

From the Heart...

... Life Skills for Today

By Sharon L. Benedict MS, ACC



Time Stops Again...or at least it feels like it

How were your holidays? Were you one of the many who, although had a great time with family and friends, you caught “the crud?” Then spent most of this January trying to get well? If so, I empathize, big time, since I was also one in the crowd. When it hit, I looked at my calendar for January and knew I needed to cross off almost everything. Who wants a sicky out in the public spreading this stuff around anyway? So, time seemed to come to an abrupt halt where I wondered if I could get anything done between hacking and coughing my days away.

Since I had the distinct impression whatever I had wasn’t going to go away quietly or swiftly, I asked myself these questions to ponder:

1. Is all my frustration about being slowed down for a while going to help me get better any faster? Of course not, Sharon.
2. Can avoiding the necessary rest and sleep, and pushing myself to at least do some work worth prolonging this time stopper? Again, the obvious is ever evident!
3. So, with an appropriate attitude check in place, what reflective opportunities are before me right now, in this moment, to embrace? Ok, give me a minute here!

Does this sound familiar to you when things to do and time to do them seem to come to a halt? I thought I had learned this lesson years ago. Yet, some lessons need recapping on occasion throughout life.

The lesson I learned again was that time didn't stop or even slow down. I just thought it did because I tagged it with my predetermined plan of activities and responsibilities. But life surprises us all. So, I still have the same amount of time. What will I do with it? I decided to go with the flow by doing the obvious.

I canceled meetings and anything I could move to another month. I stayed in bed most of the time the first week; started upping my intake of nutrients and soothing herbal teas, ginger, and good old fashioned chicken soup with loads of garlic! Although my husband, John, also got it, he was the official care giving cook and kept me well fed. I know many of you may stop eating all together when sick. But for me, I get even hungrier, wanting all kinds of goodies to keep my body and soul comforted.

Then I called my fantastic doctor, Terry Grover, for some meds. He's always there for us. Within a couple days, I started feeling much better but far from well, still aching, hacking and coughing the day and night away. I used a humidifier and took hot lavender baths frequently, candles and all! I then got out the many books I promised myself I would read and made my selection. The first, of course, was Clive Cussler's latest adventure novel, *Navigator*. What a fun diversion between naps! Then I started reading Beth Moore's *Breaking Free*, helping me keep a healthy spiritual focus during my convalescence. On a couple

nights, I grabbed John's favorite comforter and curled up to a great old movie or two.

In the next couple weeks, I checked my email periodically and answered a couple; wrote my Friday articles, certainly! But I must admit I somehow had most of January almost already written and was I glad for that! As the month rolled on and a little bit of energy was coming back, I picked up on some client work needing to be done at the computer, a few phones, an article rewrite for a medical journal, and a local meeting or two at the end of the month. Just the past week, I started exercising a little again, ever so slowly! Then I baked a couple loaves of banana nut bread (healthy of course!), saving some bananas whose skins were turning browner each day that passed.

When I look back over the weeks, I discovered, again, that being in the moment, no matter what the circumstance, brings sweet reprieve and repose for both body and soul. When at other times I probably would never have given myself that extra radical self-care. And that's not easy for a life and wellness coach to admit, believe me! But alas, who's perfect anyway? Thank God, not one of us!

So when you feel time is not moving along at the clip you want, are used to, or you are brought to a halt, pause in that moment. See what is possible for you during that season where time seems to stop or slow down. It just might hold an opportunity for you rarely offered.

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Time & Timing—making life a little less complicated

You wake up in the morning as the 6 am sound waves of your alarm hit you. You stretch and crawl out of bed to the hot shower awaiting you to help you wake up and get moving. The coffee is brewing to kick you in gear for the day's work. Since the day seems to be already planned for you, you just move along by rote—rote meaning “the mechanical repetition of something so that it is remembered, often without real understanding of its meaning or significance.”

Yet, time is inevitably moving along but is the timing? With every moment in the day, we are making decisions and taking actions required by that moment. Unfortunately, for many of us we don't seem to give enough time to whether the time is right for the decision or action.

Every comedian facing that audience waiting for the punch line can tell you, “Timing is everything.” We all know timing is everything *for everything!* Even around 800 BC, Hesoid, a renown Greek poet, encouraged his followers to “Observe due measure, for right timing is in all things the most important factor.”

The “What” is left hanging out there if it doesn't have the right “When” with it. Actually, the “What” of any decision or action flies or falls to a great extent on “When” you choose to decide or act. So, how are you doing with your time and

timing? Let's consider some possible areas we all might find ourselves, on occasion. Ask yourself these questions. Then from your response, what do you think the timing should be?

1. I am very angry at my friend who deeply hurt my feelings. When should I talk with my friend about this? Or should I say anything at all?
2. I've been offered what I believe to be a great business opportunity. Am I ready to commit to the responsibilities as well as the opportunity before me? Or am I missing something here?
3. My boss has asked me to add another project to my workload. Do I think I can do it or is this request unfair? How and when do I respond?
4. A very important decision is before my community for which I am very concerned. What do I do about it? When and with whom do I discuss my concerns?

As you consider each question and your responses, give yourself a score (1=lowest, 5=highest) on the way you handled the "What" time and "When" timing. What do you see? Was the time and timing just right? Or, were you too hasty, too slow, not enough information, too uncertain, insecure, emotional? Consider the reasons you give yourself for the timing of those decisions and actions you make each day, along with those larger life challenges and opportunities that come your way.

May you come away with a greater awareness of not only the times you make those decisions, but also the timing. As time and timing work in harmony together, life becomes a little less complicated and much more peaceful all

around. And remember, timing doesn't always mean you have to act right then or ever. Sometimes, it's just better to wait, do nothing at all, or have someone else step to the plate. Only you will know what works best for you and those around you. I leave you with this notable axiom (Cole's Quotables)—

There is timing in the whole life of the warrior, in his thriving and declining, in his harmony and discord. Similarly, there is timing in the Way of the merchant, in the rise and fall of capital. All things entail rising and falling timing. You must be able to discern this.

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Time to take your stand

With this being our nation's presidential election year, I am sure you are hearing all the latest scoops and rumors all around. Will it be Obama, Clinton, McCain, or Huckabee? And who will be the Vice-President running mate for "the chosen ones?" The electoral roulette wheel is spinning faster with every day that passes by. Therefore, let's take a moment to pause and consider how you play a major role in our nation's destiny as each of us takes our stand. And always remember how amazing our country is that we have the freedom to take that stand with each vote.

Where do you even begin to choose, not only the one in the primaries, but in November's general election? And how about all the other congressional, state, county, and city candidates who have jumped onto the fast moving election train? The time is very close to take your stand. Yet, I'm one for starting with the basics. So, here are some possible tips for trying to make the right decision for your family, community, and nation:

1. Set aside time right now in the days/weeks/months ahead to find out about all the candidates (both sides of the political aisle)—what they say, what they have done, and what they want to do if elected.
2. Consider each candidate's life—how they walk their talk.

3. Who are their close colleagues and counselors?
4. What candidates genuinely represent these basic core values?—
integrity, honesty, respect, compassion, commitment, family,
generosity, faith, self-responsibility, collaboration

Now, it's your turn. Write down your own specific core values (top ten). How do the candidates match up? What do you see? In what direction do you lean? Remember, core values are our key drivers for deciding whether you are prolife or prochoice, for universal healthcare or private reforms, believe taxes should be increased for those making over \$100,000 per year or making tax cuts permanent, repeal the estate/death tax or actually increase it, amnesty for illegal immigrants or strict green card reforms. The list goes on. . . even choosing to be a republican, democrat, or independent.

Hopefully, your membership in any of these parties or others is not just automatic—my Mom and Dad were strong supporters, therefore, I must be. Or you vote the way the party votes. What happens if someone comes along that so closely holds to your own core values? Are you ready to take a stand that your party affiliation may not support? These are touchy subjects for most of us. The old saying may be the credo for many, “Don't ever talk with relatives, friends, or anyone about politics or religion.” And many of us feel so far from knowing what is really going on “on the hill,” let alone trying to trust what we hear. Yet, these are the times we need to dialogue about both. Both our faith and local/national politics impact our lives every day and are definitely important matters for our nation, our community, and the people we desire to serve.

We need to dig deeper into our core values and consider how we are living them out with every choice and stand we take. I encourage putting aside some quality time to get connected with those decisions and actions within our community and nation. This is your opportunity to bring your core values into real life arenas all around you. With your highest core values, respect and proactive purpose, you too can make a major difference in your community and nation. The time is now, the choice is yours.

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Time in your hands?

For most of us we probably often say, “If we only had time on our hands.” Yet, maybe we should start with the reality that we do have time “***in our hands.***” With every breath, a moment is there. With every momentary decision, time is there. With every Monday, time is there. With every weekend, time is there. And before it is all spent, time is “in your hands.”

So, here are some easy ways to have that extra time in each day, before things get “out of hand!”

1. **Wake up earlier.** Wake up 30 minutes earlier each day for the next 30 days. First, rise with a thank you for a brand new day. Have breakfast, write, exercise, whatever helps your attitude and gets your body moving.
2. **TV.** Cut one hour of TV each day for the next 30 days.
3. **Internet/email.** Cut 30 minutes of internet use each day for 30 days.
Schedule only one or two times per day only to check your personal email.
4. **Phone calls.** Unless it is an emergency or your work requires it, don’t answer the phone (particularly your cell phone) every time it rings, particularly during your own quiet time.
5. **Reduce shopping trips and housekeeping chores.** If you shopping several times a week for groceries, clothes, fun stuff, try cutting one trip

- out each week for the next 30 days. Then get your kids to do some house chores or hire out.
6. **Change work hours.** Which ever way your job allows, go to work one hour later, leave work one hour earlier, or take a longer lunch.
 7. **Reduce amount of news you listen to, especially constant negative news noise.** This includes, the internet, newspapers, TV. Be selective on what and how much you hear.
 8. **Wind down after work.** Reduce the number of after work commitments, including social and civic interactions, for the next 30 days.
 9. **Sports/Recreation.** If you are one of those who has your calendar filled with sports and recreation activities, cut out at least one activity for the next 30 days.

I encourage you to give any one of these a try. After 30 days, write down what you have observed and gained from regaining time for yourself. Create your own special ways of putting “time in your hands.” And, remember . . .

***Before life “get’s out of hand,”
see the time that is “in your hands,”
so you will have lots of time “on your hands!”***

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Where time flies for us older folk

Did you ever wonder what your grandparents do with their time each day? Well, here's your chance to get a glimpse into what the US Department of Labor tells us about how us older folk pass the time of day.

American Time Use Survey (<http://stats.bls.gov/tus/charts/older.htm>) for older Americans (age 65 and over) breaks our average day into the following activities:

1. Working – 1 hour
2. Household activities – 2 ½ hours
3. Leisure and sports – about 7.2 hours, including
 - a. Watching TV – 3 hours
 - b. Reading – less than 1 hour
 - c. Socializing and communicating – slightly over ½ hour
 - d. Relaxing and thinking – 20 minutes
 - e. Other leisure – 48 minutes
4. Sleeping – 8.9 hours

For those who have a spouse or partner, here is how time alone and with others round out:

1. Time spent alone – 5.3 hours
2. Time with spouse or unmarried partner – 7.3 hours

3. Time with family except spouse – 1.3 hours
4. With friends – 36 minutes
5. With other non-relatives – 30 minutes

For those who have no spouse or partner living with them, their time alone goes up to 10 hours. Time with family is 2 hours, with friends and non-relatives around 1 hour each.

If you are among the fit and spry at 65 or older, how does your day match up? What activities would you change or add to their list? In the week ahead, think about any area that got your attention that you may want to shift some of your time to. Then start looking at ways to *give up* in order to *gain* those moments in the day and week you long for.

This is really a simple exercise but not always easy. Talk with a close friend or family member about what you want to change. Ask them for their encouragement and support in some way. Change is not always comfortable or welcomed as we grow older; but I encourage you to embrace any small steps toward making each day a day to enjoy and remember.

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