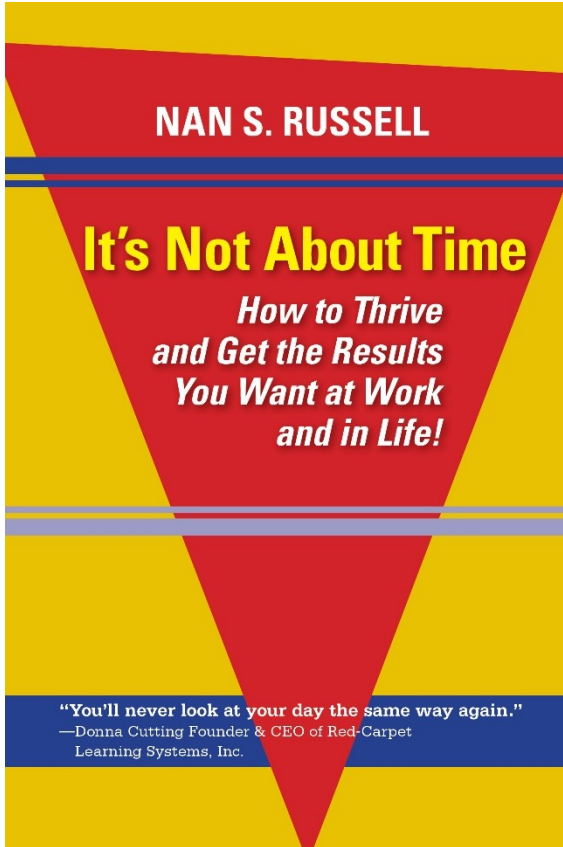


EXCERPT FROM IT'S NOT ABOUT TIME

CHAPTER 1



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CHAPTER 1  
**What Do You Want?**

*“In the long run, we shape our lives, and we shape ourselves. The process never ends until we die. And the choices we make are ultimately our own responsibility.”*

—Eleanor Roosevelt

WHAT DO YOU WANT? Do you want to halt the busy-ness commandeering your life? Replace overwhelmed with control and balance? Or maybe you'd like to have more time with the people and endeavors that matter to you? Perhaps you'd like to explore, discover, and embrace life's wonders? Or, write that book, coach your child's soccer team, volunteer in the community, reach career aspirations, go back to school, start your own business, or exercise more?

Think hard. What *do* you want? Do you want to be engaged in your life's work, live well, feel great, share joys with the love of your life, raise wonderful children,

contribute to your community, change the world or at least your part of it, and live your life's potential? Don't we all!

Sure, in the *big* scheme of things we do want those things, or ones like them. But in a world-of-overwhelmed, that seems too lofty. Maybe what you want, *right now*, is just more sleep, a walk in the woods, or an uninterrupted conversation with a friend? Or maybe it's time to organize that closet that's bugging you, read the novel you got for your birthday, or experience two unscheduled hours to do whatever you'd like?

The reality is our wants and our time demands collide. Like the ebb and flow of life, the time we have to pursue our desires, or even our basic wants like enough sleep, fluctuate. This chapter isn't about figuring out what you want, although we'll revisit wants in the book's final section, "Investing Your Time," to assist taking a step in that direction.

Instead, this chapter is about making the *decision to actualize* whatever wants you have. It introduces the book's first theme: "There Will Never Be Enough Time." When there isn't enough time to do it all, have it all, see it all, embrace it all, or control it all, we realize the results we want require a few top tier choices. One of those is the choice to make the art of *self*-managing a primary focus.

Bottom line: whatever you want won't be accomplished by merely enhancing your time management skills. You already have those basics for scheduling, priority setting, and meeting obligations. If you didn't, a book titled *It's Not About Time* wouldn't call to you. That's

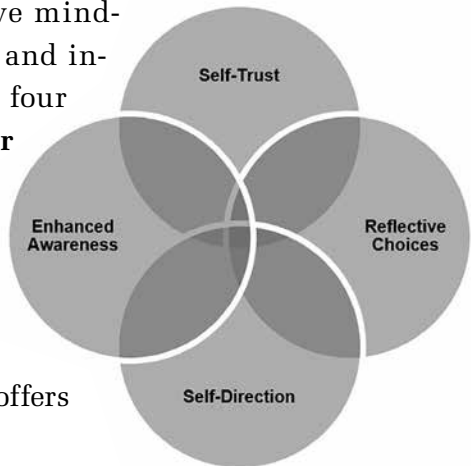
because you already know, or your good wisdom nudges you, that in this era where work and non-work blur to create “your life,” getting results isn’t about *how much* time you have.

You’re granted the same number of hours every day as your coworker down the hall or your neighbor up the street. It isn’t even how productive or efficient you become. You can be great at managing time and getting things done, but still not flourish with well-being, reach your career aspirations, enjoy great relationships, live your life’s potential, contribute to your world, or accomplish your dreams.

*Lack of time is a symptom.* Busyness is a symptom. Overwhelmed is a symptom. When these symptoms linger week to week, year to year, it’s not a time problem you’re having, it’s a choice problem. And the first choice you need to make is deciding who’s in charge of your life. In the broadest sense, that’s what this book is about.

The second part of the book, “Fueling Your Results, Aspirations, and Dreams,” grounds that choice with three skills—a productive mindset, continuous learning, and incremental progress—plus four **core elements essential for self-managing**:

You already know life is a treasure-trove, and sometimes a hornet’s nest, that brings and offers



plenty to keep you busy. What's needed is learning how to manage that busyness from the inside-out around your needs, challenges, desires, talents, and aspirations. To do that requires more than a realization that the choices we make determine the results we get; it requires behaviors and actions that align with that understanding. That's what you'll find in this book.

## **Four top tier choices**

Our choices determine whether we run our life, or our life runs us. And we do have choices. It may not seem like that when we're overwhelmed and can't see the tunnel, let alone a light at its end, or deeply mired in to-do-mud, attempting to spread our too-little-time on our too-much-to-do pile.

When that happens, we typically seek time-equivalent antibiotics—efficiency apps, email filters, more hours, and promising productivity tips—to treat the growing symptoms of too much to do and too little time to do it in. These temporary fixes hold for awhile, but soon we're at it again, seeking new ways to “stop the bleeding,” never realizing time-management wasn't our real problem. To solve the I-don't-have-enough-time problem requires mentally stepping away to elevate your thinking. Start by making these four 30,000 foot operating choices.

### **1. Passenger or driver?**

Who and / or what is driving the choices *you* make? People who thrive and get the results they want choose to

drive, not be a passenger, in their own lives. They view time as life's non-renewable currency, and carefully decide how to spend, invest, and enjoy it. By self-managing from the inside out, these drivers allocate their time carefully, understanding their life as a reflection of their choices.

They make time for the people they love, the passions they have, and work that uses their uniqueness. They focus on the results, goals, and life-dreams they desire, rather than accepting what comes their way. They do, while others talk of doing. They plan their day, while others let their day plan them. And they motivate themselves, while others wait for someone or something to motivate them. For people who choose to be drivers, it's not about the time they have; it's about the choices they make in *how* to use it.

Of course, there are choices that matter to us and choices that don't; own-life-drivers know the difference. Sometimes and about some things, we passenger on someone else's trip, but for drivers it's a reflective choice. More about that in Chapter 5.

## **2. Survival-mode or thriving-mode?**

How you spend your time puts value on what you're spending it on, and paints a results picture of either being in a survival-mode or thriving-mode. You know what that difference feels like.

For years, I operated in survival mode, putting me at the bottom of my priority list, not having time for "me," or time to exercise consistently, until a health issue caused

me to shift my choice to thriving-mode. Funny how I managed to find hours when I needed to reset my actions. Merely by choosing an hour less television a day, I “found” 365 hours a year. That’s the equivalent of nine 40 hour-weeks I could apply to thriving activities to increase my well-being.

Here’s a glimpse of what our time use says we collectively value:

- 80 percent of us value social media more than health, spending on average 4.5 hours a week tweeting, pinning, Facebooking,<sup>1</sup> and less than the recommended 2.5 hours a week exercising.<sup>2</sup>
- If we have a smart phone and children, we spend less time with our children, which averages 1.5 hours a day per parent.<sup>3</sup> Apps average 2 hours per day; “productivity apps capture just 2% of our time” with games “stealing the most of our attention.”<sup>4</sup>
- We value our TV, averaging 4 hours and 28 minutes a day<sup>5</sup> more than preparing what we eat, where we invest 30 minutes a day for all meals combined.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps an unintended consequence of this time-value equation is reflected in the 35 percent of us who are obese,<sup>7</sup> as prepackaged foods and take-out replace more healthy preparation, and mobile devices increase TV viewing.

### **3. Use time or invest time?**

There's no right or wrong answer—it's *your* time. How you use it is up to you. But, if I can be a little snarky here—*you can't have it both ways*. When you choose to “spend” it a certain way, you have no one to blame but yourself if you don't receive that pay raise or promotion, or stay wishing and hoping while others actualize their dreams by “investing” time differently. People who make better time choices, make better lives. We all get to make time-choices. The reality is your choice to use or invest time will shape your results and your life.

While we do have differing circumstances, obligations, and responsibilities, as well as challenges and situations, what we do with the time we have matters. Practice the piano three hours a day and you'll be better than people who don't. Practice and hone work talents and the same applies. Or spend time shooting the breeze, exploring the web, texting, fiddling with email, or posting general “stuff” to social media sites and you'll complete the day having traded your time for minimal results. It's your choice.

### **4. Zombie-sleeper or self-aware contributor?**

All tasks are not equal. All commitments are not equal. All responsibilities are not equal. All clients are not equal. All people of personal importance in your life are not equal. Yet many of us sleep-walk, operating as if they were. You can robotically do 50 things today and get little, if any, results for having done them. Or you can do one or two that bring a big return, be it emotional, financial,



physical, spiritual, or psychological. People who self-manage know the difference and operate accordingly.

As author Brian Tracy said, “The starting point of making *better* choices is for you to stop making *worse* choices.” These top tier choices aren’t light switches we flip on and off, but a continuum from great to not great. Typically we’re somewhere in between. There will be days that overwhelm, life happens events that stall us for long periods, and bouts of waning self-management and motivation.

The choice isn’t to be one way or the other *all* the time, but to work toward the incremental process of improving as a self-manager who drives his or her own life. That doesn’t mean we’re myopically focused on ourselves; in fact you’ll find the opposite for those who self-manage well. But, it does mean we’re self-aware and accountable for how things turn out.

## **Self-management surpasses time-management**

If you want to be the driver of your life, thriving in whatever ways that means to you, investing your time in the todays and the tomorrows you want, and doing it with increased self-trust, confidence, aligned actions, and awareness, keep reading.

But if inner work to get to outer results isn’t for you, or you’re looking for a quick fix, I hope you’ll hand this book to someone interested in changing from managing-time to managing-self. How do you know the difference? Look for these observable behaviors, keeping in mind time-management is a skill that self-managing people have, but they go steps beyond.

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**Time-managing**

- How busy you are
- How much you do
- Dealing with what happens
- Looking to others for motivation
- Work certain times
- Treat the symptoms
- How productive you are
- Finish it
- Get things done
- Spend time
- Seek balance
- Relationships are a means to an end
- Responsible

**Self-managing**

- How effective you are
  - What results you get
  - Making things happen
  - Looking to self for motivation
  - Work any time
  - Fix the problems
  - How engaged you are
  - Do it right
  - Get the right things done
  - Invest time
  - Make own balance / well-being
  - Relationships matter
  - Accountable
- 

## **What does self-managing look like?**

There are many ways to see self-managing in action. Olympic swimmer and author Sarah Connor captures the essence in her words: “Remember, the feeling you get from a good run is far better than the feeling you get from sitting around wishing you were running.” That’s what those who choose a life of self-managing know, too. The results they want for themselves don’t come from wishing and hoping, but acting and doing.

During the past centuries, concepts behind the art of self-managing have shifted from discipline to accountability. They’ll continue to shift as societal challenges, technologies, priorities, and problems influence time choices and resulting behaviors. Here’s a glimpse:

**IN THE 19TH CENTURY:** “Perhaps the most valuable result of all education is the ability to make yourself do the thing you have to do, when it ought to be done, whether you like it or not; it is the first lesson that ought to be learned; and however early a man’s training begins, it is probably the last lesson that he learns thoroughly.”<sup>8</sup>

—Thomas Huxley, biologist

**IN THE 20TH CENTURY:** There is “more exacting and more effective control from the inside. It motivates the manager to action not because somebody tells him to do something or talks him into doing it, but because the objective needs of his task demand it. He acts not because someone wants him to but because he himself decides that he has to—he acts, in other words as a free man.”<sup>9</sup>

—Peter Drucker, author and  
management expert

**IN THE 21ST CENTURY:** The growing understanding, as an unknown writer put it, “The trouble with life is, you’re halfway through before you realize it’s a ‘do it yourself’ thing.” Today the essential skill is: “Management of or by oneself; the taking of responsibility for one’s own behavior and well-being.”<sup>10</sup>

—OxfordDictionary.com.

It's easy to dismiss thinking from other times, but we shouldn't be too quick to believe we have the skills, yet, for managing ourselves.

Those choosing a self-managing path look beyond time to the choices they make, the actions they take, the skills they learn, the beliefs they have, the relationships they build, and the futures they want. Self-managing people operate with thoughts akin to the words that grace my husband's and my wedding rings: "*You invent the future that you want to face.*"<sup>11</sup>

## **Common behaviors of self-managing people**

Self-managing people display common sense, but uncommonly practiced behaviors. Here are some:

- They know what they want and work towards achieving it, applying the power of incremental progress.
- They're worthy of trust—dependable, reliable, and consistently good to their word—with word-action alignment. If they say they'll do it, they do it, or tell you well ahead they can't.
- They set boundaries for themselves, making time for what matters to them while understanding life's ebbs and flows can change their priorities.

- They look in the mirror *first* to see what they can do better; they're accountable to themselves for themselves—for their results, actions, and inactions.
- They operate from the inside out applying self-managing essentials: self-trust, enhanced awareness, self-direction, and reflective choices.
- They see the forest for the trees, and don't get lost in either.
- They invest time in fixing the problem, training the new person, figuring out better ways; they “stop the bleeding” before moving forward.
- They embrace learning, personal growth, and well-being. They compete with themselves, working to improve who they are, what they can do, achieve, or contribute.
- They do what needs to be done, whether they like the task or not.
- They're self-motivated and engaged, with what others might call “drive” or “passion.” They want to make a difference with their work and lives.
- They offer help and assistance to others, build strong relationships, and share their knowledge and talents.

- They use, enjoy, and invest their time thoughtfully. They have a make-it-happen mindset and are highly productive.
- They invest time in doing what they enjoy doing; often work is one.
- They're not myopically self-focused, but contributors to the common good, with a big team / big world mentality.

Think of self-management as a fluctuating state, which we'll explore in Chapter 3: Life Happens. It's not something you master, but rather, an operating principle. All of us have hot buttons, breaking points, strengths, weaknesses, and "issues." Perfection isn't possible, but engagement in the art of self-managing and thriving is.

## **The pain of busyness**

There are many types of pain. Feeling overwhelmed, chronically exhausted, or unable to stretch non-elastic time to fit what needs doing is one kind. So is wanting to do one thing and having to do another; knowing the people you love most feel low on your priority list; or giving up hope you'll ever move toward that life dream.

When you believe you can time-manage yourself out of that kind of pain, which is what I tried for years, life tends to offer its version of a wake-up call: headaches, illness, anger, outbursts, insomnia, overeating or

drinking—you name it. If the pain gets bad enough we seek change. Consider whether you're ready:

- Do you want to move away from the pain of overwhelmed and busy-busy-busy?
- Are you willing to try something other than more time-management techniques that treat only symptoms?
- You consider with an open mind that your time-problem isn't about time?

**REFLECTIVE EXERCISE:**

**How Much Pain is Too Much... for You?**

Consider the statements below. If you've had enough and want to change it, check it. If it's out of control sometimes, but more okay for you than not, leave it blank.

- I'm tethered to work 24/7/365; people can reach me via cell anytime and they do.
- I use at least part of the weekend to catch up on work.
- My life and responsibilities are overflowing my ability to get everything I want done.
- I don't have any time to think or be creative and that hurts the quality of my work.
- I have out-of-control numbers of unopened emails and just ignore some.
- I need to delegate more but have no time to train or hire anyone.
- My New Year's resolution was to improve work-life balance and I broke it in weeks.
- Significant others in my life complain about my lack of time and attention.

- I feel at the end of my rope more days than not.
- I can't remember the last time I unplugged and relaxed, even on vacation.
- I feel compelled to check my phone every few minutes to make sure I don't miss something important.
- I know that stress and pressure are affecting my health and well-being.
- I keep hoping things at work and home will change.
- There are so many things I'd like to do, but I just don't have time to do them.

**Self-scoring:** Only you know if something is too much, too little, or just right for you. However, typically if you checked eight or more, i.e. more than half, there's a consistent problem that time-management alone is unlikely to solve.

Motivational speaker and author Jim Rohn's words give pause, "We must all suffer one of two things: the pain of discipline or the pain of regret or disappointment."

Once again I get it. It's simpler to think it's all happening on the outside; that you're the passenger in an out of control world with stuff coming at you 24/7/365. It's easier to follow the busy-busy-busy herd, wearing busyness like a badge of success, checking your phone on average 150 times a day<sup>12</sup> even while shopping, driving, meeting, eating, or just walking around, as if that next text you think you have to answer—right now—is going to change the world. Well, it's not.

And I get it. It's harder and riskier to choose to be a driver in your own life—to own actions and results; to maybe fail and not achieve your dreams or not succeed at the things you say really *matter* to you. Still, we only get one life. Passenger or driver?