

Guide to Essential Living

You've set an important goal, have an extremely busy schedule and there are only 24 hours in a day. Feel the pressure?

If you're like most people, you've often felt that there aren't enough hours in a day. Many of us struggle just to get by, postponing what's most important to us as we attempt to 'catch up.' Unfortunately, catching up is not possible because there is always more added to our to-do list. Sadly, the years pass by and we are left wondering where the time went, disappointed by having our dreams unrealized.

Most of us aren't aware of how much of our energy is spent on things that are not important to us. The *Guide to Essential Living* was designed to help you take a closer look at how you spend your time because what you do influences the direction of your life. By committing to this two-week challenge, you are giving yourself the opportunity to rethink and, if you choose, redirect your time and energy toward what is most meaningful and essential to you and your well-being. It is our hope that this guide will inspire you to take action that leads you a step closer to achieving your desired life.

What Is Essential to You?



Once you get in touch with what you most value, make sure you make time to nurture those different aspects of your life. Try to bring awareness of whether or not you are truly present while engaging in these areas. Which ones do you feel connected to in a meaningful way?

Week One Challenge

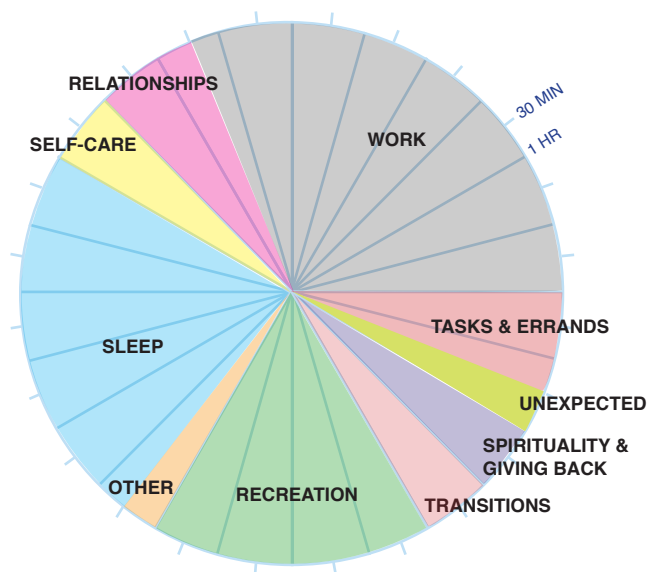
To get started, print out the entire guide. You will use the time-tracking chart on page 4 to record the time you spend in each category of your life for a full week. The information you collect will help you determine what changes you would like to make for Week Two.

Instructions for Week One:

1. Pick a start date, choosing any day during a typical week.
2. To the best of your ability, write down the amount of time spent within each category in the space provided. You may want to keep track of your time as you go about your day on a separate piece of paper and record that number at the end of the day. (For a description of the categories, refer to page 3).
3. Continue to track your time for a whole week, making sure the total for each day adds up to exactly 24 hours.
4. At the end of the week, record the average time spent in each category. To do this, add up the daily number for each category and divide that total by seven. Record that number in the space provided at the bottom of each category.
5. Once you find your averages for the week, use different colors to fill in the 24-hour circle graphic to represent the time spent in each category. This visual will make it easy for you to see how your average day is spent.

Ever wonder how much time you spend on your cell phone or computer every day?

Example:



Reflecting back on his first week, this person realized he was spending too much time on the computer and watching TV. Next week he plans on dedicating more time to his family and toward making a career transition, because his weekly work average is so high.

Category Descriptions

Refer to these basic descriptions as you fill out your chart.

Work: Hours spent doing your job (including at the office and calls you do at home) and your average commuting time

Relationships: Time spent nurturing relationships, such as with your children, partner, parents (including phone calls) and pets

Self-Care: Your basic health care needs, such as eating, showering, getting dressed, brushing teeth, applying makeup, shaving, exercising and scheduling doctor appointments

Sleep: Include taking naps, preparing for bed, the time it takes to fall asleep and wake up, and lounging in bed

Recreation: Personal time such as relaxing, reading, watching TV, playing sports and video games, and interactions with friends and family, and leisurely walks

Tasks & Errands: Daily chores such as food shopping, preparing meals, cleaning your living space, gardening and trash removal

Spirituality & Giving Back: Attending service, meditation, yoga, volunteering to help others or for a cause, support groups, etc.

Other: Miscellaneous activities such as time spent on a creative or home-improvement project or side business. If you are a student, include time dedicated to research, classes and homework.

Unexpected: Phone calls, time stuck in traffic, filling out forms, computer issues, illness, sick visits to the doctor and dentist, etc.

Transitions: Time you spend transitioning from one activity to the next. Estimate anywhere from 1–2 hours per day, making adjustments as needed. This may include driving to and from activities as well as procrastination.

Note: When you are ready to start, use the chart on the next page to track your first week. Good luck!

“A man who dares to waste one hour of time has not discovered the value of life.”

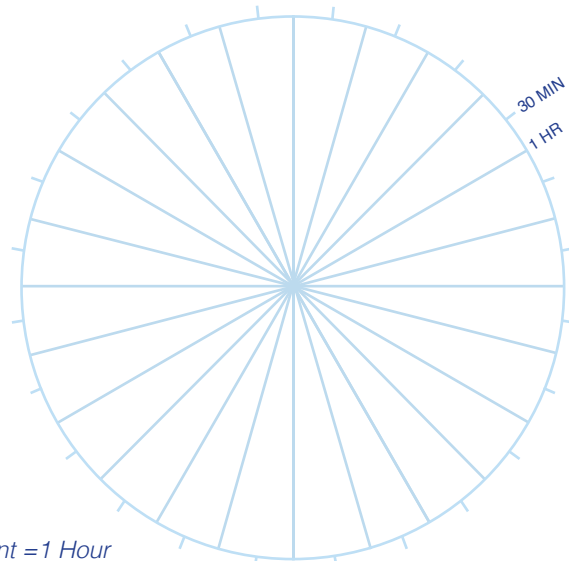
—Charles Darwin

Week One Time-Tracking Chart

	WORK	RELATIONSHIPS	SELF-CARE	SLEEP	RECREATION	TASKS & ERRANDS	SPIRITUALITY & GIVING BACK	OTHER	UNEXPECTED	TRANSITIONS	
SUN											= 24 hrs
MON											= 24 hrs
TUE											= 24 hrs
WED											= 24 hrs
THU											= 24 hrs
FRI											= 24 hrs
SAT											= 24 hrs
ADD UP AND DIVIDE BY 7 TO GET THE AVERAGE											= Your Average 24-Hr Day

Snapshot of How You Spend Your Time

Using different colors, fill in and label the segments of the circle to represent the average number of hours you spend in each category. The entire circle should be filled in, equaling a 24-hour day.



1 Segment = 1 Hour

4

Week One Reflection & Evaluation

*"You will never 'find' time for anything.
If you want time, you must make it."*

—Charles Buxton

Now that you have filled out the chart for the first week, take some time to reflect on how you spent your week by answering the following questions:

1. What is the greatest thing you learned from doing this weeklong challenge?
2. If you had downtime, what did you do? Did it add value to your day?
3. Did you gain any insights into yourself such as patterns, avoidances or strengths?
4. Moving forward, what changes would you like to make to your schedule? Where would you like to spend more time, less time?

Did you know that the average American watches 5+ hours of TV per day?

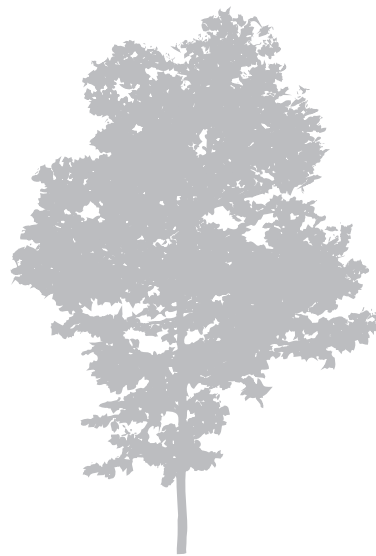
The Big Picture

*“The meaning of life is to find your gift.
The purpose of life is to give it away.”*

—Pablo Picasso

Do you have a vision for your life?

Take a few minutes to reflect on the kind of life you want to create. If you're not clear yet, use this space to brainstorm what you think you want. This may include who you aspire to become, where you want to live and what you want to be doing. Because there is no right or wrong way to do this exercise, just have fun and let your thoughts run free!



Choice

*“To live is to choose. But to choose well, you must
know who you are and what you stand for, where you want
to go and why you want to get there.”*

—Kofi Annan

Choice is a wonderful gift we all too often forget we have. It's easy to get stuck in a situation, feeling as if we have no way out. When we realize we have the ability to make changes in our lives, such as letting go of what drains our energy, we can focus on what's essential to us. When we do that, not only do we feel empowered but everything around us expands in a positive way.

Life can often be challenging. Every moment offers you an opportunity to learn more about yourself. If you are not clear about who you are or what you want, the direction of your life will be determined by random circumstances or someone else's agenda. Once you crystalize a vision for your life, use it to inspire and guide you through your daily decision-making process.

What three choices can you make *right now* that will most impact the direction you want to take in your life?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**Whatever
you decide to do,
choose consciously.
That way, there will
be no room
for guilt.**



Week Two Challenge

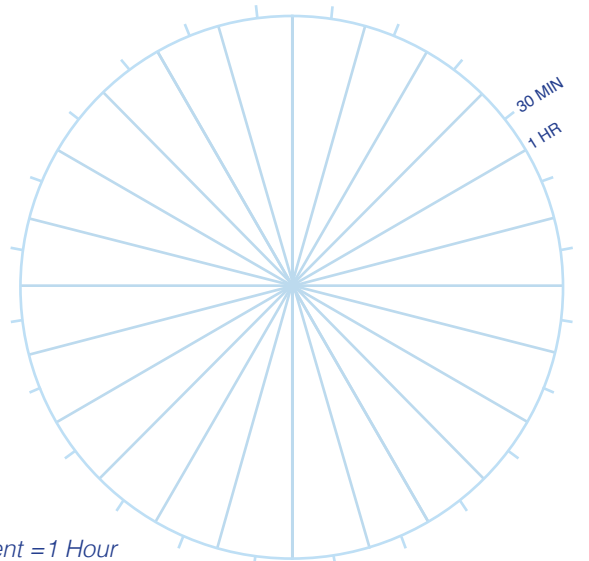
Instructions for Week Two: Looking back on how you used your time in Week One, decide on what changes you'd like to make moving forward. Though you may not be fully ready to commit to all the changes you want to make, give yourself the opportunity to try out your new-and-revised schedule for the week. Good luck!

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Week Two Reflection & Evaluation

"Time is more valuable than money. You can get more money, but you cannot get more time."
—Jim Rohn

Now that you've finished your second week of tracking your time, answer the following questions:

1. Were you able to maintain the changes you wanted to make in your schedule? If not, where did you have the most difficulty, the least difficulty?
2. What insights did you gain by adjusting how you spent your time compared to Week One?
3. Did you utilize the additional time you created to pursue something you've been putting off?
4. Did you experience any changes in yourself or your productivity? Do you feel any differently about yourself compared to the previous week?
5. Moving forward, what other changes would you like to make?

Essential Living

In order to stay on track with your goals, it is imperative that you develop a keen awareness of how you choose to spend your time. This skill requires you to stay focused on your daily priorities while editing out the things that are neither essential to your life values nor truly important to you.

Practicing essentialism can also be applied within. By letting go of thoughts and emotions that don't serve you and others, and by shifting to those that cultivate patience, kindness and love, you realize your greatest creative power.

To help
you decide what
is essential to
you, ask yourself:
“Does this add
value to my
life?”

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*“Start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible;
and suddenly you are doing the impossible.”*

—Saint Francis of Assisi

Thank you for taking this two-week challenge with us. We sincerely hope this exercise inspires you to use your time to create a life that reflects your deepest aspirations.

Other planners help you plan your day. We help you plan your life.

InnerGuide Planners
The Life Coach in-a-Book
The InnerGuide Yearly Planner

inner-guide.com