How to Start

You are the CEO of your life, plus career advice from the Dalai Lama.

CEO

You are the CEO of your life.
You make the choices.
You know what works for you.
You know what doesn’t work for you.
You celebrate the wins.
You learn from the losses.
You get the praise.
You take the hits.
You become stronger.
You build a life.
Choose to make it an amazing life!

Some interesting questions to ask yourself as you ponder the possibilities and understand the qualities that you know about yourself and that others see in you.

1. When I am at my best, how would I describe myself?

2. When I receive compliments, what specifically do people praise? Is there a theme to the praise?

3. In what types of situations do I easily slip into “the zone” – meaning, with confidence and fluidity?

4. Ask a friend or colleague: In what ways have I been a help to you?

5. Ask three people you know well: Name five things about me that you can count on me to do.

Now, use this information to inform your life, career and job search or graduate school experience.

Believe in yourself.

I CAN &
I WILL.
WATCH ME.
“Some people identify so strongly with their role at work, their self-concept is so mixed with the role they play or sometimes the amount of money they make, that it is as if they don’t exist once they lose their job.” - His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet

It is funny, perhaps, to turn to the Dalai Lama for career advice. His job looks like no other on this planet, and comes with enviable perks like guaranteed lifetime employment, lots of respect, and tremendous responsibility. However, when asked the question “What do you do for a living?” the Dalai Lama answered, “Nothing, I do nothing!” Not your typical career coach.

Yet, being less than totally happy in the day-to-day at my own job, I turned to his book, *The Art of Happiness at Work*, written with Howard Cutler, a psychiatrist who posed questions to the Dalai Lama about his philosophy about work. His advice on happiness at work centers around improving your attitude as much, if not more, than your circumstances. While the book covers many topics, I took away three core lessons on how to improve happiness at work.

**Be a Good Co-worker**

Regardless of your job—whether you are teaching children, managing a large company or tediously nailing parts on an assembly line—the Dalai Lama points out that we are all interconnected. Our actions impact the people around us, especially our coworkers, customers and clients. Making the most of this connection by treasuring the relationships we have, assuming coworkers’ best intentions, and taking joy from them, is central to work happiness.

“I think if we make a special effort to cultivate good relationships with people at work, get to know the other people, and bring our basic good human qualities to the workplace, that we can make a tremendous difference,” he writes. “Then, whatever kind of work we do, it can be a source of satisfaction.”

**Seek Balance**

Much of the Dalai Lama’s advice comes down to finding a balance—balance between work and the rest of your life, between taking care of ourselves versus others, and, importantly, between being happy with what you have and trying to improve it.

The Dalai Lama puts it well: “You shouldn’t confuse contentment with complacency. You shouldn’t mistake being content with one’s job with just sort of not caring, not wanting to grow, not wanting to learn, just staying where one is even if one’s situation is bad and not even making the effort to advance and to learn and to achieve something better.” In this case, he recommends trying to find better work. If that fails, then to try to be content with what you have. If you shift your attitude to being grateful for what you do have, rather than upset about what is lacking, it can save you from anger, resentment and frustration.

The Dalai Lama also discusses a balance between challenging ourselves and boredom. A manageable amount of challenges can keep us engaged at work, but we also need to balance complex work with simple tasks.

Ultimately, the Dalai Lama points out that challenges aren’t an absolute requirement for satisfaction, and also pokes fun at the busy culture of work. “Personally, I think no challenge is better because without challenge you can just lie down and rest,” he writes. “Take a little nap.” Learning to balance work and other parts of life, and to sit still, allows us to be happy doing less.

**Expand Your Identity**

Often, our unhappiness at work stems from our ego and identity: We don’t feel respected, we think we deserve more, we are upset over a rejection, or we are worried about being perceived in a certain negative way. As Cutler points out, “If we choose an external marker as the measure of our
inner worth, whether it is the amount of money we make, or other’s opinion of us, or the success of some project we’re involved in, sooner or later we’re bound to be battered by life’s inevitable changes. After all, money comes and goes, and thus is an unstable source of self-esteem, an unreliable foundation upon which to build our identity.

There are two ways to widen your self-image. One is by “outward expansion,” which Cutler describes as “looking out across the landscape of [your] life to find other parts beyond the workplace.” This can be relationships, hobbies, athletic endeavors, volunteer work, anything that gives your life meaning. Yet, Cutler realizes that for the Dalai Lama, something deeper is at work; it involves “‘inward expansion’—going to the core, moving to a deeper and more fundamental level by discovering the essence of the particular role or activity…and binding one’s identity to this essence.”

For the Dalai Lama, it is his spiritual practice as a monk; for us non-monks, our essence might be relationships that have love and affection at the core, it could be growing and learning new skills, or creating beauty, solving technical challenges.

Of course it isn’t true that the Dalai Lama does nothing all day. He works hard as a Buddhist monk, waking before dawn for meditation practice, serving as a statesman and leader of Tibet, and traveling globally to meet with other leaders and give speeches and talks. His answer of “I do nothing” reflects not a lack of activity, but his own attitude to his job. His life is so aligned with his core purpose as a monk that he brings joy and tireless energy to an exhausting schedule.

It’s clear that the Dalai Lama’s career advice comes from a deeper place, one that is not solely concerned with material possessions or even meaningful work. Rather, it comes from a generous and holistic view of life and the world. He understands that job satisfaction is only one piece of life satisfaction. Accept that your job won’t be perfect, but your life can still be full.

The Grindstone is a series about how we work today by Billfold writers Leda Marritz and Stephanie Stern.
NEW HARVARD RESEARCH REVEALS A FUN WAY TO BE MORE SUCCESSFUL
Eric Barker | Barking Up The Wrong Tree | 09.28.14

We all want to be more successful. But everything you read probably sounds like a lot of work. Isn’t there a scientifically proven method that’s a little more… fun? There is.

Shawn Achor is the bestselling author of The Happiness Advantage and for years at Harvard he studied exactly that: happiness. He gave an extremely popular (and, in my opinion, the all-time funniest) TED talk. And his ideas even attracted the attention of Oprah Winfrey, who filmed an interview with him.

What’s so special about Shawn’s work? His research shows that success doesn’t bring happiness — happiness brings success. He did what a lot of researchers never do: instead of scrubbing the freak out outliers from the data he aggressively studied them. He wanted to know what people with happiness superpowers do that we don’t.

Here’s Shawn:
Instead of deleting those people that are weirdos in the data what we do is we intentionally study them. We try and find out why it is that while an entire sales force has low numbers, we’re finding three or four people whose sales are skyrocketing. Or we’re looking at a low socioeconomic school in Chicago, where the academic scores are below average, there are a couple students whose grades are skyrocketing. By studying those outliers, what we’re doing is we’re gleaning information not on how to move subpar performers up toward that average point, but how to move people from average to superior.

Shawn believes (and his research shows) that you can do things to be happier. And being happier will make you more successful. I gave Shawn a call to find out what he’s learned. Want more joy and success in your life? Here’s what Shawn had to say.

Success Brings Happiness?
No. Happiness Brings Success. We all chase success hoping it will make us happy:
• I’ll be happy once I get that promotion.
• I’ll be happy once I get that raise.
• I’ll be happy once I lose 15 pounds.

But the research shows that isn’t true. You achieve a goal and you’re briefly happier… but, then you’re looking toward the next big thing. What Shawn’s research showed was when you flip the formula and focus on increasing happiness, you end up increasing success.

Here’s Shawn:
If we can get somebody to raise their levels of optimism or deepen their social connection or raise happiness, turns out every single business and educational outcome we know how to test for improves dramatically. You can increase your success rates for the rest of your life and your happiness levels will flatten, but if you raise your level of happiness and deepen optimism it turns out every single one of your success rates rises dramatically compared to what it would have been at negative, neutral, or stressed.

MET Life saw such great results among happy salespeople that they tried an experiment: they started hiring people based on optimism. And that was even if those people performed poorly on the standard industry “aptitude test.” What was the result? It turns out that the optimistic group
outsold their more pessimistic counterparts by 19% in year one and 57% in year two. How can this be?

Shawn explained that intelligence and technical skills only predict 25% of success:

If we know the intelligence and technical skills of an employee, we can actually only predict about 25% of their job success. 75% of long term job success is predicted not by intelligence and technical skills, which is normally how we hire, educate and train, but it’s predicted by three other umbrella categories. It’s optimism (which is the belief that your behavior matters in the midst of challenge), your social connection (whether or not you have depth and breadth in your social relationships), and the way that you perceive stress.

And students who want success in their future should worry a little less about grades and more about optimism. Shawn found that rolling a pair of dice was as predictive of your future income as your college GPA is - and millionaires agree. So your attitude has a huge effect on how successful you are. What was the most powerful thing Shawn learned from looking at those happiness outliers?

**See Problems As Challenges, Not Threats**
Shawn did a study of bankers right after the huge banking crisis hit. Most of them were incredibly stressed. But a few were happy and resilient. What did those guys have in common? They didn’t see problems as threats; they saw them as challenges to overcome.

Here’s Shawn:

What these positive outliers do is that when there are changes that occur in the economic landscape or the political landscape or at an educational institution, they see those changes not as threats, but as challenges.

So those people are just wired differently and our duty is to envy them, right? Nope. Shawn did an experiment that proved this attitude can be learned. Just by showing the normal bankers a video explaining how to see stress as a challenge, he turned sad bankers into super-bankers.

Here’s Shawn:

And we watched those groups of people over the next three to six weeks, and what we found was if we could move people to view stress as enhancing, a challenge instead of as a threat, we saw a 23% drop in their stress-related symptoms. It produced a significant increase not only in levels of happiness, but a dramatic improvement in their levels of engagement at work as well.

But what about when there’s just too much to do? Maybe there are more “challenges” than you can handle. Should we just give up on any chance of work-life balance? Cancel those plans with friends and spend more hours at the office? Once again the answer is the exact opposite.

**Twice As Much Work Means You Need Friends Twice As Much**
After doing his undergraduate work at Harvard, Shawn was a proctor there, helping freshman adapt to the often stressful, competitive environment. Many students would respond to the workload by living in the library and eating meals in their bedrooms so they could keep studying. Did those students perform better? No. Those were the ones who burned out; the ones who ended up wanting to transfer to another school. Shawn would tell them what they had unknowingly done was cut themselves off from the greatest predictor of happiness.

Here’s Shawn:

The people who survive stress the best are the ones who actually increase their social investments in the middle of stress, which is the opposite of what most of us do. Turns out that social connection is the greatest predictor of happiness we have when I run them in my studies. When we run social support metrics, they trump everything else we do, every time.

And what did we just learn about happiness? It predicts success. And it was no different here:

We found that social connection is extremely important for predicting academic achievement.
Want to resist stress, increase productivity and get a promotion? Then don’t just seek social support — provide it to others. Confirming the research of top Wharton professor Adam Grant, people who provide social support get some of the greatest benefits. Shawn saw this not only with his students at Harvard but he’s since advised over a third of the Fortune 100 companies — and it worked there too.

Here’s Shawn:
Work altruists were ten times more likely to be engaged than the bottom quartile of that list and the top quartile was significantly happier and 40% more likely to receive a promotion over the next 2-year period of time.

Some of you might be thinking: “Alright already, happiness makes you more successful. I get it. But how do I get happier?” It’s simpler than you think.

**Send A “Thank You” Email Every Morning**
You might think happiness only comes from big wins or big achievements. You’re wrong. Research shows little things are more important. So Shawn believes rather than focusing on big boosts like vacations, it’s smarter to build little, consistent habits akin to brushing your teeth. What little habit gives a big happiness boost over time? Send a 2-minute “thank you” email or text as soon as you get into the office.

Here’s Shawn:
The simplest thing you can do is a two-minute email praising or thanking one person that you know. We’ve done this at Facebook, at US Foods, we’ve done this at Microsoft. We had them write a two-minute email praising or thanking one person they know, and a different person each day for 21 days in a row. That’s it. What we find is this dramatically increases their social connection which is the greatest predictor of happiness we have in organizations. It also improves teamwork. We’ve measured the collective IQ of teams and the collective years of experience of teams but both of those metrics are trumped by social cohesion.

What other little daily happiness habits does Shawn recommend?
- List the things you’re grateful for
- Meditate
- Exercise

Over 120,000 people receive my weekly email. And it’s sent from my real email address. People can reply. And they do. What’s one of the most common things readers email me to say? “Eric, you suggest all these great things. I read them. I agree with them. But I don’t end up doing any of them. How can I follow through?”
Shawn has a great answer for this too.

**The 20-Second Rule**
What stops you from making the changes you know you should? Shawn says it’s “activation energy.” You know, like the activation energy it takes to initially get your butt off the couch and to the gym. The hard part is getting started. If you reduce the amount of activation energy required, tough things become easy. So make new habits 20 seconds easier to start. Shawn would sleep in his gym clothes and put his sneakers next to the bed and it made him much more likely to exercise when he woke up.

Here’s Shawn:
If you can make the positive habit three to 20 seconds easier to start, you’re likelihood of doing it rises dramatically. And you can do the same thing by flipping it for negative habits. Watching too much television? Merely take out the batteries of the remote control creating a 20 second delay and it dramatically decreases the amount of television people will watch.

So how do we pull all this together? And what was the most inspiring thing Shawn told me about happiness and success?
Sum Up
Here’s what we can all learn from Shawn:

- Success doesn’t bring happiness. Happiness brings success.
- See problems as challenges, not threats.
- More work means you need more social support. And giving support is better than receiving.
- Send a 2-minute “thank you” email every morning.
- Use the 20-second rule to build the habit.

Some people might think it’s too hard to get happier. Maybe they’ve suffered from depression. Or they’ve seen the research that we have a “happiness set point”, and our genetics ultimately decide how happy we can be. You know what the most inspiring thing Shawn told me was? The latest research shows good habits might trump genes.

Here’s Shawn:
When you look at outliers on the graph, you find people who actually break the tyranny of genes and environment by creating these conscious positive habits that actually cause them to interact with life in a more positive way with higher levels of success, lower levels of stress, and higher levels of resilience. They do it by changing their mindset and changing their habits, and by doing so they actually trump their genes. Most people accept that they’re just born some way and that’s how they’re going to be the rest of their life, and whatever they were last year is what they’re going to be this year. I think positive psychology shows us that that doesn’t actually have to be the case.
Extraordinarily motivated people are driven to go above and beyond. They are trusted by others, focused, and confident in their own abilities. They dream of endless possibilities and tend to be extremely satisfied with their lives. They are more likely to receive a raise or a dream project, maintain longer relationships, and get promoted or recruited more than their unmotivated peers.

Seeking and achieving your dreams means you are really living your life. Ready to get motivated and become all you can be? Try some or all of these habits of extraordinarily motivated people and perhaps you too will find the courage to live a life of fulfilled dreams.

1. **They’re Internally Motivated**
   It is their intrinsic desire to be their best selves and succeed that drives their motivation. They are internally driven—not pushed—toward new adventures, the unfolding journey, and the possible outcomes—they relish challenging themselves, learning, and exploring.

2. **They Don’t Waste Time Judging**
   They objectively observe the successes and mistakes of others and learn from them instead of judging or comparing themselves. They don’t waste their time with judgmental, gossipy people either.

3. **They Are Humble**
   They are willing to admit they made a mistake and apologize. They encourage feedback from others and use it to take steps in the right direction.

4. **They Look at the Upside**
   Instead of focusing on what’s not working and bad experiences—which so many of us tend to do—they instead focus on what is working and their successes. If they find themselves overthinking a miscalculation, they automatically flip a switch and think about those things they did do right.

5. **They Are Authentic**
   They are true to themselves despite what others think—they don’t live their lives solely to please others.

6. **They Push Beyond Their Comfort Zone**
   Extraordinarily motivated people face discomfort head on—they never choose the easy route—to get what they want. They push themselves out of their comfort zone and get rid of those annoying internal voices that say, “You are limited in what you can do.” They trust their abilities and know they will come out on top.

7. **They Continue to Learn**
   They read a lot and are brilliant observers—they are always watching and searching for new, more efficient, and faster ways to achieve. They understand that in order to grow as a person, they must always continue to learn.

8. **They Know What They Want**
   They have a clear vision of what they want their lives to look like and who they want to be. Their clarity comes with the wisdom to know what things to harness and what things to avoid. Their mottos are, “Never say never” and “Anything is possible.”

9. **They Don’t Give Up**
   When they stumble over that proverbial bump in the road, they problem solve, come up with a plan, take action, and get past it. They understand that a sure way to lose a battle is to quit—which is not a part of their vocabulary or an option.
10. They Don't Blame Others
They never blame others for their failures. They understand that ultimately they alone are in charge of their actions and choices and no other.

11. They Take Time for Themselves
They know that in order to stay motivated and on top of their game, they have to carve out time for themselves. Rewards of time away from it all and taking care of themselves are more important to them than material possessions.

12. They Surround Themselves With Motivators
Their friends are those who are trustworthy, positive, and supportive and who bring out the best in them unconditionally. Their friends help them take on the world side by side and, when needed, help them get back on their feet again.

While wishing and hoping makes you a dreamer,
acting and doing makes you someone who can turn dreams into reality.
-Nan Russell
Because grammar can be tricky and we don’t have time to Google everything.

Grammar is one of those funny things that sparks a wide range of reactions from different people. While one person couldn’t care less about colons vs. semicolons, another person will have a visceral reaction to a misplaced apostrophe or a “there” where a “their” is needed (if you fall into the latter category, hello and welcome).

I think we can still all agree on one thing: poor grammar and spelling takes away from your message and credibility. In the worst case, a blog post rife with errors will cause you to think twice about how knowledgeable the person who wrote it really is. In lesser cases, a “then” where a “than” should be is just distracting and reflects poorly on your editing skills. Which is a bummer.

I like to think that my grammar is pretty good for the average bear, but when I’m writing or editing things, I’ll often turn to Google to make sure my instincts are right (especially when it comes to proper punctuation and its weird little tricks), or realize they’re not and quietly sob at my desk before composing myself and moving on.

Which is why I created this list to have on hand for when you’re not quite sure, find the answer, and get back to that article you were working on. It’s a work in progress that I dream of one day being the ultimate cheat sheet that addresses everyone’s biggest grammar pet peeves.

Repeat Offenders
You probably already know these, but a grammar cheat sheet just wouldn’t be complete without them.

Their/There/They’re
- Their is possessive, meaning it owns something. There refers to a place or an idea.
- They’re is a contraction for “they are.”
- Example: Their grammar was impeccable. There were no mistakes to be found in the article. They’re probably going to be promoted soon.

Then/Than
- Then refers to timing—you did one thing, then you did another.
- Than is comparative.
- Example: I ate McDonald’s for dinner, then followed it up with a bowl of Haagen-Dazs. Still, my eating habits are better now than when I was in college.

Its/It’s
- Its is possessive, like their.
- It’s is a contraction for “it is.”
- Example: It’s a shame we missed the baby ocelot exhibit but its lineup was way too long, even for an ocelot show.

Lay/Lie
- Lay requires a direct object.
- Lie doesn’t require an object.
- The past tense of lay is laid, while the past tense of lie is lay.
- Example: I lay my head down on the pillow. / I laid my head down on the pillow.
- Example: The rocks lie near the stream. / The rocks lay near the stream.

That/Who
- Use that when you’re writing about something.
- Use who when you’re writing about someone or a group of people.
• Example: The apartment above me is the one that all of the noise is coming from. Jillian, the woman who lives there, owns several parrots.

That/Which
• That is used to introduce a restrictive clause which, if removed, will make the sentence nonsensical.
• Which is used with a nonrestrictive clause (think of it as adding more information).
• Example: My dog that is small has a total Napoleon complex.
• Example: My car, which I’ve had for 10 years, still runs as well as the day I stole it.

Compliment/Complement
• A compliment is what you pay to someone or something.
• Complement refers to something going well with or enhancing something else.
• Example: Emily has been getting a lot of compliments on her sweater today. People say the color complements the green in her eyes.

Nor/Or
• Nor is negative.
• Use nor with neither, and or with either.
• Example: Neither Debbie nor Alison will be coming to the baby shower. Either they have food poisoning or we should expect an invite to their own showers about 8 months from now.

Comprise/Compose
• Comprise refers to what something contains.
• Compose refers to what something is made up of.
• You’ll know which one to use depending on how it is speaking about the subject of the sentence.
• Example: One day in world wide web comprises more tweets, blog posts and emails than you can imagine.
• Example: The United States is composed of 50 states.

Who/Whom
• Who is used when referring to the subject, or the person doing something.
• Whom is used for the object, or the person having something done to them.
• Tip: Who can often be applied when the answer is he/she/they, while whom works with her/him/them.
• Example: Who forgot to close the back door and let the ‘possums in again?
• Example: To whom is this suspiciously unmarked package being delivered?

I/Me
Using I or me in a sentence when you’re referring to you and another person/people also depends on whether you’re the subject or the object.
• If you’re the subject, use I (or we).
• If you’re the object, use me (or us).
• Example: If Heather and I get to the cottage first, we’re claiming the best bedrooms.
• Example: They told Alex and me to go outside and get some fresh air.

Everyday/Every day
• Everyday is an adjective used to describe something that occurs daily or is commonplace.
• Every day means “each day.”
• Example: Drinking coffee is an everyday habit for me.
• Example: I drink coffee every day.

Defuse/Diffuse
• Defuse means to make something less dangerous or tense.
• Diffuse refers to something being spread, scattered, or dispersed.
• Example: Elaine was desperate to defuse the situation after realizing she ate a $29,000 piece of antique cake from Peterman’s mini fridge.
• Example: The light diffused through the room.

**Punctuation**

**Colon**

• Colons are used after an independent clause that precedes a list, or to separate an explanation or example of the preceding clause.
• Example: The Uberflip blog is a great resource for everything content marketing: social media, inbound marketing, copywriting, SEO, and more.

**Semicolon**

• You can use semicolons to join independent clauses where connectors (and, or, but) and commas aren’t used, or to separate long or complicated items in a series.
• Example: Everyone hopes this summer will be a good one; after the soul-crushing winter we’ve had, some serious sunshine is in order.

**Hyphen**

• Place a hyphen between a two-word description that refers to the thing it’s preceding.
• Example: Place a hyphen between a two-word description that refers to the thing it’s preceding.

**Dash**

• A dash is like a comma in that it introduces a related element. A dash, however, is more dramatic as it interrupts the flow of the sentence.
• This dash, an em dash, is different from an en dash, which is shorter and usually only used to indicate a range of numbers.
• Example: An Uberflip Hub is the best gift you can give your content—it’s much better than having everything live in sad, lonely silos.
• Example: I’ll be out of the office from July 18-July 21, so don’t bother emailing.

**Quotations**

• Semicolons, colons and dashes always go outside the quotation mark, while periods and commas always go inside.
• Question marks and exclamation points are placed either inside or outside, depending on whether they apply to the quotation or the sentence itself.
• Example: Did you mean the movie or the country when you asked if I want to come to “Madagascar”?
• Example: When I asked my nephew who his favorite person is, he replied, “Aunt Hayley!”

**Apostrophes**

• If a single thing or person owns something, use an apostrophe before the “s.”
• If the thing or group you’re referring to is plural, put the apostrophe after the “s.”
• Example: The Uberflip office’s ping pong table is in high demand at lunch time.
• Example: A second table may be needed to accommodate all of the team members’ thirst for ping pong.

**Comma Splices**

• Comma splices most often occur when a comma is used without a conjunction (like and, but, or as) or in place of a period or semicolon that divides or joins two thoughts that could be complete sentences on their own.
• Example (wrong): Stacey was the nicest girl in class, she always shared the rainbow frosting from her Dunkaroos.
• Example (right): Stacey was the nicest girl in class, because she always shared the rainbow frosting from her Dunkaroos.
• Example 2 (right): Stacey was the nicest girl in class. She always shared the rainbow frosting from her Dunkaroos.
The Oxford Comma

- The Oxford comma is the name given to the final comma in a series.
- It’s completely optional.
- Example:

Why I still use the Oxford Comma

WITH:
I had eggs, toast, and orange juice.

WITHOUT:
I had eggs, toast and orange juice.

That’s all for now! Here’s hoping it saves you one fewer Google search (or potential grammar fail).
When talking to busy colleagues or professional contacts, one of the biggest complaints I hear is “I don’t have any time.” No time for leisure, no time for seeing friends, no time for handling those gazillion new emails, no time for the gym. It is true that we are all working more than ever before, but for the vast majority of us, the no-time myth is exactly that: a myth.

As Scott Behson recently reminded us in *Harvard Business Review*, we all start each week with the gift of 168 new hours. Behson breaks down the week, taking out 49 hours for sleep, 56 for work, 7 for commuting, 13 for errands and routine housework, and 20 hours for family (childcare, cooking, and so on). After all that, he lays out what seems like an impossible fact: We should have a full 23 hours leftover. That’s 1,380 glorious minutes a week, unaccounted for. More than three hours a day!

Rather than quibble with Behson’s breakdown, I decided to take his 168 hours and try thinking of my time the same way I think about money: since I only have a certain amount, I should make sure I’m being thoughtful about how and where I spend it.

Enter the time budget. Just like its financial counterpart, the idea is to plan out how much time you’d like to be spending on each part of your life (and how much you’d like to “save” for more fun or relaxing pursuits), and then track your actual temporal spending to help you stick to those goals.

To test this out on my own life, I created a simple Excel spreadsheet and started filling it out. I put in my most aggressive estimates on how much I work and gave myself seven hours of sleep per night (nine on weekends!) and a very aspirational 30 minutes a day each on exercise and reading. After taking out errands and such, I was still left with 10 whole hours unaccounted for to spend on family, friends, hobbies, and entertainment.

Surprisingly, finding time in my budgeted week wasn’t as hard I thought it would be, and it didn’t reflect how much time I actually felt like I had each week.

So, where did all my time go? I’ll be spending the next month doing a weekly time audit. By writing down where I’m actually spending my time, without judgment or trying to change my activities for now, I’m hoping to discover some interesting patterns and opportunities to reclaim a few free hours for myself.

Just like a financial budget can surprise you with the amount you’re spending on Starbucks or taxis, a time budget can help you realize how fast your 10-minute Facebook breaks are adding up or how many TV shows you really watch per week. And unlike money, you can’t catch up on lost time, so make sure you’re spending yours wisely.