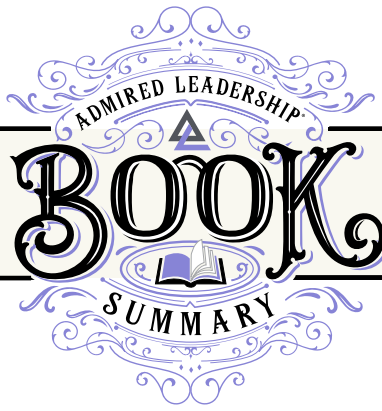




Eight Minutes, Not Eight Hours



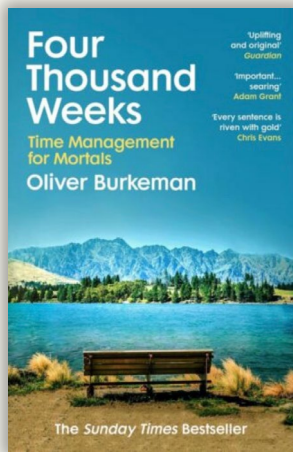
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Four Thousand Weeks

Time Management for Mortals

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Four thousand weeks is the average time you will spend here on Earth. The number four thousand seems large, but when it comes to how long you will survive, it's comparably and terrifyingly short. **“Four Thousand Weeks: Time Management for Mortals”** by Oliver Burkeman is not a book that gives you methods to check off your to-do list faster, but instead emphasizes the importance of making the most of your finite time on this planet by focusing on what truly matters.

Key Quote

“What people need isn't greater individual control over their schedules but rather... “the social regulation of time” (p. 191).

KEY POINTS AND CONCEPTS

The Efficiency Trap

The ideology that time is money has been burned into our brains from living in a capitalistic society and with that, our self-worth can get caught up in how productive we are (p. 25).


“Our troubled relationship with time arises largely from this same effort to avoid the painful constraints of reality” (p. 30). If we stay productive enough and plan enough now, life won't be so bad at a future point. But that future point will never come.

Once you accept that most of what you wish to accomplish in life will not happen, you can begin focusing on building a meaningful life today, regardless of your situation (p. 34).


As you accomplish more and get more efficient, you will find yourself trying to fill the time you just bought yourself with different tasks and activities to feel “on top of things.” You will never feel on top of things because the goalposts will keep moving forward (p. 41).

The Three Principles of Becoming a Better Procrastinator

1. Pay yourself first: Carve out time for tasks/activities that are the most important and meaningful to you and ensure that acting on them is non-negotiable.
2. Limit your work in progress: Limit how many projects, or activities you allow yourself to start until at least one is completed. This limitation enables you to accept that you can only progress a little each day, but you are guaranteed to finish your work in its entirety over time.
3. Resist the allure of middling priorities: Make a list of what you think is most important to you and then arrange them from most to least important. Avoiding anything outside the top five would be best (p.77).



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Pay Yourself First

“But if, like most people, you “pay yourself last,” instead - buying what you need and hoping they’ll be some money remaining at the end to put into savings - you’ll usually find that there isn’t any” (p. 74). The same holds true for how we spend our time.

“This is the same insight embodied into two vulnerable pieces of time management advice: to work on your most important project for the first hour of each day and to protect your time by scheduling “meetings” with yourself” (p. 75). This method ensures that you are actively working on something that gives your life true meaning every day in the present instead of putting it off for the future, which may never come.

Limit Your Work in Progress

We tend to be drawn to multitasking because it gives a false sense of security where we think we have a handle on things, but there is a significant downside. “You get to persevere your sense of being in control of things, but at the cost of never finishing anything important” (p. 75).

A strategy to overcome this false sense of security is to hold yourself accountable by only allowing yourself to work on a few activities or projects until they are complete. “The point isn’t to force yourself to finish absolutely everything you start, but rather to banish the bad habit of keeping an ever-proliferating number of unfinished projects on the back burner” (p. 76).

Resist the Allure of Middling Priorities

We have numerous tasks/activities that are important to us, but there is a clear hierarchy of importance, and we should dedicate ourselves to pursuing those at the top of the list. “...make a list of the top twenty-five things he wants out of life, and then arrange them in order, from the most important to the least. The top five, Buffet says, should be those around which he organizes his time” (p. 77).

You should toss the remaining items on this list aside. Not because they aren't important but because they take away from the most important ones. "Because they're the ambitions insufficiently important to him to form the core of his life yet seductive enough to distract him from the ones that matter most" (p. 77).

Staying in the Present Moment

"The person mired in this mentality believes that the reason she doesn't feel fulfilled... is that she hasn't yet managed to accomplish certain specific things... she's treating the present solely as a path to some superior future state - and so the present moment won't ever feel satisfying in itself" (p. 127). To use your time today as merely a vehicle to get you to an unknown destination in the future would be a terrible misuse of your finite time.

We will experience aspects of life for the last time and miss them because we are so worried about what lies ahead. "... there will be a last time that you visit your childhood home, or swim in the ocean, or make love, or have a deep conversation with a certain close friend. Yet they'll be no way to know" (p. 133).

If you still operate your life under the assumption that life will begin in the future, you ignore your finitism to hold on to a sense of control (p. 135).

Once you can move out of the frame of mind that you have the power to control your time, real life/work can genuinely begin (p. 177).


The Three Principles of Patience

1. Develop a taste for having problems: You will never reach a point in your life where you won't have some problem you are facing because facing problems is life.
2. Embrace radical incrementalism: By doing something for a small amount of time each day, you train yourself to get out of a hyper-productive state and will realize that you have accomplished so much more over the long term (p. 181).
3. Originality lies on the far side of unoriginality: Achieving originality and finding meaning in your work only occurs after you can find enough patience to withstand the trial-and-error phase of learning to gain experience (p. 183).


Developing a Taste for Having Problems

"Most of us treat the problems we encounter as doubly problematic... because we seem to believe, if only subconsciously, that we shouldn't have problems. Yet the state of having no problems is obviously never going to arrive" (p. 180).

Having problems is what makes life, life. "The presence of problems in your life, in other words. Isn't an impediment to a meaningful existence but the very substance of one" (p. 181).



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Embracing Radical Incrementalism

“One critical aspect of the radical incrementalist approach, which runs counter to much mainstream advice on productivity, is thus to be willing to stop when your daily time is up.” (p. 182). Stopping yourself during a task trains your subconscious mind to be patient and encourages you to return to it later, thus sustaining productivity levels over time.

“The urge to push onward beyond that point includes a big component of impatience about not being finished, about not being productive enough, about never again finding such an ideal time” (p. 182). As stated earlier, the more you are at peace with not being able to finish things, the better off you will be because you will never accomplish all you wish to in your lifetime.

Originality Lies on the Far Side of Unoriginality

“In many areas of life, there’s a strong cultural pressure to strike out in a unique direction - to spurn the conventional options of getting married... remaining in your hometown... in favor of something more exciting and original” (p. 183). This pressure stems from the fear of settling and impatience, where we think to have a meaningful experience, we must go against the grain of society and find something original and unique to us.


Meaningful relationships and experiences require patience up-front. It would be best to accept that it requires being unoriginal or conventional until you get to the other side where originality lies. To achieve meaningful relationships and experiences, we must invest time, but ultimately, time remains beyond our control. “To experience the profound mutual understanding of the long-married couple, you have to stay married to one person; to know what it’s like to be deeply rooted in a particular community... you have to stop moving around” (p. 184).

Having More Time Won’t Solve Your Problems Either


“Having all the time in the world isn’t much use if you’re forced to experience it all on your own... Time is also a “network good,” one that derives its value from how many other people have access to it, too, and how well their portion is coordinated with yours” (p. 187).

“What people need isn’t greater individual control over their schedules but rather... “the social regulation of time” (p. 191). We tend to think that being able to dictate our schedules and report to ourselves will make us feel free and, thus, happier. However, we genuinely need our free time to align with those we wish to spend it with.

“You can grasp the truth that power over your time isn’t something best hoarded entirely for yourself: that your time can be too much your own” (p. 201).



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On Leadership and Communication

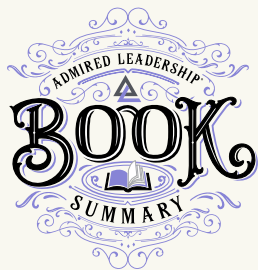
The Power of Listening: Besides clear communication, influential leaders must also be good listeners. Burkeman argues that listening is an underrated skill. Leaders who genuinely listen to their team members are more likely to build trust and work together more effectively. "...we snap at our partners rather than hearing them out because waiting and listening would make us feel – correctly – as though we aren't in control of the situation" (p. 179). We can become better communicators by stopping, listening, and succumbing to the power of time that we have no control over.

Making Hard Decisions and Embracing Uncertainty: Life is inherently uncertain, and we must embrace it rather than try to control or eliminate it. Leaders need to be comfortable with ambiguity and adapt accordingly. "Since hard choices are unavoidable, what matters is learning to make them consciously, deciding what to focus on and what to neglect, rather than letting them get made by default" (p. 32).

By resisting the allure of middling priorities, a leader can be in tune with the organization's top priorities and make aligned decisions (p. 77).

Balancing Tasks and Relationships: There are instances where managers and leaders will feed the efficiency trap at the expense of their employees. "The more efficient you get, the more you become "a limitless reservoir for other people's expectations" (p. 49). By prioritizing communication, active listening, and respecting employees' "hard upper limits", you can create stronger relationships within your team, while also ensuring sustained productivity and achieving your goals (p. 77).

Burkeman, O. (2021). **Four Thousand Weeks: Time Management for Mortals**. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux



By prioritizing communication, active listening, and respecting employees' "hard upper limits", you can create stronger relationships within your team, while also ensuring sustained productivity and achieving your goals.

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