

Toolkit

time *smart*

*How to RECLAIM YOUR TIME
& LIVE A HAPPIER LIFE*

ASHLEY
WHILLANS

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Introduction

Welcome to *Time Smart: Tools for Reclaiming Your Time and Living a Happier Life*. With these tools in hand, you will put lessons from Ashley Whillans' book *Time Smart* into action to take back the time you lose to mindless tasks and unfulfilling chores and live a happier, more time-affluent life. Within this toolkit, you'll find digital versions of some of the exercises and strategies described in the book, as well as additional worksheets and tips to help free up time that you can reinvest in positive, healthy activities. Additionally, you'll learn techniques to support you in achieving the mindset shift that will make time-saving activities part of your everyday regimen through assessments, checklists, and exercises.

This handbook provides an overview of each tool and some suggestions about how to use them effectively.

We suggest that you begin by viewing Ashley Whillans' "Video Quick Study" on time poverty included in the toolkit. Then, dive into the tools themselves. With Tools 1–4, you'll develop a baseline understanding of how you think about time and money. To get the most out of the strategies and activities in this toolkit, you'll pause and reflect on how you typically make trade-offs between time and money. You'll reflect on your feelings of time poverty, document a few ways in which you fall into the six most common time traps, and determine whether you broadly value time or money. Tools 5–10 will help you plan to significantly improve your time affluence. Using strategies to help you make decisions, you'll document your time, find time, fund time, reframe time, and account for your time. Additionally, you'll learn tactics (like scheduling proactive time into your schedule) to make small daily decisions about time into a habit. Finally, Tools 11–17 will support you in making longer life-view decisions that carry consequences for the way you spend your time. Decisions about where to live and whom to live with could affect your time affluence for as long as the lease or the mortgage lasts. As important as it is to develop the daily habit of making good time choices, it's equally important to think about the effect on time affluence of major decisions and life planning.

You should commit to time affluence as you do to your physical health, focusing on the cumulative effect of many small behavior changes. Time affluence involves small decisions that allow you to have more and better time, such as saying "no" more often and paying your way out of time-consuming, unrewarding tasks. These strategies will help you make the shift to time-smart living and build a happier, more fulfilling life.

Contents

Section 1: Understanding Your Relationship to Time and Money

- 3 Tool 1: Are You a Taylor or a Morgan?
- 3 Tool 2: Know Your Calendar Mindset
- 3 Tool 3: Time Poverty Diagnostic Test
- 3 Tool 4: Overcoming Time Traps Worksheet

Section 2: Daily Habits to Improve Your Time Affluence

- 4 Tool 5: The Typical Tuesday Exercise
- 4 Tool 6: The Small Why Worksheet
- 4 Tool 7: Recognize and Fight Mere Urgency
- 4 Tool 8: The Reframing Time Worksheet
- 5 Tool 9: Using the Time-Affluence To-Do List
- 5 Tool 10: Create Intentions

Section 3: Major Life Decisions to Improve Your Time Affluence

- 5 Tool 11: Major Life Milestones Worksheet
- 6 Tool 12: Saying No Worksheet
- 6 Tool 13: Asking for More Time Worksheet
- 6 Tool 14: The Big Why Worksheet
- 6 Tool 15: Five Time-Affluent Habits
- 6 Tool 16: Time-Smart Regimen Reflection
- 7 Tool 17: Accounting for Time Balance Sheet

Section 1:

Understanding Your Relationship to Time and Money

TOOL 1

Are You a Taylor or a Morgan?

15–30 MINUTES

To get the most from the strategies and activities in this toolkit, it helps to have a baseline understanding of how you think about time and money now. Using this tool, you will decide with which persona you most strongly identify: Taylor or Morgan. Taylor values time more than money, and Morgan values money more than time. By knowing whether you are a Taylor or a Morgan, you can further benefit from the strategies and exercises in this toolkit, which are based on rigorous studies from behavioral science that take these personas into consideration.

TOOL 2

Know Your Calendar Mindset

15–30 MINUTES

Are you a clock-time person or an event-time person? In Tool 2, you will use a questionnaire to identify your calendar mindset to help you schedule slack time into your life. We all default toward one style or the other, and in our personal planning we need to think carefully about how our default calendar mindset can shape whether and how we account for time and our time affluence. By scheduling activities in a way that is consistent with your calendar mindset, you will feel more comfortable and will be more likely to follow through on your plans.

TOOL 3

Time Poverty Diagnostic Test

10 MINUTES

How much spare time do you have? Using Tool 3, you will determine how much or little spare time you have. Once you determine how time poor you might be, you can focus your attention on alleviating your time poverty to carve out happier and more meaningful moments each day.

TOOL 4

Overcoming Time Traps Worksheet

30 MINUTES

The first step to becoming time smart is to understand the six time traps that make you feel time poor and identify them in your life. In Tool 4, you'll learn to recognize these time traps (technology, money focus, undervalued time, busyness as a status, idleness aversion, and the "yes ... damn!" effect) and document the ones that you fall into most often. By thinking about the traps you are most vulnerable to, you can form strategies to avoid them.

Section 2:

Daily Habits to Improve Your Time Affluence

TOOL 5

The Typical Tuesday Exercise

1 DAY

To start increasing your time affluence, you need a baseline understanding of your time-use decisions. One of the best ways to do this is to spend a Tuesday keeping a detailed log of how you spend your time. Tuesdays tend to be fairly routine workdays when people usually experience more negative feelings and greater stress than other days, so this log will capture more of the activities that are making you time poor. Once you've documented your activities, reflect on them. Think about which activities were pleasurable versus painful, which were productive versus unproductive, and which brought you joy versus meaning. For activities that made you stressed or unhappy, ask yourself whether it's possible to spend less time on them. For any task you can't (or shouldn't) get out of, ask yourself whether it's possible to make the activity more pleasant or less tense.

TOOL 6

The Small Why Worksheet

30 MINUTES

One way to beat back bad habits is by asking the "small why" question: Why am I doing this? Follow up with other questions about your intentions and answer as honestly as you can, thinking critically about yourself and your time. Knowing why and when you engage in mindless activities can help you replace them with happier time.

TOOL 7

Recognize and Fight Mere Urgency

15–30 MINUTES

Sometimes when we are procrastinating regarding doing harder, more important activities, such as preparing for an interview, we will waste our time with simpler, less important activities like answering email. To stave off this "mere urgency effect," map your activities in Tool 7. Take special care in documenting tasks that were merely urgent or not important and try to avoid those tasks in the future when they come up.

TOOL 8

The Reframing Time Worksheet

30 MINUTES

We can count up minutes and assign costs to our time, but we can also change how we feel about our time, and that can make us more time affluent too. We know from research that deliberately savoring an experience can change our perception of it. Conversely, ruminating on the past or anticipating the future makes us feel pressed for time. By focusing our attention on the present, we become sensitive to existing pleasures, increasing time affluence in the process. You can find better time by reframing what you think is bad time as some form of good time.

TOOL 9**Using the Time-Affluence To-Do List****5 MINUTES—AN AFTERNOON**

Being stuck in tasks we don't like and can't control is one of the leading causes of time poverty. As a result, the easiest and most obvious path to greater time affluence is to deliberately choose to spend more time on activities that bring you joy and less time on activities that cause you misery. Review Tool 9 to find time to transform daily activities from the kind that make you feel time poor to the kind that make you feel time affluent.

TOOL 10**Create Intentions****15–30 MINUTES**

Intentions are deliberate actions that force us to think about how we're using our time and to commit to making positive use of it. Intentions become powerful when we tie them to daily actions that take our time away. Tying intentions to activities you must complete each day (shopping, commuting, eating) also makes it more likely you'll follow through, because every time you sit down to have lunch, you are reminded of the fact that you could be doing something else. In Tool 10, you'll write down your intentions and will note whether you were able to do the tasks you wanted to, and if not, why not. You'll look for patterns that would explain why you did not engage in certain behaviors and will come up with a game plan for following through on these activities.

Section 3: Major Life Decisions to Improve Your Time Affluence

TOOL 11**Major Life Milestones Worksheet****1 HOUR**

As important as it is to develop the daily habit of making good time choices, it's equally important to think about the effect on time affluence of major decisions and life planning. You need to look ahead 5 to 10 years and think about how big life choices will influence your time choices. In Tool 11, you'll record the major events in your life, especially ones involving money (choosing a job, having a child, buying a house, etc.). Then, you'll account for some of the time implications of your expected decision by documenting the costs. After you think about the time costs, you'll consider how you might offset some of them; either by making a different decision or by increasing your focus on time-smart strategies such as funding time, finding time, and reframing time.

TOOL 12**Saying No Worksheet****30 MINUTES**

We can't say "yes" to everything. If we did, our days would be overrun with distractions and we would be stuck in the trap of prioritizing only what's right in front of us at the expense of focusing on what truly matters. In Tool 12, you'll learn to develop long-term policies for how you approach demands, with an emphasis on how to productively say "no."

TOOL 13**Asking for More Time Worksheet****15 MINUTES**

Instead of saying "no," you can ask for more time in order to make taking on a request more viable. At work, deadlines are a major source of time stress. This simple, powerful tool will help you to feel more in control of your schedule by pushing back adjustable deadlines. This sounds easy, but we often avoid requesting extensions because we worry it will make us appear less competent and unmotivated. Another form of the extension request is to ask for a few days off to reduce stress and make sure you're operating at a high level when you're working.

TOOL 14**The Big Why Worksheet****15 MINUTES**

The "big why" focuses on what you value as a person over time, asking: Why does prioritizing time over money matter to me? The answer to this question will motivate you to pursue better uses of your time. It may be a simple answer, and it may change over time, but it's important to periodically reflect on it.

TOOL 15**Five Time-Affluent Habits****10 MINUTES OF READING;
A LIFETIME OF DOING**

Becoming a time-affluent person over the long term takes practice. You will do better during some periods and worse in others. Some stretches may feel overwhelmingly positive, and during others it may feel like a slog to maintain your focus on time. Tool 15 offers strategies that are proven to help you lead a time-affluent life over longer periods.

TOOL 16**Time-Smart Regimen Reflection****10 MINUTES OF READING;
A LIFETIME OF DOING**

The solutions to time poverty are simple. The execution is something else altogether. Can you make small daily decisions about time a habit? Review the eight strategies for getting into the habit of living a time-smart life.

TOOL 17

Accounting for Time Balance Sheet

45 MINUTES

People are more sensitive to small losses of money than small losses of time. Calculating the value of a \$10,000 raise is easy; determining the cumulative value of an additional 30 minutes of free time in a day is more difficult. So, we default to focusing on the resource we know: money. However, if we could say what our time is worth, it would be easier to make time-affluent decisions. Using this tool, you'll use the included Excel formulas to assign a tangible value to time and the happiness it produces. Using the resulting happiness dollars (the income equivalent of the amount of happiness produced by a time-related choice), you'll learn to account for your time in ways that make it easier to believe that time-forced decisions carry greater value than the money we might miss out on. Read more about calculating happiness dollars on pages 52–59 in *Time Smart*.



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