

Life Balance: The Urgent vs. The Important

One of the greatest skills you can ever develop in your life is not only to tell the two apart, but to be able to assign the correct amount of time to each

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Of all the wisdom I have gained, the most important is the knowledge that time and health are two precious assets that we rarely recognize or appreciate until they have been depleted. As with health, time is the raw material of life. You can use it wisely, waste it or even kill it.

To accomplish all we are capable of, we would need a hundred lifetimes. If we had forever in our mortal lives, there would be no need to set goals, plan effectively or set priorities. We could squander our time and perhaps still manage to accomplish something, if only by chance. Yet in reality, we're given only this one life span on earth to do our earthly best.

Each human being now living has exactly 168 hours per week. Scientists can't invent new minutes, and even the super-rich can't buy more hours. Queen Elizabeth I of England, the richest, most powerful woman on earth of her era, whispered these final words on her deathbed: "All my possessions for a moment of time!"

We worry about things we *want* to do, but can't, instead of doing the things we *can* do, but don't.

How often have you said to yourself, “Where did the day go? I accomplished nothing,” or “I can’t even remember what I did yesterday.” That time is gone, and you never get it back.

To live a rich, balanced life we need to be more in conscious control of our habits and lifestyles.

Actualized individuals have a regular exercise routine. They pay attention to nutrition, with lean sources protein and fiber-based carbohydrates as their basic food choices. They relax through musical, cultural, artistic and family activities. They get sufficient sleep and rest to meet the next day renewed and invigorated.

In addition to blocking periods of time for recreation and vacations, they also schedule large, uninterrupted periods of work on their most important projects. Contrary to popular notions, most books, works of art, inventions and musical compositions are created during uninterrupted time frames, not by a few lines, strokes, or notes every so often. Every book or audio program I have written has been done with the discipline of 12 to 15 hours per day during a specific block of time.

Freedom from urgency... that’s what will allow us to live a rich and rewarding life. You may have thought your problem was “time starvation,” when in truth, it was in the way you assigned priorities in your decision-making process. Have you allowed the urgent to crowd out the important?

Each day we will continue to encounter deadlines we must meet and “fires,” not necessarily of our own making, we must put out. Endless urgent details will always beg for attention, time and energy. What we seldom realize is that the really important things in our life don’t make such strict demands on us, and therefore we usually assign them a lower priority.

You see, it’s the easiest thing in the world to neglect the important and give in to the urgent. One of the greatest skills you can ever develop in your life is not only to tell the two apart, but to be able to assign the correct amount of time to each.

Beginning tomorrow, throughout the day, and every day thereafter, stop and ask yourself this question: *“Is what I’m doing right now important to my health, well-being and mission in life, and for my loved ones?”* Your affirmative answer will free you forever from the tyranny of the urgent.



Denis Waitley is one of America's most respected and beloved authors, keynote lecturers and productivity consultants on high performance human achievement. He has inspired, informed, challenged and entertained audiences for over 25 years from the boardrooms of multi-national corporations to the control rooms of NASA's space program. Denis has been voted business speaker of the year by the Sales and Marketing Executives' Association

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