

EXERCISE

My Ideal Time of Day



Time: solo 15 or more minutes, in conversation 15 or more minutes per person



Setup and materials: pencil and paper or printed day wheels. You can print from this exercise page or see Day Wheel templates



Good For: individuals, followed by discussion (optional.)

Framing:

The solo part of this exercise prompts you to explore your own unique relationship with time. When you discuss your discoveries with another person, you deepen the learning. There is no right or wrong way to engage in this mental stretch. The exercise is meant to invite insight. It may lead to action, but that's not it's primary intention. No need for results; just play. Play with abandon.

You're asked to only consider yourself while you do this bit of thinking. I can almost guarantee that some "but" thought will come into your head. There are constraints. You have external obligations, family and work and tasks to do. But for the 15 minutes it takes to do the solo part of this exercise when interfering thoughts show up, remind yourself that this is all about you, only you.

Here's your mission. In the best of all possible worlds, what would be the perfect time of day for your regular daily activities? When would you sleep? When would you eat meals, do creative work, do mundane tasks, socialize, spend time with family, kick back and relax?

You may not be able to live your days by any ideal schedule, but create it anyway. You never know...

As kids we thought about all the freedom being a grown up would bring. For these 15 minutes, keep your kid hat on and declare, "This is when I'd eat, sleep, do stuff, goof off, work and play with others."

Life will disrupt any version of ideal that you try to make. Still, the design process isn't a waste. As you know the conditions in which you thrive, you're able to adapt more easily when external circumstances change. Your self awareness provides a cushion of resilience. You're able to care for yourself in meaningful ways, some as simple as knowing when you want a snack.

Steps:

1. The wheel is your individually designed time-scape of 24 hours. The top of the wheel is noon, the bottom of the wheel is midnight. Mark your sleep hours first. That chunk will most likely be toward the bottom part of the wheel. Sleep comprises the biggest allotment of your 24 hours, and it isn't optional. Humans need sleep.

Next look at when you would like to eat your meals. Do you want 2 meals a day, 3 meals, 6 small ones? We only ask when you eat. You might like to eat twenty minutes after you get up, you might prefer two hours later. You could prefer a quick 15 minute lunch, but a leisurely hour long lunch time might be your preference. Give each meal or snack the perfect chunk of time on your wheel.

2. With those two basics sketched in, start thinking through the typical contents of your days. Make a list of the activities that you currently fit into a day. Break something like "work" into specific tasks. Are there meetings, emails, projects, collaborative parts and individual parts? Remember to include things like exercise, friend time, family time, household tasks.
3. Look at your list and think about the type of energy each of your activities needs. I was doing email first thing in the morning. But morning is my best creative time. I was writing eloquent emails, but they don't matter much. I could have been giving this time to my favorite and most important work, but that was getting my energetic leftovers.
Continue plotting your ideal day, matching the type of energy to the task and the time of day.
4. (Optional) With a partner, discuss what you noticed. You might have found things that you want to change. You may be aware of requests you want to make. You could decide to re-negotiate current parts of a typical daily routine. One client dropped from three hours a day on social media to twenty minutes. About a year and a half later she had finished writing a book and had a publisher.
As we said, this is not an action exercise. It's intended to settle in the back of your mind. Shifts might take place in small organic ways. Over time, you could notice that you are closer to living your ideal more often.

TEMPLATE

24 Hour Clock

