuous effort, and still live your old life, you are mistaken. I repeat that some sacrifice, and an immense deal of volition, will be necessary. And it is because I know the difficulty, it is because I know the almost disastrous effect of failure in such an enterprise, that I earnestly advise a very humble beginning. You must safeguard your self-respect. Self-respect is at the root of all purposefulness, and a failure in an enterprise deliberately planned deals a desperate wound at one's self-respect. Hence I iterate and reiterate: Start quietly, unostentatiously.

When you have conscientiously given seven hours and a half a week to the cultivation of your vitality for three months—then you may begin to sing louder and tell yourself what wondrous things you are capable of doing.

Before coming to the method of using the indicated hours, I have one final suggestion to make. That is, as regards the evenings, to allow much more than an hour and a half in which to do the work of an hour and a half. Remember the chance of accidents. Remember human nature. And give yourself, say, from 9 to 11.30 for your task of ninety minutes.

VII

CONTROLLING THE MIND

People say: "One can't help one's thoughts." But one can. The control of the thinking machine is perfectly possible. And since nothing whatever happens to us outside our own brain; since nothing hurts us or gives us pleasure except within the brain, the supreme importance of being able to control what goes on in that mysterious brain is patent. This idea is one of the oldest platitudes, but it is a platitude whose profound truth and urgency most people live and die without realising. People complain of the lack of power to concentrate, not witting that they may acquire the power, if they choose.

And without the power to concentrate—that is to say, without the power to dictate to the brain its task and to ensure obedience—true life is impossible. Mind control is the first element of a full existence.

Hence, it seems to me, the first business of the day should be to put the mind through its paces. You look after your body, inside and out; you run grave danger in hacking hairs off your skin; you employ a whole army of individuals, from the milkman to the pig-killer, to enable you to bribe your stomach into decent behaviour. Why not devote a little attention to the far more delicate machinery of the mind, especially as you will require no extraneous aid? It is for this portion of the art and craft of living that I have reserved the time from the moment of quitting your door to the moment of arriving at your office.

"What? I am to cultivate my mind in the street, on the platform, in the train, and in the crowded street again?" Precisely. Nothing simpler! No tools required! Not even a book. Nevertheless, the affair is not easy.

When you leave your house, concentrate your mind on a subject (no matter what, to begin with). You will not have gone ten yards before your mind has skipped away under your very eyes and is larking round the corner with another subject.

Bring it back by the scruff of the neck. Ere you have reached the station you will have brought it back about forty times. Do not despair. Continue. Keep it up. You will succeed. You cannot by any chance fail if you persevere. It is idle to pretend that your mind is incapable of concentration. Do you not remember that morning when you received a disquieting letter which demanded a very carefully-worded answer? How you kept your mind steadily on the subject of the answer, without a second's intermission, until you reached your office; whereupon you instantly sat down and wrote the answer? That was a case in which *you* were roused by circumstances to such a degree of vitality that you were able to dominate your mind like a tyrant. You would have no trifling. You insisted that its work should be done, and its work was done.

By the regular practice of concentration (as to which there is no secret—save the secret of perseverance) you can tyrannise over your mind (which is not the highest part of *you*) every hour of the day, and in no matter what place. The exercise is a very convenient one. If you got into your morning train with a pair of dumb-bells for your muscles or an encyclopaedia in ten volumes for your learning, you would probably excite remark. But as you walk in the street, or sit in the corner of the compartment behind a pipe, or "strap-hang" on the Subterranean, who is to know

that you are engaged in the most important of daily acts? What asinine boor can laugh at you?

I do not care what you concentrate on, so long as you concentrate. It is the mere disciplining of the thinking machine that counts. But still, you may as well kill two birds with one stone, and concentrate on something useful. I suggest—it is only a suggestion—a little chapter of Marcus Aurelius or Epictetus.

Do not, I beg, shy at their names. For myself, I know nothing more "actual," more bursting with plain common-sense, applicable to the daily life of plain persons like you and me (who hate airs, pose, and nonsense) than Marcus Aurelius or Epictetus. Read a chapter—and so short they are, the chapters!—in the evening and concentrate on it the next morning. You will see.

Yes, my friend, it is useless for you to try to disguise the fact. I can hear your brain like a telephone at my ear. You are saying to yourself: "This fellow was doing pretty well up to his seventh chapter. He had begun to interest me faintly. But what he says about thinking in trains, and concentration, and so on, is not for me. It may be well enough for some folks, but it isn't in my line."

It is for you, I passionately repeat; it is for you. Indeed, you are the very man I am aiming at.

Throw away the suggestion, and you throw away the most precious suggestion that was ever offered to you. It is not my suggestion. It is the suggestion of the most sensible, practical, hard-headed men who have walked the earth. I only give it you at second-hand. Try it. Get your mind in hand. And see how the process cures half the evils of life—especially worry, that miserable, avoidable, shameful disease—worry!

VIII

THE REFLECTIVE MOOD

The exercise of concentrating the mind (to which at least half an hour a day should be given) is a mere preliminary, like scales on the piano. Having acquired power over that most unruly member of one's complex organism, one has naturally to put it to the yoke. Useless to possess an obedient mind unless one profits to the furthest possible degree by its obedience. A prolonged primary course of study is indicated.

Now as to what this course of study should be there cannot be any question; there never has

been any question. All the sensible people of all ages are agreed upon it. And it is not literature, nor is it any other art, nor is it history, nor is it any science. It is the study of one's self. Man, know thyself. These words are so hackneyed that verily I blush to write them. Yet they must be written, for they need to be written. (I take back my blush, being ashamed of it.) Man, know thyself. I say it out loud. The phrase is one of those phrases with which everyone is familiar, of which everyone acknowledges the value, and which only the most sagacious put into practice. I don't know why. I am entirely convinced that what is more than anything else lacking in the life of the average well-intentioned man of to-day is the reflective mood.

We do not reflect. I mean that we do not reflect upon genuinely important things; upon the problem of our happiness, upon the main direction in which we are going, upon what life is giving to us, upon the share which reason has (or has not) in determining our actions, and upon the relation between our principles and our conduct.

And yet you are in search of happiness, are you not? Have you discovered it?

The chances are that you have not. The chances are that you have already come to believe that happiness is unattainable. But men have attained it. And they have attained it by

realising that happiness does not spring from the procuring of physical or mental pleasure, but from the development of reason and the adjustment of conduct to principles.

I suppose that you will not have the audacity to deny this. And if you admit it, and still devote no part of your day to the deliberate consideration of your reason, principles, and conduct, you admit also that while striving for a certain thing you are regularly leaving undone the one act which is necessary to the attainment of that thing.

Now, shall I blush, or will you?

Do not fear that I mean to thrust certain principles upon your attention. I care not (in this place) what your principles are. Your principles may induce you to believe in the righteousness of burglary. I don't mind. All I urge is that a life in which conduct does not fairly well accord with principles is a silly life; and that conduct can only be made to accord with principles by means of daily examination, reflection, and resolution. What leads to the permanent sorrowfulness of burglars is that their principles are contrary to burglary. If they genuinely believed in the moral excellence of burglary, penal servitude would simply mean so many happy years for them; all martyrs are happy, because their conduct and their principles agree.

As for reason (which makes conduct, and is not unconnected with the making of principles), it plays a far smaller part in our lives than we fancy. We are supposed to be reasonable but we are much more instinctive than reasonable. And the less we reflect, the less reasonable we shall be. The next time you get cross with the waiter because your steak is over-cooked, ask reason to step into the cabinet-room of your mind, and consult her. She will probably tell you that the waiter did not cook the steak, and had no control over the cooking of the steak; and that even if he alone was to blame, you accomplished nothing good by getting cross; you merely lost your dignity, looked a fool in the eyes of sensible men, and soured the waiter, while producing no effect whatever on the steak.

The result of this consultation with reason (for which she makes no charge) will be that when once more your steak is over-cooked you will treat the waiter as a fellow-creature, remain quite calm in a kindly spirit, and politely insist on having a fresh steak. The gain will be obvious and solid.

In the formation or modification of principles, and the practice of conduct, much help can be derived from printed books (issued at sixpence each and upwards). I mentioned in my last chapter Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus. Certain even more widely known works will

occur at once to the memory. I may also mention Pascal, La Bruyere, and Emerson. For myself, you do not catch me travelling without my Marcus Aurelius. Yes, books are valuable. But not reading of books will take the place of a daily, candid, honest examination of what one has recently done, and what one is about to do—of a steady looking at one's self in the face (disconcerting though the sight may be).

When shall this important business be accomplished? The solitude of the evening journey home appears to me to be suitable for it. A reflective mood naturally follows the exertion of having earned the day's living. Of course if, instead of attending to an elementary and profoundly important duty, you prefer to read the paper (which you might just as well read while waiting for your dinner) I have nothing to say. But attend to it at some time of the day you must. I now come to the evening hours.

IX

INTEREST IN THE ARTS

Many people pursue a regular and uninterrupted course of idleness in the evenings because they think that there is no alternative to idleness but the study of literature; and they do not happen to have a taste for literature. This is a great mistake.

Of course it is impossible, or at any rate very difficult, properly to study anything whatever without the aid of printed books. But if you desire to understand the deeper depths of bridge or of boat-sailing you would not be deterred by your lack of interest in literature from reading the best books on bridge or boat-sailing. We must, therefore, distinguish between literature, and books treating of subjects not literary. I shall come to literature in due course.

Let me now remark to those who have never read Meredith, and who are capable of being unmoved by a discussion as to whether Mr. Stephen Phillips is or is not a true poet, that they are perfectly within their rights. It is not a crime not to love literature. It is not a sign of imbecility. The mandarins of literature will order out to instant execution the unfortunate individual who does not comprehend, say, the influence of Wordsworth on Tennyson. But that is only their

impudence. Where would they be, I wonder, if requested to explain the influences that went to make Tschaikowsky's "Pathetic Symphony"?

There are enormous fields of knowledge quite outside literature which will yield magnificent results to cultivators. For example (since I have just mentioned the most popular piece of high-class music in England to-day), I am reminded that the Promenade Concerts begin in August. You go to them. You smoke your cigar or cigarette (and I regret to say that you strike your matches during the soft bars of the "Lohengrin" overture), and you enjoy the music. But you say you cannot play the piano or the fiddle, or even the banjo; that you know nothing of music.

What does that matter? That you have a genuine taste for music is proved by the fact that, in order to fill his hall with you and your peers, the conductor is obliged to provide programmes from which bad music is almost entirely excluded (a change from the old Covent Garden days!).

Now surely your inability to perform "The Maiden's Prayer" on a piano need not prevent you from making yourself familiar with the construction of the orchestra to which you listen a couple of nights a week during a couple of months! As things are, you probably think of the orchestra as a heterogeneous mass of instruments producing a confused agreeable mass of sound.

You do not listen for details because you have never trained your ears to listen to details.

If you were asked to name the instruments which play the great theme at the beginning of the C minor symphony you could not name them for your life's sake. Yet you admire the C minor symphony. It has thrilled you. It will thrill you again. You have even talked about it, in an expansive mood, to that lady—you know whom I mean. And all you can positively state about the C minor symphony is that Beethoven composed it and that it is a "jolly fine thing."

Now, if you have read, say, Mr. Krehbiel's "How to Listen to Music" (which can be got at any bookseller's for less than the price of a stall at the Alhambra, and which contains photographs of all the orchestral instruments and plans of the arrangement of orchestras) you would next go to a promenade concert with an astonishing intensification of interest in it. Instead of a confused mass, the orchestra would appear to you as what it is—a marvellously balanced organism whose various groups of members each have a different and an indispensable function. You would spy out the instruments, and listen for their respective sounds. You would know the gulf that separates a French horn from an English horn, and you would perceive why a player of the hautboy gets higher wages than a fiddler, though the fiddle is the more difficult instrument. You

would *live* at a promenade concert, whereas previously you had merely existed there in a state of beatific coma, like a baby gazing at a bright object.

The foundations of a genuine, systematic knowledge of music might be laid. You might specialise your inquiries either on a particular form of music (such as the symphony), or on the works of a particular composer. At the end of a year of forty-eight weeks of three brief evenings each, combined with a study of programmes and attendances at concerts chosen out of your increasing knowledge, you would really know something about music, even though you were as far off as ever from jangling "The Maiden's Prayer" on the piano.

"But I hate music!" you say. My dear sir, I respect you.

What applies to music applies to the other arts. I might mention Mr. Clermont Witt's "How to Look at Pictures," or Mr. Russell Sturgis's "How to Judge Architecture," as beginnings (merely beginnings) of systematic vitalising knowledge in other arts, the materials for whose study abound in London.

"I hate all the arts!" you say. My dear sir, I respect you more and more.

I will deal with your case next, before coming to literature.

X

NOTHING IN LIFE IS HUMDRUM

Art is a great thing. But it is not the greatest. The most important of all perceptions is the continual perception of cause and effect—in other words, the perception of the continuous development of the universe—in still other words, the perception of the course of evolution. When one has thoroughly got imbued into one's head the leading truth that nothing happens without a cause, one grows not only large-minded, but large-hearted.

It is hard to have one's watch stolen, but one reflects that the thief of the watch became a thief from causes of heredity and environment which are as interesting as they are scientifically comprehensible; and one buys another watch, if not with joy, at any rate with a philosophy that makes bitterness impossible. One loses, in the study of cause and effect, that absurd air which

so many people have of being always shocked and pained by the curiousness of life. Such people live amid human nature as if human nature were a foreign country full of awful foreign customs. But, having reached maturity, one ought surely to be ashamed of being a stranger in a strange land!

The study of cause and effect, while it lessens the painfulness of life, adds to life's picturesqueness. The man to whom evolution is but a name looks at the sea as a grandiose, monotonous spectacle, which he can witness in August for three shillings third-class return. The man who is imbued with the idea of development, of continuous cause and effect, perceives in the sea an element which in the day-before-yesterday of geology was vapour, which yesterday was boiling, and which to-morrow will inevitably be ice.

He perceives that a liquid is merely something on its way to be solid, and he is penetrated by a sense of the tremendous, changeful picturesqueness of life. Nothing will afford a more durable satisfaction than the constantly cultivated appreciation of this. It is the end of all science.

Cause and effect are to be found everywhere. Rents went up in Shepherd's Bush. It was painful and shocking that rents should go up in Shepherd's Bush. But to a certain point we are all

scientific students of cause and effect, and there was not a clerk lunching at a Lyons Restaurant who did not scientifically put two and two together and see in the (once) Two-penny Tube the cause of an excessive demand for wigwams in Shepherd's Bush, and in the excessive demand for wigwams the cause of the increase in the price of wigwams.

"Simple!" you say, disdainfully. Everything—the whole complex movement of the universe—is as simple as that—when you can sufficiently put two and two together. And, my dear sir, perhaps you happen to be an estate agent's clerk, and you hate the arts, and you want to foster your immortal soul, and you can't be interested in your business because it's so humdrum.

Nothing is humdrum.

The tremendous, changeful picturesqueness of life is marvellously shown in an estate agent's office. What! There was a block of traffic in Oxford Street; to avoid the block people actually began to travel under the cellars and drains, and the result was a rise of rents in Shepherd's Bush! And you say that isn't picturesque! Suppose you were to study, in this spirit, the property question in London for an hour and a half every other evening. Would it not give zest to your business, and transform your whole life?

You would arrive at more difficult problems. And you would be able to tell us why, as the natural result of cause and effect, the longest straight street in London is about a yard and a half in length, while the longest absolutely straight street in Paris extends for miles. I think you will admit that in an estate agent's clerk I have not chosen an example that specially favours my theories.

You are a bank clerk, and you have not read that breathless romance (disguised as a scientific study), Walter Bagehot's "Lombard Street"? Ah, my dear sir, if you had begun with that, and followed it up for ninety minutes every other evening, how entralling your business would be to you, and how much more clearly you would understand human nature.

You are "penned in town," but you love excursions to the country and the observation of wild life—certainly a heart-enlarging diversion. Why don't you walk out of your house door, in your slippers, to the nearest gas lamp of a night with a butterfly net, and observe the wild life of common and rare moths that is beating about it, and co-ordinate the knowledge thus obtained and build a superstructure on it, and at last get to know something about something?

You need not be devoted to the arts, not to literature, in order to live fully.

The whole field of daily habit and scene is waiting to satisfy that curiosity which means life, and the satisfaction of which means an understanding heart.

I promised to deal with your case, O man who hates art and literature, and I have dealt with it. I now come to the case of the person, happily very common, who does "like reading."

XI

SERIOUS READING

Novels are excluded from "serious reading," so that the man who, bent on self-improvement, has been deciding to devote ninety minutes three times a week to a complete study of the works of Charles Dickens will be well advised to alter his plans. The reason is not that novels are not serious—some of the great literature of the world is in the form of prose fiction—the reason is that bad novels ought not to be read, and that good novels never demand any appreciable mental application on the part of the reader. It is only the bad parts of Meredith's novels that are difficult.

A good novel rushes you forward like a skiff down a stream, and you arrive at the end, perhaps breathless, but unexhausted. The best novels involve the least strain. Now in the cultivation of the mind one of the most important factors is precisely the feeling of strain, of difficulty, of a task which one part of you is anxious to achieve and another part of you is anxious to shirk; and that feeling cannot be got in facing a novel. You do not set your teeth in order to read "Anna Karenina." Therefore, though you should read novels, you should not read them in those ninety minutes.

Imaginative poetry produces a far greater mental strain than novels. It produces probably the severest strain of any form of literature. It is the highest form of literature. It yields the highest form of pleasure, and teaches the highest form of wisdom. In a word, there is nothing to compare with it. I say this with sad consciousness of the fact that the majority of people do not read poetry.

I am persuaded that many excellent persons, if they were confronted with the alternatives of reading "Paradise Lost" and going round Trafalgar Square at noonday on their knees in sack-cloth, would choose the ordeal of public ridicule. Still, I will never cease advising my friends and enemies to read poetry before anything.

If poetry is what is called "a sealed book" to you, begin by reading Hazlitt's famous essay on the nature of "poetry in general." It is the best thing of its kind in English, and no one who has read it can possibly be under the misapprehension that poetry is a mediaeval torture, or a mad elephant, or a gun that will go off by itself and kill at forty paces. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine the mental state of the man who, after reading Hazlitt's essay, is not urgently desirous of reading some poetry before his next meal. If the essay so inspires you I would suggest that you make a commencement with purely narrative poetry.

There is an infinitely finer English novel, written by a woman, than anything by George Eliot or the Brontes, or even Jane Austen, which perhaps you have not read. Its title is "Aurora Leigh," and its author E.B. Browning. It happens to be written in verse, and to contain a considerable amount of genuinely fine poetry. Decide to read that book through, even if you die for it. Forget that it is fine poetry. Read it simply for the story and the social ideas. And when you have done, ask yourself honestly whether you still dislike poetry. I have known more than one person to whom "Aurora Leigh" has been the means of proving that in assuming they hated poetry they were entirely mistaken.

Of course, if, after Hazlitt, and such an experiment made in the light of Hazlitt, you are finally assured that there is something in you which is antagonistic to poetry, you must be content with history or philosophy. I shall regret it, yet not inconsolably. "The Decline and Fall" is not to be named in the same day with "Paradise Lost," but it is a vastly pretty thing; and Herbert Spencer's "First Principles" simply laughs at the claims of poetry and refuses to be accepted as aught but the most majestic product of any human mind. I do not suggest that either of these works is suitable for a tyro in mental strains. But I see no reason why any man of average intelligence should not, after a year of continuous reading, be fit to assault the supreme masterpieces of history or philosophy. The great convenience of masterpieces is that they are so astonishingly lucid.

I suggest no particular work as a start. The attempt would be futile in the space of my command. But I have two general suggestions of a certain importance. The first is to define the direction and scope of your efforts. Choose a limited period, or a limited subject, or a single author. Say to yourself: "I will know something about the French Revolution, or the rise of railways, or the works of John Keats." And during a given period, to be settled beforehand, confine yourself to your choice. There is much pleasure to be derived from being a specialist.

The second suggestion is to think as well as to read. I know people who read and read, and for all the good it does them they might just as well cut bread-and-butter. They take to reading as better men take to drink. They fly through the shires of literature on a motor-car, their sole object being motion. They will tell you how many books they have read in a year.

Unless you give at least forty-five minutes to careful, fatiguing reflection (it is an awful bore at first) upon what you are reading, your ninety minutes of a night are chiefly wasted. This means that your pace will be slow.

Never mind.

Forget the goal; think only of the surrounding country; and after a period, perhaps when you least expect it, you will suddenly find yourself in a lovely town on a hill.

XII

DANGERS TO AVOID

I cannot terminate these hints, often, I fear, too didactic and abrupt, upon the full use of one's time to the great end of living (as distinguished from vegetating) without briefly referring to certain dangers which lie in wait for the sincere aspirant towards life. The first is the terrible danger of becoming that most odious and least supportable of persons—a prig. Now a prig is a pert fellow who gives himself airs of superior wisdom. A prig is a pompous fool who has gone out for a ceremonial walk, and without knowing it has lost an important part of his attire, namely, his sense of humour. A prig is a tedious individual who, having made a discovery, is so impressed by his discovery that he is capable of being gravely displeased because the entire world is not also impressed by it. Unconsciously to become a prig is an easy and a fatal thing.

Hence, when one sets forth on the enterprise of using all one's time, it is just as well to remember that one's own time, and not other people's time, is the material with which one has to deal; that the earth rolled on pretty comfortably before one began to balance a budget of the hours, and that it will continue to roll on pretty comfortably whether or not one succeeds in one's new role of chancellor of the exchequer of time.

It is as well not to chatter too much about what one is doing, and not to betray a too-pained sadness at the spectacle of a whole world deliberately wasting so many hours out of every day, and therefore never really living. It will be found, ultimately, that in taking care of one's self one has quite all one can do.

Another danger is the danger of being tied to a programme like a slave to a chariot. One's programme must not be allowed to run away with one. It must be respected, but it must not be worshipped as a fetish. A programme of daily employ is not a religion.

This seems obvious. Yet I know men whose lives are a burden to themselves and a distressing burden to their relatives and friends simply because they have failed to appreciate the obvious. "Oh, no," I have heard the martyred wife exclaim, "Arthur always takes the dog out for exercise at eight o'clock and he always begins to read at a quarter to nine. So it's quite out of the question that we should..." etc., etc. And the note of absolute finality in that plaintive voice reveals the unsuspected and ridiculous tragedy of a career.

On the other hand, a programme is a programme. And unless it is treated with deference it ceases to be anything but a poor joke. To treat one's programme with exactly the right amount of deference, to live with not too much

and not too little elasticity, is scarcely the simple affair it may appear to the inexperienced.

And still another danger is the danger of developing a policy of rush, of being gradually more and more obsessed by what one has to do next. In this way one may come to exist as in a prison, and one's life may cease to be one's own. One may take the dog out for a walk at eight o'clock, and meditate the whole time on the fact that one must begin to read at a quarter to nine, and that one must not be late.

And the occasional deliberate breaking of one's programme will not help to mend matters. The evil springs not from persisting without elasticity in what one has attempted, but from originally attempting too much, from filling one's programme till it runs over. The only cure is to reconstitute the programme, and to attempt less.

But the appetite for knowledge grows by what it feeds on, and there are men who come to like a constant breathless hurry of endeavour. Of them it may be said that a constant breathless hurry is better than an eternal doze.

In any case, if the programme exhibits a tendency to be oppressive, and yet one wishes not to modify it, an excellent palliative is to pass with exaggerated deliberation from one portion of it to another; for example, to spend five minutes in perfect mental quiescence between chaining up

the St. Bernard and opening the book; in other words, to waste five minutes with the entire consciousness of wasting them.

The last, and chiefest danger which I would indicate, is one to which I have already referred—the risk of a failure at the commencement of the enterprise.

I must insist on it.

A failure at the commencement may easily kill outright the newborn impulse towards a complete vitality, and therefore every precaution should be observed to avoid it. The impulse must not be over-taxed. Let the pace of the first lap be even absurdly slow, but let it be as regular as possible.

And, having once decided to achieve a certain task, achieve it at all costs of tedium and distaste. The gain in self-confidence of having accomplished a tiresome labour is immense.

Finally, in choosing the first occupations of those evening hours, be guided by nothing whatever but your taste and natural inclination.

It is a fine thing to be a walking encyclopaedia of philosophy, but if you happen to have no liking for philosophy, and to have a like for the natural history of street-cries, much

better leave philosophy alone, and take to street-cries.

**Excerpt from A Young
Man's Guide
by
William Alcott
1833**

Section III. Industry.

Nothing is more essential to usefulness and happiness in life, than habits of industry. 'This we commanded you,' says St. Paul, 'that if any would not work, neither should he eat.' Now this would be the sober dictate of good sense, had the apostle never spoken. It is just as true now as it was 2,000 years ago, that no person possessing a sound mind in a healthy body, has a right to live in this world without labor. If he claims an existence on any other condition, let him betake himself to some other planet.

There are many kinds of labor. Some which are no less useful than others, are almost exclusively mental. You may make your own selection from a very wide range of employments, all, perhaps, equally important to society. But something you must do. Even if you happen to inherit an ample fortune, your health and happiness demand that you should labor. To live in idleness, even if you have the means, is not only injurious to yourself, but a species of fraud upon the community, and the children,—if children you ever have,—who have a claim upon you for what you can earn and do.

Let me prevail with you then, when I urge you to set out in life fully determined to depend chiefly on yourself, for pecuniary support; and to be in this respect, independent. In a country where the general rule is that a person shall rise,—if he rise at all,—by his own merit, such a resolution is indispensable. It is usually idle to be looking out for support from some other quarter. Suppose you should obtain a place of office or trust through the friendship, favor, or affection of others; what then? Why, you hold your post at uncertainties. It may be taken from you at almost any hour. But if you depend on yourself alone, in

this respect, your mountain stands strong, and cannot very easily be moved.

He who lives upon any thing except his own labor, is incessantly surrounded by rivals. He is in daily danger of being out-bidden; his very bread depends upon caprice, and he lives in a state of never ceasing fear. His is not, indeed, the dog's life, 'hunger and idleness,' but it is worse; for it is 'idleness with slavery;' the latter being just the price of the former.

Slaves, are often well fed and decently clothed; but they dare not speak. They dare not be suspected even to think differently from their master, despise his acts as much as they may;—let him be tyrant, drunkard, fool, or all three at once, they must either be silent, or lose his approbation. Though possessing a thousand times his knowledge, they yield to his assumption of superior understanding; though knowing it is they who, in fact, do all that he is paid for doing, it is destruction to them to seem as if they thought any portion of the service belonged to themselves.

You smile, perhaps, and ask what all this tirade against slavery means. But remember, there is

slavery of several kinds. There is mental slavery as well as bodily; and the former is not confined to any particular division of the United States.

Begin, too, with a determination to labor through life. There are many who suppose that when they have secured to themselves a competence, they shall sit with folded arms, in an easy chair, the rest of their days, and enjoy it. But they may be assured that this will never do. The very fact of a person's having spent the early and middle part of life in active usefulness, creates a necessity, to the body and mind, of its continuance. By this is not meant that men should labor as hard in old age, even in proportion to their strength, as in early life. Youth requires a great variety and amount of action, maturity not so much, and age still less. Yet so much as age does, in fact, demand, is more necessary than to those who are younger. Children are so tenacious of life, that they do not appear to suffer immediately, if exercise is neglected; though a day of reckoning must finally come.

Hence we see the reason why those who retire from business towards the close of life, so often become diseased, in body and mind; and instead of enjoying life, or making those around them

happy, become a source of misery to themselves and others.

Most people have a general belief in the importance of industrious habits; and yet not a few make strange work in endeavoring to form them. Some attempt to do it by compulsion; others by flattery. Some think it is to be accomplished by set lessons, in spite of example; others by example alone.

A certain father who was deeply convinced of the importance of forming his sons to habits of industry, used to employ them whole days in removing and replacing heaps of stones. This was well intended, and arose from regarding industry as a high accomplishment; but there is some danger of defeating our own purpose in this way, and of producing disgust. Besides this, labor enough can usually be obtained which is obviously profitable.

All persons, without exception, ought to labor more or less, every day in the open air. Of the truth of this opinion, the public are beginning to be sensible; and hence we hear much said, lately, about manual labor schools. Those who, from particular circumstances, cannot labor in the open

air, should substitute in its place some active mechanical employment, together with suitable calisthenic or gymnastic exercises.

It is a great misfortune of the present day, that almost every one is, by his own estimate, raised above his real state of life. Nearly every person you meet with is aiming at a situation in which he shall be exempted from the drudgery of laboring with his hands.

Now we cannot all become 'lords' and 'gentlemen,' if we would. There must be a large part of us, after all, to make and mend clothes and houses, and carry on trade and commerce, and, in spite of all that we can do, the far greater part of us must actually work at something; otherwise we fall under the sentence; 'He who will not work shall not eat.' Yet, so strong is the propensity to be thought 'gentlemen;' so general is this desire amongst the youth of this proud money making nation, that thousands upon thousands of them are, at this moment, in a state which may end in starvation; not so much because they are too lazy to earn their bread, as because they are too proud!

And what are the consequences? A lazy youth becomes a burden to those parents, whom he

ought to comfort, if not support. Always aspiring to something higher than he can reach, his life is a life of disappointment and shame. If marriage befall him, it is a real affliction, involving others as well as himself. His lot is a thousand times worse than that of the common laborer. Nineteen times out of twenty a premature death awaits him: and, alas! how numerous are the cases in which that death is most miserable, not to say ignominious!

Section IV. On Economy.

There is a false, as well as a true economy. I have seen an individual who, with a view to economy, was in the habit of splitting his wafers. Sometimes a thick wafer can be split into two, which will answer a very good purpose; but at others, both parts fall to pieces. Let the success be ever so complete, however, all who reflect for a moment on the value of time, must see it to be a losing process.

I knew a laboring man who would hire a horse, and spend the greater part of a day, in going six or eight miles and purchasing half a dozen bushels of grain, at sixpence less a bushel than he must have given near home. Thus to gain fifty

cents, he subjected himself to an expense, in time and money, of one hundred and fifty. These are very common examples of defective economy; and of that 'withholding' which the Scripture says 'tends to poverty.'

Economy in time is economy of money—for it needs not Franklin to tell us that time is equivalent to money. Besides, I never knew a person who was economical of the one, who was not equally so of the other. Economy of time will, therefore, be an important branch of study.

But the study is rather difficult. For though every young man of common sense knows that an hour is sixty minutes, very few seem to know that sixty minutes make an hour. On this account many waste fragments of time,—of one, two, three or five minutes each—without hesitation, and apparently without regret;—never thinking that fifteen or twenty such fragments are equal to a full hour. 'Take care of the pence, the pounds will take care of themselves,' is not more true, than that hours will take care of themselves, if you will only secure the minutes.[1]

In order to form economical habits, several important points must be secured. You must have

for every purpose and thing a time, and place; and every thing must be done at the time, and all things put in their place.

1. Every thing must be done at the time. Whether you attempt little or much, let every hour have its employment, in business, study, social conversation, or diversion; and unless it be on extraordinary occasions, you must not suffer your plan to be broken. It is in this way that many men who perform an incredible amount of business, have abundant leisure. And it is for want of doing business systematically that many who effect but little, never find much leisure. They spend their lives in literally 'doing nothing.'

An eminent prime minister of Holland was asked how he could perform such a vast amount of business, as it was known he did, and yet have so much leisure. 'I do every thing at the time;' was the reply.

Some of you will say you have no room for any plan of your own; that your whole time is at the will of your master, or employer. But this is not so. There are few persons who are so entirely devoted to others as not to have minutes, if not hours, every day, which they can call their own.

Now here it is that character is tried and proved. He alone who is wise in small matters, will be wise in large ones. Whether your unoccupied moments amount in a day to half an hour, or an hour, or two hours, have something to do in each of them. If it be social conversation, the moment your hour arrives, engage in it at once; if study, engage at once in that. The very fact that you have but a very few minutes at your command, will create an interest in your employment during that time.

Perhaps no persons read to better purpose than those who have but very little leisure. Some of the very best minds have been formed in this manner. To repeat their names would be to mention a host of self educated men, in this and in other countries. To show what can be done, I will mention one fact which fell under my own observation. A young man, about fifteen years of age, unaccustomed to study, and with a mind wholly undisciplined, read Rollin's Ancient History through in about three months, or a fourth of a year; and few persons were ever more closely confined to a laborious employment than he was during the whole time. Now to read four such works as Rollin in a year, is by no means a matter to be despised.

2. Every thing should have its place. Going into a shop, the other day, where a large number of persons were employed, I observed the following motto, in large letters, pasted on the side of the room; 'Put every thing in its proper place.' I found the owner of the shop to be a man of order and economy.

An old gentleman of my acquaintance, who always had a place for every thing, made it a rule, if any thing was out of its place, and none of his children could find it, to blame the whole of them. This was an unreasonable measure, but produced its intended effect. His whole family follow his example; they have a place for every thing, and they put every thing in its place.

Unless both the foregoing rules are observed, true economy does not and cannot exist. But without economy, life is of little comparative value to ourselves or others. This trait of character is generally claimed, but more rarely possessed.

Section V. Indolence.

One of the greatest obstacles in the road to excellence, is indolence. I have known young

men who would reason finely on the value of time, and the necessity of rising early and improving every moment of it. Yet I have also known these same aspiring young men to lie dozing, an hour or two in the morning, after the wants of nature had been reasonably, and more than reasonably gratified. You can no more rouse them, with all their fine arguments, than you can a log. There they lie, completely enchained by indolence.

I have known others continually complain of the shortness of time; that they had no time for business, no time for study, &c. Yet they would lavish hours in yawning at a public house, or hesitating whether they had better go to the theatre or stay; or whether they had better get up, or indulge in 'a little more slumber.' Such people wear the most galling chains, and as long as they continue to wear them there is no reasoning with them.

An indolent person is scarcely human; he is half quadruped, and of the most stupid species too. He may have good intentions of discharging a duty, while that duty is at a distance; but let it approach, let him view the time of action as near, and down

go his hands in languor. He wills, perhaps; but he unwill in the next breath.

What is to be done with such a man, especially if he is a young one? He is absolutely good for nothing. Business tires him; reading fatigues him; the public service interferes with his pleasures, or restrains his freedom. His life must be passed on a bed of down. If he is employed, moments are as hours to him—if he is amused, hours are as moments. In general, his whole time eludes him, he lets it glide unheeded, like water under a bridge. Ask him what he has done with his morning,—he cannot tell you; for he has lived without reflection, and almost without knowing whether he has lived at all.

The indolent man sleeps as long as it is possible for him to sleep, dresses slowly, amuses himself in conversation with the first person that calls upon him, and loiters about till dinner. Or if he engages in any employment, however important, he leaves it the moment an opportunity of talking occurs. At length dinner is served up; and after lounging at the table a long time, the evening will probably be spent as unprofitably as the morning: and this it may be, is no unfair specimen of his whole life. And is not such a wretch, for it is

improper to call him a man—good for nothing? What is he good for? How can any rational being be willing to spend the precious gift of life in a manner so worthless, and so much beneath the dignity of human nature? When he is about stepping into the grave, how can he review the past with any degree of satisfaction? What is his history, whether recorded here or there,—in golden letters, or on the plainest slab—but, 'he was born' and 'he died!'

Section VI. Early Rising and Rest.

Dr. Rush mentions a patient of his who thought himself wonderfully abstinent because he drank no spirituous or fermented liquors, except a bottle of wine or so, after dinner!

In like manner some call it early to retire at ten or eleven o'clock. Others think ten very late. Dr. Good, an English writer on medicine, in treating of the appropriate means of preventing the gout in those who are predisposed to it, after giving directions in regard to diet, drink, exercise, &c., recommends an early hour of retiring to rest. 'By all means,' says he, 'you should go to bed by eleven.'

To half the population of New England such a direction would seem strange; but by the inhabitants of cities and large towns, who already begin to ape the customs and fashions of the old world, the caution is well understood. People who are in the habit of making and attending parties which commence at 9 or 10 o'clock in the evening, can hardly be expected to rise with the sun.

We hear much said about the benefit of the morning air. Many wise men have supposed the common opinion on this subject to be erroneous; and that the mistake has arisen from the fact that being refreshed and invigorated by rest, the change is within instead of without; that our physical frames and mental faculties are more healthy than they were the previous evening, rather than that the surrounding atmosphere has altered.

Whether the morning air is more healthy or not, it is certainly healthy enough. Besides, there are so many reasons for early rising that if I can persuade the reader to go to bed early, I shall have little fear of his lying late in the morning.

1st. He who rises early and plans his work, and early sets himself about it, generally finds his business go well with him the whole day. He has taken time by the foretop; and will be sure to go before, or drive his business; while his more tardy neighbor 'suffers his business to drive him.' There is something striking in the feeling produced by beginning a day's work thus seasonably. It gives an impulse to a man's thoughts, speech, and actions, which usually lasts through the day. This is not a mere whim, but sober fact; as can be attested by thousands. The person who rises late, usually pleads (for mankind are very ingenious in defence of what falls in with their own inclinations,) that he does as much in the progress of the day, as those who rise early. This may, in a few instances, be true; but in general, facts show the reverse. The motions of the early riser will be more lively and vigorous all day. He may, indeed, become dull late in the evening, but he ought to be so.

Sir Matthew Hale said that after spending a Sunday well, the rest of the week was usually prosperous. This is doubtless to be accounted for—in part at least—on the above principle.

2. In the warm season, the morning is the most agreeable time for labor. Many farmers and mechanics in the country perform a good half day's work before the people of the city scarcely know that the sun shines.[2]

3. To lie snoring late in the morning, assimilates us to the most beastly of animals. Burgh, an ingenious English writer, justly observes; 'There is no time spent more stupidly than that which some luxurious people pass in a morning between sleeping and waking, after nature has been fully gratified. He who is awake may be doing something: he who is asleep, is receiving the refreshment necessary to fit him for action: but the hours spent in dozing and slumbering can hardly be called existence.'

The late Dr. Smith, of Yale College, in his lectures, used to urge on his hearers never to take 'the second nap.' He said that if this rule were steadily and universally followed by persons in health,—there would be no dozing or oversleeping. If, for once, they should awake from the first nap before nature was sufficiently restored, the next night would restore the proper balance. In laying this down as a rule, Dr. Smith

would, of course, except those instances in which we are awakened by accident.

4. It has been remarked by experienced physicians that they have seldom, if ever, known a person of great age, who was not an early riser. In enumerating the causes of longevity, Rush and Sinclair both include early rising.

5. It is a trite but just maxim that one hour's sleep before midnight is worth two afterward. Why it is so, would perhaps be difficult to say. The power of habit is great, and as the majority of children are trained to go to bed early, perhaps this will in part account for the fact. So when the usual hour for meal arrives, a given amount of food eaten at the time, is digested in a more healthy and regular manner than if eaten one, or two, or three hours afterwards. Again, nature certainly intended man should exercise during the day, and sleep in the night. I do not say the whole night; because in the winter and in high northern latitudes, this would be devoting an unreasonable portion of time to sleep. It would hardly do to sleep three or four months. But in all countries, and in all climates, we should try to sleep half our hours before midnight.

6. The person who, instead of going to bed at nine, sits up till eleven, and then sleeps during two hours of daylight the following morning, is grossly negligent of economy. For, suppose he makes this his constant practice, during his whole business life, say fifty years. The extra oil or tallow which he would consume would not be estimated at less than one cent an evening; which, in fifty years would be \$182.50. Not a very large sum to be sure; but, to every young man, worth saving; since, to a community of 1,000 young men, the amount would be no less than \$182,500. Then the loss in health and strength would be far greater, though it is obvious that it cannot so easily be computed.

7. Once more. If an hour's sleep before midnight is worth more than an hour in the morning, then an hour in the morning is of course worth less than an hour before midnight, and a person must sleep a greater number of hours in the morning to obtain an equal amount of rest. A person retiring at eleven and rising at eight, would probably get no more rest, possibly less, than a person who should sleep from nine to five;—a period one hour shorter. But if so, he actually loses an hour of time a day. And you well know, if Franklin had not told you so, that time is money.

Now, if we estimate the value of this time at ten cents an hour for one person in four, of the population of the United States—and this is probably a fair estimate—the loss to an individual in a year, or 313 working days, would be \$31.30; and in 50 years \$1,565. A sum sufficient to buy a good farm in many parts of the country. The loss to a population equal to that of the United States, would, in fifty years, be no less than five thousand and eighty-six millions of dollars!

But this is not the whole loss. The time of the young and old is beyond all price for the purposes of mental and moral improvement. Especially is this true of the precious golden hours of the morning. Think, then, of the immense waste in a year! At twelve hours a day, more than a million of years of valuable time are wasted annually in the United States.

I have hitherto made my estimates on the supposition that we do not sleep too much, in the aggregate, and that the only loss sustained arises from the manner of procuring it. But suppose, once more, we sleep an hour too much daily. This

involves a waste just twice as great as that which we have already estimated.

Do you startle at these estimates! It is proper that many of you should. You have misspent time enough. Awake your 'drowsy souls,' and shake off your stupid habits. Think of Napoleon breaking up the boundaries of kingdoms, and dethroning kings, and to accomplish these results, going through with an amount of mental and bodily labor that few constitutions would be equal to, with only four hours of sleep in the twenty-four. Think of Brougham too, who works as many hours, perhaps, as any man in England, and has as much influence, and yet sleeps as few; i.e., only four. A hundred persons might be named, and the list would include some of the greatest benefactors of their race, who never think of sleeping more than six hours a day. And yet many of you are scarcely contented with eight!

Would you conquer as Bonaparte did—not states, provinces, and empires,—but would you aspire to the high honor of conquering yourselves, and of extending your conquests intellectually and morally, you must take the necessary steps. The path is a plain one; requiring nothing but a little

moral courage. 'What man has done, man may do.' I know you do not and ought not to aspire to conquer kingdoms, or to become prime ministers; but you ought to aspire to get the victory over yourselves:—a victory as much more noble than those of Napoleon, and Cæsar, and Alexander, as intellectual and moral influence are superior to mere brute force.